



**MID-TERM REVIEW
of**

**Conserving, Enhancing and Managing Carbon Stocks and Biodiversity in the
Chornobyl Exclusion Zone Project
(GFL/4634 PMS: 785)**

- MAIN REPORT -



Photo Source: Chornobyl Radiation and Ecological Biosphere Reserve Information Booklet

Prepared by Murat ÇEVİK

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This report has been prepared by independent consultant Murat ÇEVİK, and is a product of the Ecosystems Division of UN Environment Programme. The findings and conclusions expressed herein do not necessarily reflect the views of Member States or the UN Environment Programme Senior Management

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This MTR Report prepared in line with the content given in the “Annex 10. Review Structure and Contents of the Main Review Report” of the Terms of Reference for the Mid-Term Review. The writer of this report focused to be concise and provide the most relevant issues and references for the reader, rather than giving all information that can easily be found in the Annexes or referred resources.

MTR Consultant, Mr. Murat ÇEVİK would like to thank the SAUEZM Office of the Biosphere Reserve, Mr. Oleksandr Galushchenko, Mr. Taras Melnychuk, Mr. Valeriy Maliarenko, Mr. Victor Aliyev, Mr. Denis Vishnevskiy and other valuable experts; Prof.Dr. Sergiy Zibtsev as the Science Coordinator of the project, and his colleagues from academia; Dr. Dmytro Holiaka and Dr. Sergey Gashchak for their informative chats in field visit to the ChEZ, Dr. Vitaliy Kolomychuk for the presentation on the Management Plan and kind guidance at the Botanic Garden, our drivers, and also the Head of Agency Mr. Alexander Kovalchuk, for their kind hosting, information and comments provided in the meetings and field visit. Also special thanks to all experts, stakeholders and interviewees met in the MTR field mission.

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In the dates of the final review of this document, a big fire occurred in the ChEZ, showing the importance of the project and the urgency of the actions discussed and recommended in this MTR process, especially in establishing enhanced fire management and site monitoring systems.

SHORT BIO of THE CONSULTANT

The consultant, Mr. Murat ÇEVİK is a senior expert with a BSc. in city and regional planning, MSc. degree in Regional Planning and PhD candidate in (Human) Geography, with expertise in spatial and strategic planning, regional/ rural development, environmental management, nature conservation, socio-spatial and socio-ecological research, as well as management, monitoring, evaluation and impact assessment of projects and programmes in mentioned fields of expertise.

His professional experience of almost 20 years gained in development, management, coordination, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of projects and programmes of UN and other international organisations, private sector, local administrations, NGOs and academic research institutions, mostly in the Republic of Türkiye. Some of these experience can be listed as Project Officer and Programme Manager at WWF Türkiye, Project Manager, Monitoring Expert, Regional Administrator, and Evaluation Consultant positions in UNDP, Montreal Protocol National Programme Coordinator at UNIDO, Monitoring and Evaluation Specialist at FAO, and consultancies to various NGO and private sector activities, as well as GEF, WB and nationally/ government funded project and programme level evaluations.

His PhD study and current research mainly focus on socio-ecological systems and sustainable regional/ rural development topics, specifically in the high conservation value ecoregions. Mr.Çevik is currently a freelance senior consultant, advisor to NGOs, professional and private sector organisations, and the managing partner of Akademia Consulting Co.Ltd, located in Ankara, Türkiye.

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ABBREVIATIONS

CCNSRWR	Chornobyl Center for Nuclear Safety, Radioactive Waste and Radioecology
ChEZ	Chornobyl Exclusion Zone
ChNPP	Chornobyl Nuclear Power Plant
CREBRO	Chornobyl Radiation and Ecological Biosphere Reserve Office
EU	European Union
GEF	Global Environment Facility
GoU	Government of Ukraine
MENR	Ministry of Ecology and Natural Resources
MTR	Mid-Term Review
Reserve	Chornobyl Radiation and Ecological Biosphere Reserve
SC	Steering Committee
TC	Technical Committee
ToC	Theory of Change
UNEP	United Nations Environment Programme
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
SAUEZM	State Agency of Ukraine for the Exclusion Zone Management
SGP	Small Grants Programme

PROJECT IDENTIFICATION TABLE

GEF Project ID:	4634		
Implementing Agency:	UNEP	Executing Agency:	UNEP/ ROE
Sub-programme:	3. Healthy and Productive Ecosystems	Expected Accomplishment(s):	EA (a) The health and productivity of marine, freshwater and terrestrial ecosystems are institutionalized in education, monitoring and cross-sector and transboundary collaboration frameworks at the national and international levels
UN Environment approval date:	-	Programme of Work Output(s):	
GEF approval date:	12.12.2014	Project type:	FSP
GEF Operational Programme #:	00785	Focal Area(s):	Climate Change, Biodiversity, Land Degradation
		GEF Strategic Priority:	BD1 CCM-5 LD-3
Expected start date:	26.02.2015 ¹	Actual start date:	16.03.2015
Planned completion date:	31.12.2019	Actual completion date:	31.12.2020
Planned project budget at approval:	US\$ 33,203,955	Actual total expenditures reported as of [date]:	US\$ 21,038,257
GEF grant allocation:	US\$ 4,863,955	GEF grant expenditures reported as of 31.12.2019:	US\$ 3,540,756
Project Preparation Grant - GEF financing:	US\$ 181,818	Project Preparation Grant - co-financing:	US\$ 181,818
Expected Medium-Size Project/Full-Size Project co-financing:	US\$ 28,340,000	Secured Medium-Size Project/Full-Size Project co-financing:	US\$ 28,340,000
First disbursement:	16.03.2015	Date of financial closure:	31.08.2021
No. of revisions:		Date of last revision:	
No. of Steering Committee meetings:	2	Date of last/next Steering Committee meeting:	Last: 12.12.2017 Next:
Mid-term Review/ Evaluation (planned date):	30.09.2019	Mid-term Review/ Evaluation (actual date):	March 2020
Terminal Evaluation (planned date):	01.03.2021	Terminal Evaluation (actual date):	
Coverage - Country(ies):	Ukraine	Coverage - Region(s):	Europe
Dates of previous project phases:	-	Status of future project phases:	-

¹ The date is the official date referred in the Memorandum between the Chornobyl Radiation-Ecological Biosphere Reserve and UNEP.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The United Nations Environment Programme Ecosystems Division (UNEP/ED) implements the full-sized project, **“Conserving, Enhancing and Managing Carbon Stocks and Biodiversity in the Chernobyl Exclusion Zone (ChEZ)”**, in cooperation with the United Nations Environment Programme Regional Office for Europe (UNEP/ROE), as executing agency on behalf of the Government of the Ukraine, as officially agreed and approved in the Project Document.

The project defined as a multi-focal area Project, in the Biodiversity (BD-1), Climate Change (CCM-5) and Land Degradation (LD-3) Focal Areas of GEF. The GEF CEO approved the Project Document on 12.12.2014, and actual implementation could start as of 16.03.2015. The project implementation process was delayed due to political instabilities in the Ukraine and other administrative issues, so the Internal Cooperation Agreement was therefore extended on 17.04.2019 at a no-cost basis for 23 months to be completed by the date of 31.12.2020, and financial closure by 31 August 2021.

The total proposed budget for the project is 33,203,955 USD; as the total of the GEF allocation of 4,863,955 USD, the GoU, GFMC and UNEP co-financing with a total of 28,340,000 USD.

The project objective is enhanced conservation and management of carbon stocks and biodiversity in forest and non-forest lands in the Chernobyl Exclusion Zone (ChEZ). The project aims to expand current use of the Chernobyl Exclusion Zone to encompass ecosystem values and in so doing provide ecosystem services to the benefit of local, national and international stakeholders. Project developed as an Intervention to; improve monitoring and research for large areas of forests, wetlands, and other habitat types and associated carbon benefits in the ChEZ; improve management of natural resources and carbon stocks within and around the ChEZ; and increase availability and access to critical information needed for decision-making for effective sustainable management of the ChEZ, which also defined as the project outcomes.

The project consists of local, national, regional and international scale activities, proposed to contribute to development and implementation of an expanded protected area network in and around the ChEZ, and accompanying management processes in the context of a governmental commitment to expand current productive uses in the ChEZ to the social, economic and environmental benefit of all stakeholders.

The Mid-Term Review conducted to assess the project performance to date, in terms of relevance, effectiveness and efficiency, and determine the likelihood of the project achieving its intended outcomes, including their sustainability; also address a number of strategic questions that are questions of interest to GEF and the implementing agency, and to which the project is believed to be able to make a substantive contribution.

MTRs also contribute to the implementing and partnering institutions, key stakeholders and other target groups for further improvement of both ongoing project-related processes and recommendations for post-implementation strategies and relevant actions. In this regard, not only the project partners, but all institutions and experts involved in the project implementation can be considered as the beneficiaries from the results of this review process.

A summary indicating the evaluation ratings and the findings linked to the relevant criterias presented below. More detailed analysis can be found in the associated sections of the report.

CRITERIA	MAIN FINDINGS/ COMMENTS	RATING
A. Strategic Relevance		Highly Satisfactory
<i>Alignment to MTS and PoW</i>	The project defined as a multi-focal area Project, in the Biodiversity, Climate Change and Land Degradation Focal Areas of GEF; contribute the achievement of Sustainable Development Goal 15, Targets 15.1. / 15.1.1., 15.2.1. and UN Environment Subprogramme 3 Healthy and productive ecosystems, defined in PoW 2018-19, EA (a) Project is an important part of the international efforts of the Government of Ukraine on management of the Exclusion Zone and the Reserve; comply with the UNDAF Partnership Framework Area: Environment and Climate Change / Outcome 1; complementary to the cooperation agreement between the Chernobyl Radiation and Ecological Biosphere Reserve and Polissia State	Highly Satisfactory
<i>Alignment to UNEP/GEF/Donor Strategic priorities</i>		Highly Satisfactory
<i>Relevance to regional, sub regional and national issues and needs</i>		Highly Satisfactory

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<i>Complementarity with existing interventions</i>	Radiation and Ecological Reserve (Belarus); as well as research and nature conservation priorities of EU.	Highly Satisfactory
<i>Quality of project design</i>	Project design complies with the GEF requirements by content and structure; have high potential as a model of a post-disaster nature conservation and protected area management. Results framework found to be concise, realistic and achievable; indicators and their means of verification comply with the SMART criteria, and mostly relevant to measure the associated outcomes and outputs. Some revisions considering the status of implementation by MTR date, recommended in the Results Framework in Section IV of this report.	Satisfactory
<i>Nature of external context</i>	Main issue creating external impact on the project is the political instability and turmoil occurred in Ukraine, starting from the project preparation period. More than being an issue raising concerns on securing the management and implementation of the project with a special condition, it also seem to affect the project management structure and implementation process. The key government counterparts and staff, namely the ministers and assigned ministerial staff that were proposed to coordinate the project activities and manage the project budget, changed in this period. This condition led to develop a project execution and implementation structure, which UNEP plays a more active and critical role, both as the executing and implementing agency, to secure the achievement of the project outcomes and objective. Another issue is defining the project as an important part of the international cooperation efforts of GoU for the conservation and management of ChEZ, especially in the scientific research and management side.	Unfavourable
B. Effectiveness		Moderately Satisfactory
<i>Delivery of outputs</i>	Considering the challenges faced in the project preparation and approval period, mainly related to the staff mobility and political turmoil in the country, this delay seems reasonable at first sight. But in the initial stage after the inception period, the unavailability of a fixed locally recruited project team, affected to progress on time. Recently, the (current) assigned government officers and scientists highly involved, professional, dedicated and work actively to compensate the delayed time, and to achieve the project targets in the remaining time. As per the MTR report date, the status in the delivery of outputs, observed as progressing, compared to the previous stages, referring the PIRs and field mission discussions.	Moderately Satisfactory
<i>Achievement of direct outcomes</i>	Outcomes defined for the project found almost achieved, as all project team members (science coordinator and the CREBRO Experts), key stakeholders are all interested and involved in the successful completion of the project. The main issue is to increase the quality and reliability of the results with checked, confirmed and analysed field based scientific data.	Moderately Satisfactory
<i>Likelihood of impact</i>	The project observed highly progressing to achieve the overall objective that will lead to create the proposed social, environmental and scientific impact, with a successful and qualified achievement of the proposed outcomes, regarding the high level of achievement in the mid-term targets listed for the project objective in the Results framework. But, the key issue that the Project success depends on the sustaining and enhancing the existing institutional structure and expertise of the CREBRO with its cooperating institutions (such as CCNSRWR), academic partners and the improvement of the necessary supporting national regulations related to ChEZ and the biosphere Reserve in line with the international agreements and bilateral cooperations (especially with Belarus)	Moderately Likely
C. Financial Management		Moderately Satisfactory

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<i>Completeness of the project financial information</i>	The project financial information collected and compiled by the UNEP and SAUEZM Project Teams, based on the official records of the institutional and financial documentations. The transfer of the UNEP financial operations system from IMIS to the UMOJA system commented to create problems in reporting processes and timely delivery of funds, in the MTR mission discussions. The key issue related to the reporting problems was the format of the reports and the information used in this reporting, which do not link the financial information to the output and outcomes, to comply with the GEF financial reports.	Moderately Satisfactory
<i>Communication between finance and project management staff</i>	Both UNEP and SAUEZM teams, MTR findings reflect a consistent communication between the financial and project management staff, especially in provision of financial data in reporting process and periods. Technical and financial reports compiled by UNEP Project Management, based on the information from the UNEP project management (UMOJA) system and the information provided from the SAUEZM	Moderately Satisfactory
D. Efficiency	Project cash and in-kind contributions, in any case can be considered as cost-effective in such a special case, which is an invaluable and only area especially for scientific research on radioecology, and biodiversity conservation topics. Considering the project total budget and the total area of the Chornobyl Radiation and Ecological Biosphere Reserve (226,964.7 ha), an amount of 146,3 USD/ha investment for 4-5 years, where the GEF share is 21,43 USD/ ha, considered highly cost-efficient for such a unique case. Timely release of funds is of critical importance and priority, especially for receiving high quality results from the scientific research field works.	Moderately Satisfactory
E. Monitoring and Reporting		Moderately Satisfactory
Monitoring design and budgeting	The Monitoring and Reporting framework proposed with the Project Document found not to be completely and functionally operational from the initial start of the project, due to various reasons, observed from the contents and process of the official reporting. The major reason found as the same with the delay in the Project implementation, specifically political and administrative issues mentioned in previous sections. An updated workplan and budget prepared and approved by the Steering Committee, for 2019-2020 period, which also provides a framework for the monitoring of the Project implementation. This could be supported with a detailed updated monitoring plan, for use of the Project Team, in cooperation and coordination with the involved experts and steering committee.	Moderately Satisfactory
Monitoring of project implementation		Moderately Satisfactory
Project reporting	The reporting process conducted by the executing partner, in consultation with the SAUEZM team and science coordinator, especially in collecting the updated information from site and key local partners. UNEP ROE Project team compiling the information and preparing the official Project reports. Financial reports prepared by using UNEP financial operations system UMOJA, which commented to create delays and problems in the Project implementation and not easy to use for GEF and similar external funding reportings. To support a more qualified reporting process, periodical (bi-weekly or monthly) online meetings and information update documents in a format and content complies with the Project results framework, mostly updated workplan and budget will be beneficial for the Project partners for more efficient monitoring and reporting.	Moderately Unsatisfactory
F. Sustainability		Moderately Likely
<i>Socio-political sustainability</i>	The key topic for evaluation sustainability in this project is the socio-political dimension, regarding the political instability and turmoil occurred in the country in the project development process. The MTR consultant observed the active involvement and ownership of the government institutions, from	Moderately Likely

	management to expert level, and interest in improving the administrative structures, as well as active and progressing cooperation with local administrations, non-governmental organisations and international or bilateral technical cooperations. This policy and intention has a positive impression, but needs improvements by integrating the results, lessons learned and outcomes from the project to the national legislation, scientific research agendas and public policies related to the ChEZ and the conservation sites in general.	
<i>Financial sustainability</i>	Also linked to the institutional sustainability, and it is mainly a matter of provision and use of funding for the improvement and enhancing the capacities of the management of the Reserve and ChEZ. In this special and specific case, management do not only mean the site administration, but also scientific research with monitoring and capacity development. The existing conditions observed in the MTR field visit and review of the related documentation shows that the high level of international interest creates multilateral and bilateral funding opportunities. In order to use these opportunities and for more cost-effective actions, a long-term strategy for 20 years would be beneficial.	Moderately Likely
<i>Institutional sustainability</i>	The first level institutional sustainability found to be secured with the declaration of the Biosphere Reserve with the presidential decree, with the establishment of the CREBRO, and so its existence, acceptance and ownership by the state assured in the presidential and ministerial level. Also, the unique condition of ChEZ in international level and international environmental agreements, both provide opportunities for the institutional sustainability as well as creating an international enforcement and shared responsibility for sustaining institutional structure for the management of the ChEZ and the Reserve. There are significant improvements in the outreach and community level awareness about the reserve, as the second (community) level institutional sustainability, with the activities conducted by the Reserve central office and the field office in Ivankiv District, especially targeting youth and children. But, these community level activities requires improvement, periodical monitoring and enhancement throughout the country, starting with the ChEZ neighbouring areas.	Likely
G. Factors and Processes Affecting Project Performance		Satisfactory
Preparation and readiness	Dedication and ownership, constructive and cooperative actions, progressive approaches of the management and responsible staff in the SAUEZM and especially CREBRO, as well as active involvement of the scientists, research institutions, and the local administrations, improving cooperation with the non-governmental organisations reflect a positive approach for preparation and readiness.	Satisfactory
Quality of project management and supervision	Although the quality of the project management and supervision progressed compared to the initial phase of the Project implementation, improvements in management required, especially in timely reporting and financial operations such as release of funds by UNEP, especially for priority activities that are commented to be delayed in MTR discussions. The Project management structure, executing by UNEP ROE observed as a practical and operational for the problematic initial phase of the Project. However, in the current status of the Project implementation, given that the UNEP/ROE Project Manager not fully assigned for the project, a full-time national project coordinator in the field, supporting the Project Manager and science coordinator for more improved and timely management, strongly recommended for the remaining time of the Project implementation, as also discussed in the MTR field mission discussions.	Moderately Satisfactory
Stakeholders participation and cooperation	Local and national stakeholders' participation and involvement to the project and biosphere reserve related activities found as constructive and progressive, with a good cooperation opportunities between state agencies,	Moderately Satisfactory

	local governments, academic institutions and NGOs, but needs improvements in cooperation, knowledge management and communication activities, as observed in the MTR field mission discussions.	
Responsiveness to human rights and gender equity	Project focus on the improvement of the environmental-natural conditions for a healthy environment while developing a radio-ecological research and monitoring structure, which is also an issue of improving conditions to live in peace and healthy environment, which is a basic human right. Progress in the project implementation and achievement of outputs observed to have positive impacts, especially on women and youth in the neighboring settlements. The project has a high level of active involvement of women in all stages of the relevant activities and improved expertise, especially observed in the local office of the Biosphere Reserve at Ivankiv. Also a reasonable level of participation and involvement of women observed in the field visit discussion, as mentioned and confirmed by two women senior manager, the mayor of Pryborsk, and Deputy Head of the Ivankiv Regional Council. Almost 55-60% of the local population of the neighbouring settlements mentioned as women, by the local administrators met in the field, and same ratio for apply for women recruited in the services for Reserve's Local Office, in expert and administrative positions.	Satisfactory
Country ownership and driven-ness	Country ownership for the Project and the improvement of the supporting activities observed as secured and progressing with the presidential decree on the establishment of the CREBR, as well as the assignment of the previous Head of Agency in higher positions in central government, and increasing international cooperation and (cash and in-kind) funds provided for the research and operational activities in ChEZ and for the Reserve.	Satisfactory
Communication and public awareness	SAUEZM conduct various community outreach, countrywide and international level communication and raising awareness activities, mainly targeting children & youth in the region and countrywide, in addition to the general communication activities of SAUEZM on ChEZ and the Reserve. These include photo exhibitions, short documentary and promotional films, printing books and informative materials for kids, several competitions in schools, etc., as well as the Project, Reserve and SAUEZM websites (chornobyl-gef.com, zapovidnyk.org.ua, dazv.gov.ua) and scientific journals published by SAUEZM and the cooperating research institutions	Satisfactory
OVERALL RATING		Moderately Satisfactory

The main **conclusions** of the Mid-Term Review process, considering the initial review questions and key findings, can be summarized as below:

- ***Regard of project activities to conserving, enhancing and managing of carbon stock and the extent of biodiversity benefits being demonstrated in Chornobyl***

The project, having scientific research based main components, also complementing the national interest and policy on the improvement of the biodiversity conservation and carbon management this unique area, as an important part of the international efforts of the GoU on the management and conservation of the zone.

As the first project on radioecology focus, funded by the GEF, it also has an important position by means of developing lessons, guidance and methodologies both for the greater Exclusion Zone area and some other similar landscapes, especially the ones highly affected or threatened by either radioactivity or other toxic, pollutant materials in the world.

In this regard, improvements in the capacities of SAUEZM and its national partners, supporting their compliance with relevant international standards for carbon management and radioecology research and monitoring infrastructure and establishing the institutional and methodological setting for all, especially carbon management. This is an achievable condition with the improvement of the existing technical capacity, knowledge management, infobase and developing efficient management and operations structures, also considering the recommendations listed in this Report.

- ***Likelines of the project's establishment of a research and environmental protection centre to improve monitoring and research of the ChEZ***

Establishing a Research and Environmental Protection Centre is one of the main outcomes of the project, which was seen as an important condition of the active management and monitoring of the radioecological, biodiversity and carbon related operations, as well as sustaining and enhancing the project results after implementation.

In the implementation process of the project, the idea of operating a cooperation structure, instead of an institutional body, regarding the existence and active operation of cooperating institutions CCNSRWR, CREBRO and Eco-Center, raised and considered as a more efficient, functional and cost-effective solution. This proposal found feasible and convenient in the MTR discussions, as a coordination unit under the CREBRO, operating in cooperation with CCNSRWR, Eco-Center and other institutions represented in SC and Technical Committees.,

The operational and technical structure of the CREBRO officially defined in detail by the SAUEZM, currently with almost 150 staff and a targeting 600 staff in different technical, field and administrative positions, located in the central office, field office and in the field operations. When CCNSRWR added to this capacity, it increases both by quality and quantity, and technically covers the function proposed with the REPC in the project document.

Also, such a model have the potential to create an opportunity to enhance and improve cooperation and capacities of the key institutions involved in the project implementation and research activities, and transform the Steering and Technical Committees as an institutional part of this coordination structure.

- ***Support of the project activities to the central and local government to better manage natural resources and carbon stocks within and around the ChEZ***

The Project, treated as a part of the international efforts for the management of ChEZ rather than a standalone project, from the GoU –SAUEZM side, providing the complementing support to both the GoU and the scientific community dealing with ChEZ, to improve the work on radio-ecology and carbon management in this unique site and research field.

The project and the relevant activities implemented at the central government level only. Whereas, the involvement of local governments and NGOs indirectly involved to the process, a public and institutional cooperation structure, such as working groups or committees organised by the proposed coordination unit, will be functional for better management .

In this point, the main issue is the using and transforming the scientific information collected and compiled from the site into the policy and community based activities, local administration operations. This has to go beyond public awareness raising with some informative activities, but incorporating the results and lessons learned to the national and regional strategies and legislation, and improve the management structures benefiting from field expertise on the carbon management and nature conservation.

- ***Extent and ways the project considered an important initiative for the management and the protection of the Chornobyl Exclusion Zone (ChEZ), by the targeted communities, the Government partners, and the financial institutions***

Local administrations in the neighbouring areas of ChEZ, academic community and related national NGOs, work in good cooperation with the SAUEZM, and partially involve in the project activities as observed in the MTR field mission meetings with the local stakeholders. For example, operation and maintenance of the Field Office of the Reserve supported by the Ivankiv Regional Council, and Council cooperate in the dissemination of information especially in the community based communication and outreach activities, as well as improving the social and technical infrastructure of the region. This is a result of the significant work of SAUEZM and CREBRO, but still need some more informing and awareness of the local and national NGOs about the project progress and outputs

The project, as mentioned above, considered as a key component of the international efforts of the GoU for the conservation of the cultural and biodiversity values of ChEZ, by both the SAUEZM and the scientific community involved to the project. For this aim, the SAUEZM cooperating with international and bilateral organisations (especially with Belarus), bilateral funding agencies, as well as the local institutions, science community and NGOs for a better management and improvement of the potentials of ChEZ.

As a reflection of this framework, the project operates as a co-financing for the other activities conducted from external funds, and provides conditional support for activities complementing the project outputs. So, there is a need of timely release of project funds for the succesful implementation of the project activities.

Additionally, the project and the proposed results observed to complement with the small and medium scale funding projects, such as UNDP-GEF SGP and some EU country funded research (by UK, FR, etc.), and have potentials for future phases for the project especially in community based projects, which the scientific research results and recommendations can be transformed and disseminated to public.

- **Effective measuring of progress with implementation of a Monitoring and Evaluation system**

Monitoring and evaluation of the project reviewed in two levels. The first is the monitoring of progress in project implementation defined as Component 4 in the Project Document and the second is the monitoring system proposed with the project under Component 1

The delayed start of the Project due to the political and administrative changes found to affect the implementation of the Project activities and establishing an efficient monitoring and reporting system. In addition to this delay, changes in the project financial operation system of UNEP affected timely financial management and reporting.

The main tool for an effective monitoring of progress is the progress reports and steering committee meetings. Both seem not fully comply with the proposed performance, although quality of PIRs improved but SC and TC meetings not organised as required. So, earliest organisation of SC and TC meetings with extended agendas are crucial for the project progress.

As the second level of monitoring topic, the proposed monitoring and evaluation system could not be developed, due to the incomplete scientific research as of the MTR date. Based on the information provided from the science coordinator and the research teams, as well as the SAUEZM experts, establishing such a system is possible, but needs the successful and reliable completion of the research process and transfer of the information to the SAUEZM. In this topic, the SAUEZM need to improve its capacity on monitoring and evaluation, both on site and operational issues, and for this need to develop an M&E infrastructure in line with the international methods and standards, in the remaining time of the project implementation.

Recommendations

1. Management

- **Establishing a coordination unit under the CREBRO**, acting as the REPC proposed in the project, in cooperation with CCNSRWR, Eco-Center and other institutions represented in SC and TC.
- **Recruitment of a national coordinator for the remaining period of the Project implementation**, who will be responsible for the implementation of the workplan and coordination between UNEP ROE, SAUEZM, Science coordinator, SC, TC and the stakeholders. Such a position was also defined in the Project document and budgeted as National Coordinator.
- **A no-cost extension for up to 15 months**, considering the need for the qualified completion of the site-specific research (instead of using the general models for carbon management, etc.) and interconnected activities, such as the scientific research inputs to management planning of the reserve, development and implementation of a monitoring and decision support system, as discussed in the MTR group discussions,
- **Organisation of periodical (monthly) Project progress update (online) meetings** for sharing technical and financial information by UNEP/ROE Project Management and SAUEZM Project team, with each other, complementing the SC and TC meetings organised once in a year and strengthening the communication for better management.
- **Capacity enhancement activities to improve the institutional structure of the SAUEZM and the Reserve**, such as seminars on different topics (like integrated management, knowledge management, based on lessons learned and best practices in similar cases in the world, under Component 3 of the Project.

2. Technical

- **Updating the Project results framework** considering the recommendations in the Theory of Change section of this MTR report, and **an updated workplan and detailed monitoring plan for the remaining time of the project** revising the inconsistencies in the activity level definitions, comparing with the official Project document, After this revision and approval by SC, all reports and relevant project documentation should use this content.
- **Conducting a periodical socio-economic survey** in the ChEZ neighbouring areas of Ivankiv and Zhytomyr districts will be beneficial to update the social and economic status of the region, and define activities for the dissemination of the Project results and further improvement of the management plan and proposed impacts from the project especially in social dimension, as referred in Output 2.1. in Project Results Framework.
- **Periodical updates for informing the local governments and all relevant local and national NGOs** involved in the nature conservation, radioecology and environmental protection issues and the ChEZ area, on the progress in the Project achievements and outputs, and public activities, via all communication media (website, social media, TV, etc.) strongly recommended. For this, **preparing a communication plan** will be beneficial

- **Developing an open access database for ChEZ and Reserve**, as a knowledge base especially for further research and information dissemination to public and interested institutions, as a part of the proposed monitoring system referred in Outcome 1 indicators, as well as a knowledgebase for learning and dissemination referred in Outcome 3.

1. INTRODUCTION

Mid-Term Reviews (MTR) of GEF funded projects, are undertaken approximately half way through the project implementation, to analyze whether the project is on track, what problems or challenges the project is encountering, and what corrective actions are required, in line with the relevant GEF and Implementing Agency evaluation guidelines.

The MTR assess project performance to date, in terms of relevance, effectiveness and efficiency, and determine the likelihood of the project achieving its intended outcomes, including their sustainability; also address a number of strategic questions that are questions of interest to GEF and the implementing/ executing agency/ies, and to which the project is believed to be able to make a substantive contribution.

MTRs also contribute to the implementing and partnering institutions, key stakeholders and other target groups for further improvement of both ongoing project-related processes and recommendations for post-implementation strategies and relevant actions. In this regard, not only the project partners, but all institutions and experts involved in the project implementation and mostly met in the MTR process as listed in Annex 6 of this report, can be mentioned as the target audience of the review findings and recommendations.

The UN Environment Programme implements the full-sized project, “**Conserving, Enhancing and Managing Carbon Stocks and Biodiversity in the Chernobyl Exclusion Zone (ChEZ)**”, in cooperation with the Government of Ukraine. The project defined as a multi-focal area Project, in the Biodiversity (BD-1), Climate Change (CCM-5) and Land Degradation (LD-3) Focal Areas of GEF². The GEF CEO approved the project document on 12.12.2014, implementation intended to be 48 months (4 years), and completion therefore aimed for by 31.12.2018. Actual implementation started as of 16.03.2015 with the signature of the Internal Cooperation Agreement (ICA) between the implementing agency, then represented by the UN Environment Programme Division for Environmental Policy Implementation (UNEP/DEPI) and the UN Environment Programme Regional Office for Europe (UNEP/ROE)³ as executing agency on behalf of the government of the Ukraine, as requested by the latter and initially foreseen in the project document, with a proposed completion date of 31.12.2019. The project implementation process was delayed due to political instabilities in the Ukraine and other administrative issues, and the ICA was therefore extended on 17.04.2019 at a no-cost basis for 23 months to be completed by the date of 31.12.2020, and financial closure by 31 August 2021.

The total proposed budget for the project is 33,203,955 USD; as the total of the GEF allocation of 4,863,955 USD, the GoU, GFMC and UNEP co-financing with a total of 28,340,000 USD.

The project was developed consistent with the UNEP Midterm Strategy (MTS) for 2014-2017 and the biennial Programme of Work (PoW) for 2014-2015 (specifically Expected Accomplishments under the Ecosystem Management and Environmental Governance sub programmes; and, most recently, with PoW 2018-2019 Sub programme 3: Healthy and productive Ecosystems, as referred in the PIR 2019 Report.

The **project objective** is enhanced conservation and management of carbon stocks and biodiversity in forest and non-forest lands in the Chernobyl Exclusion Zone (ChEZ). **The project aims** to expand current use of the Chernobyl Exclusion Zone to encompass ecosystem values and in so doing provide ecosystem services to the benefit of local, national and international stakeholders. Project **developed as an Intervention to**; improve monitoring and research for large areas of forests, wetlands, and other habitat types and associated carbon benefits in the ChEZ; improve management of natural resources and carbon stocks within and around the ChEZ; and increase availability and access to critical information needed for decision-making for effective sustainable management of the ChEZ, which also defined as the project outcomes.

The project consists of local, national, regional and international scale activities, proposed to contribute to development and implementation of an expanded protected area network in and around the ChEZ, and accompanying management processes in the context of a governmental commitment to expand current productive uses in the ChEZ to the social, economic and environmental benefit of all stakeholders. While the central focus of the Project is the Ukrainian part of ChEZ, Belarus part, namely the Polesky Nature Reserve, involved in the preparation process and a cooperation agreement with has been signed in the early stages of the project implementation.

² Specifically: BD-1 Improve sustainability of Protected Area Systems, Outcome 1.1 Improved Management Effectiveness of existing and new protected areas; CCM-5 LULUCF: Promote conservation and enhancement of carbon stocks through sustainable management of land use, land use change and forestry, Outcome 5.1 Good management practices in LULUCF adopted both within the forestland and in the wider landscape; LD-2 Integrated Landscape Management: Reduce pressures on natural resources from competing land uses in the wider landscape, Outcome 3.2 Good management practices in the wider landscape demonstrated and adopted by relevant economic sectors.

³ In the meantime changed to UN Environment Programme Ecosystem Division and UN Environment Programme Europe Office, respectively.

2. REVIEW METHODS

A. Theory of Change at review

A Theory of Change (ToC), identifying and presenting the “pathways for driving change by the project”, not explicitly presented for the project in the initial project documents. The MTR process proposed to develop a ToC recommendation, based on the information MTR consultant proposed to collect and compile on the assessment of the level of implementation and project performance, from key stakeholders and project management, and discuss with the project management (UNEP & GoU)

Although, such a ToC development process proposed in the inception period, as requested by Project Management, the conditions in the field visit was not suitable to follow the ideal way to develop such a technical document, formally requiring more expert time and discussions with key stakeholders. Instead, MTR Consultant worked on the necessary revisions on the Results Framework, based on the findings and observations in the field visit and discussions in SAUEZM office in Kyiv, as discussed and agreed with UNEP Task Manager and UNEP/ROE Project Manager in Geneva meeting. Section IV of this report covers the recommended revisions for the Results Framework.

B. Information collection

The MTR consultant mainly used qualitative - semi constructed focus group methodology, especially for the partner and stakeholder meetings and field visits, supported by document reviews and expert discussions. An interviewees and meeting participants list provided in Annex 6.

In the first stage of the MTR process, the consultant reviewed **the project documentation and relevant written materials** provided from the UNEP Task Manager Project Manager, SAUEZM CREBRO, as well as the project informative and awareness raising materials produced by SAUEZM, and other online open sources related to the project such as websites and audio-visuals, listed in Annex 6.

There is a high number of information and different kinds of documentation on scientific, social and environmental issues related to the Chornobyl Accident in 1986 and ChEZ, as a topic of international interest, that is almost impossible to review all in a relatively limited time and expertise. This issue solved practically by contacting and discussions with the key experts involved in the preliminary scientific research and the project document preparation.

Identification of interested parties and potential respondents, for the provision of the necessary information identified based on the stakeholder analysis conducted in the project development process and reflected to the project document, and preliminary discussions with the UNEP Project Manager and Task Manager. As also provided in the MTR Inception Report, potential respondents compiled under six groups and at least one respondent from each group met in the field visit, organized by the CREBRO.

Face to face interviews, conducted with the selected key stakeholders, upon their availability, interest and acceptance in the field visit to Kyiv, as listed in Annex 2.

Skype interviews conducted with the UNEP Project Manager Mr. Mahir Aliyev and Acting Task Manager Mr. Ulrich Piest, before the field visit on the Inception Report and MTR schedule, with former Task Manager Mrs. Marieta Sakalian and Mr. David Laroche, PPG Consultant, after the field visit, to discuss the project preparation and initial implementation process.

A continuous **e-mail communication** established with both UNEP Team in Geneva, Project Science Coordinator Dr. Zibtsev, SAUEZM Project Team, and other relevant officers and consultants before and after the field visit, to receive the necessary information.

Site visit to Kyiv, which also covers the field visit to ChEZ, through Ivankiv, Chornobyl, Pripjat, organized and conducted as a one day trip, with the participation of SAUEZM Project Team and relevant experts, as scheduled. In the visit, meetings and interviews with local stakeholders, namely the representatives of the Ivankiv District Regional Council, mayor of Pryborsk City, founder of pripjat.com NGO, conducted and information on the social and economic linkages to the project discussed with the participants.

A total of three **group meetings** conducted in the MTR process. The first one is the project team meeting to inform the project team on the aim and methodology of the MTR, discuss the MTR schedule and the status of the project

implementation, with the participation of the SAUEZM project team, moderated by Dr. Ziptsev, Science Coordinator, at the CREBRO in Kyiv. Second one is the debriefing of the SAUEZM Head of Agency and the project team, at the end day of the field visit, on the preliminary findings and discuss on these findings. The third meeting was the debriefing meeting in UNEP Geneva office, with the participation of the MTR Consultant, Task Manager, Acting Task Manager and Project Manager.

C. Gender considerations

MTR considered gender issue in the project in two levels. The first is the gender balance in the people working for the project, including the staff at support services, cooperating stakeholders and partners, and the second is the same for the target groups in the surrounding/ neighboring areas.

D. Ethics and human rights issues

The project has a special condition, as the project region Chornobyl Exclusion Zone is a no-human zone due to the official restrictions, except the authorized technicians working at the NPP campus and officially allowed visitors. This condition is because of the catastrophic accident in Chornobyl NPP in 1986, which is also an important case of threat to right to live in peace and healthy environment, the discussion of which is out of the context of this MTR.

E. Constraints on the review process

In general, there are three main possible constraints in similar reviews. These are time, resources (funds, documents, number of consultants/experts, etc.) and availability of the respondents, partners and/or the experts.

In this MTR, the main constraint could be noted as allocating one international MTR expert for such a specific project, without support of a national expert, by means of conducting preliminary research on the project related documents, especially the ones in Ukrainian language. But, the possible impacts of this potential constraint minimised with the close communication and support of the science coordinator and the CREBRO Expert Team, especially in the field visits of the MTR Process.

3. THE PROJECT

A. Context

The project aims to expand current use of the Chornobyl Exclusion Zone to encompass ecosystem values and in so doing provide ecosystem services to the benefit of local, national and international stakeholders. Project **developed as an Intervention to**; improve monitoring and research for large areas of forests, wetlands, and other habitat types and associated carbon benefits in the ChEZ; improve management of natural resources and carbon stocks within and around the ChEZ; and increase availability and access to critical information needed for decision-making for effective sustainable management of the ChEZ, which also defined as the project outcomes.

The project consists of local, national, regional and international scale activities, proposed to contribute to development and implementation of an expanded protected area network in and around the ChEZ, and accompanying management processes in the context of a governmental commitment to expand current productive uses in the ChEZ to the social, economic and environmental benefit of all stakeholders. While the central focus of the Project is the ChEZ, officials from Belarus generally, and specifically from the Polesky Nature Reserve, were involved during project preparation. Close cooperation and joint activities with the Reserve planned during project implementation.

The State Agency for the ChEZ has exclusive control of matters related to the ChEZ. Other ministries and agencies of government that were proposed to be involved during project implementation include, but are not limited to, the State Ecological Academy (SEA), the State Environmental Investment Agency, the State Forestry Resources Agency, officials from the adjoining Drevliansky Nature Reserve, the Kyiv oblast State Administration, the Zhytomyr oblast State Administration, and the Academy of Sciences of Ukraine. With the institutional establishment of the ChEZ Biosphere Reserve through presidential decree, during project implementation, this entity became one of the key institutions for the project and the official project recipient.

The project defined as a multi-focal area Project, in the Biodiversity (BD-1), Climate Change (CCM-5) and Land Degradation (LD-3) Focal Areas of GEF. These are specifically:

- BD-1 Improve sustainability of Protected Area Systems (Outcome 1.1 Improved Management Effectiveness of existing and new protected areas)
- CCM-5 LULUCF: Promote conservation and enhancement of carbon stocks through sustainable management of land use, land use change and forestry (Outcome 5.1 Good management practices in LULUCF adopted both within the forestland and in the wider landscape)
- LD-2 Integrated Landscape Management: Reduce pressures on natural resources from competing land uses in the wider landscape (Outcome 3.2 Good management practices in the wider landscape demonstrated and adopted by relevant economic sectors.)

B. Objectives and components

The project results framework indicates three main outcomes, associated with the components of the project, and supported by a total of seven outputs:

Project Objective: Enhanced Conservation, and Management of Carbon Stocks and Biodiversity in Forest and non-Forest Lands in the Chornobyl Exclusion Zone (ChEZ), in Ukraine.

Component 1:

Outcome 1. Improved monitoring and research for large areas of forests, wetlands, and other habitat types and associated carbon benefits in the ChEZ

Output 1.1. The Research and Environmental Protection Center (REPC) established and fully functional

Output 1.2. Comprehensive assessment of the current state and trends of natural ecosystems in ChEZ

Output 1.3. Assessment of the status of ecosystem services and their values, enhancement of carbon benefits in terms of meeting LULUCF targets in the ChEZ

Component 2:

Outcome 2. Improved management of natural resources and carbon stocks within and around the ChEZ.

Output 2.1. Formal designation of the ChEZ as Biosphere Reserve for enhancing conservation and management of carbon stocks

Output 2.2. Measures developed to ensure financial and institutional sustainability of multi-sector conservation programs

Component 3:

Outcome 3. Increased availability and access to critical information needed for decision-making for effective sustainable management of the ChEZ.

Output 3.1. A set of lessons learned and practical recommendations on habitat rehabilitation, carbon stocks management and biodiversity conservation developed and published) (as in ProDoc)

Output 3.2. Knowledge sharing at national and international level and Training programme field tested and available for replication.)

C. Stakeholders

Project document provides a detailed stakeholder analysis for the project, indicating the responsibilities and proposed roles in the projects. Based on this analysis, MTR compiled the stakeholders in six main groups, based on the nature of the project, proposed level of involvement and their roles in the project, as detailed in the MTR Inception report:

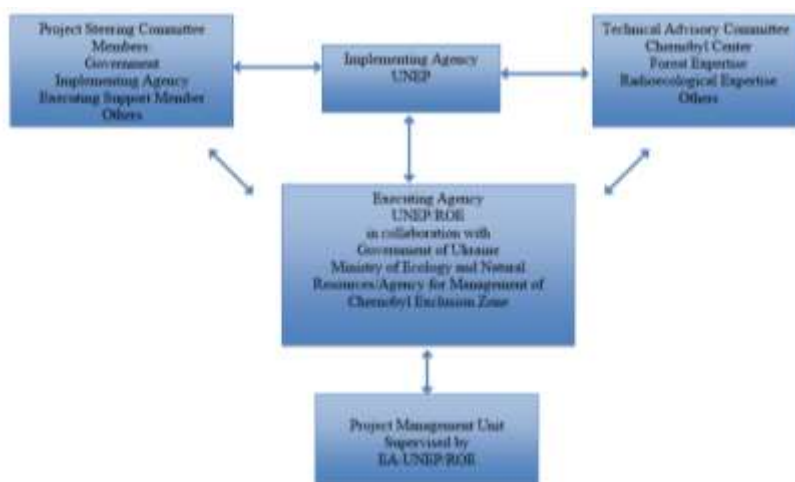
- 1. Central government institutions** (Level of influence: High – Authority for the management)
- 2. Local governments and communities** (Level of influence: Medium)
- 3. Academia and research institutions** (Level of influence: High – Infobase via scientific information and research)
- 4. International organizations, other country/ bilateral institutions** (Level of influence: Medium – Co-financing and cooperation opportunities)
- 5. Local and national NGOs and professional organizations,** (Level of influence: Medium)
- 6. Executing and implementing partners Government of Ukraine and UN Environment Programme** (Level of influence: High – key institutions for Implementation, management and sustainability)

D. Project implementation structure and partners

The UN Environment Programme Ecosystems Division implements the full-sized project, “**Conserving, Enhancing and Managing Carbon Stocks and Biodiversity in the Chornobyl Exclusion Zone (ChEZ)**”, executed by its Europe Regional Office (UNEP ROE), in cooperation with the Government of Ukraine, represented by the State Agency of Ukraine on Exclusion Zone Management (SAUEZM) under the Ministry of Ecology and Natural Resources of Ukraine. These two parties signed a Memorandum for the implementation of the project, covering the period from February 2015 to December 2020. The execution modality of the project is much different than the usual GEF project implementation modalities where governments of the recipient institutions act as the executing partner, and the UN organisations as implementing agencies. In this project, UNEP handles both roles.

Project steering committee, chaired by the Head of SAUEZM, and composed of the representatives from UNEP ROE, Ministry of Ecology and Natural Resources, SAUEZM, CCNSRWR, National University of Bioresources and Natural Resources of Ukraine (represented by the Project Science Coordinator). Key partners in the implementation are the institutions represented in the Steering Committee and the Technical Advisory Committee.

Figure 1: Project Organogram (Project Document p.61)



E. Changes in design during implementation

- Project implementation on the ground started by late 2016 with delay, due to the political and administrative problems occurred in the preparation and implementation processes, as detailed in previous sections. Considering this issue, project was given a no-cost extension of 23 Months, as mentioned in the project reports.
- Project work plan and budget updates prepared by the executing partner, discussed and updated in the Steering Committee Meetings, and used in line with the relevant UNEP and GEF procedures.

F. Project financing

- The GEF share in project funding is 4,863,955 USD, and the total co-financing proposed as 28,340,000 USD in the project document, with 17,390,000 USD cash and remaining 10,950,000 USD in-kind from GoU, UNEP and Global Fire Monitoring Center, as detailed in Annex 3.
- The project total (cumulative) expenditure from GEF funds, as of 31 December 2019 reported as 3,540,756 USD as per UNEP Half-Yearly Expenditure Statement and Unliquidated Obligations Report for 31 December 2019, with a delivery rate of 72,8 %. The co-financing of GoU as a cumulative of 20,027,089 USD, with a delivery rate of 71,5 % as of 31 December 2019.
- Also there are other in-kind and cash contributions from cooperating scientific institutions and other external project funding from OSCE, US Forestry Service, Japan SATREP Fund and CCNSRWR.
- Financial reports prepared in UNEP Financial Operations System (UMOJA) budget lines, but not linking to project outcome and output level budget and expenditure tables. Also inconsistency in total expenditure figures exists between PIR 2019 and Financial Report by 31.12.2018; and between the Financial Reports of December 2018 and December 2019 in that need to be verified and fixed with an audit report. Total disbursement presented in the PIR of June 2019, as almost 3,5 million USD and expenditure reported as almost 2,1 million USD, which is different from the amounts reported by UNEP in 2018 financial report.

Table 1. Expenditure by Outcome/Output (All figures as USD)			
UNEP/UMOJA Budget Line	Estimated cost at design*	Actual Cost/ expenditure	Expenditure ratio (actual/planned)
PROJECT PERSONNEL COMPONENT	1,145,123	358,003	31,26
1100 - Project Personnel	580,801	203,661	35,07
1200 - Consultants	355,822	19,751	5,55
1300 - Administrative Support	173,432	-	0,00
1600 - Travel on Official Business	35,068	134,591	383,80
SUB-CONTRACT COMPONENT	3,038,604	3,144,318	103,48
2200- Sub-Contracts (MoUs/LAs for non-profit support)	3,038,604	3,144,318	103,48
TRAINING COMPONENT	84,811	0	0,00
3300 – Meetings/ Conferences	84,811	0	0,00
EQUIPMENT & PREMISES COMPONENT	448,898	38,435	8,56
4100 –Office Supplies	10,000	70	0,70
4200 – Non-expandible equipment (over 10,000 USD each)	410,000	38.184	9,31
4300 – Premises (rent, maintenance, etc.)	28,898	181	0,63
MISCELLANEOUS COMPONENT	146,519	0	0,00
5200 – Reporting costs	-	-	
5300 - Sundry	6,519	0	0,00
5500 - Evaluation	140,000	0	0,00
TOTAL COSTS	4,863,955	3,540,756	72,80
Source: UNEP Half-Yearly Expenditure Statement and Unliquidated Obligations Report for 31 December 2019			
* “Total Project Budget” column in Financial Report			
** Latest figures used for this table is from above referred source report, as officially confirmed by UNEP, but not verified with an audit report.			

Table 2a: Co-financing Table (US\$ 1,000)									
Co financing (Type/ Source)	UN Environment own Financing		Government		Other* (GFMC as in ProDoc)		Total		Total Disbursed
	Planned	Actual	Planned	Actual	Planned	Actual	Planned	Actual	
Grants	70		17,300	20,027			17,370		
Loans									
Credits									
Equity investments									
In-kind support	230		10,700		20		10,950		
Totals	300		28,000	20,027	20				

* This refers to contributions mobilized for the project from other multilateral agencies, bilateral development cooperation agencies, NGOs, the private sector and beneficiaries.

Table 2b: Other co-financing information provided from project partners and experts (in US\$) *

Donor	Project	Years	Funds *	Comments
OSCE	Assessment of Environmental risks in the Exclusion Zone along the Ukrainian and Belorussian borders	2016-2018	140 000	Trans border co-operation on fires
United State Forest Service	Increasing capacity of fire fighting in the Chornobyl Exclusion Zone	2016-2018	240 000	Detection system (5), trainings, interagency co-operation, protective closes
JST-SATREPS	Strengthening of the Environmental Radiation Control and Legislative Basis for the Environmental Remediation of Radioactively Contaminated Sites Enable safe and effective management of ChEZ	2016-2021	-	-

* Information provided from Project Science Coordinator Dr. Sergiy Zibtsev and Field Expert Dr. Dmitri Holiaka. Official financial information of the listed sources could not be provided and verified in the MTR process.

4. THEORY OF CHANGE

A Theory of Change (ToC), identifying and presenting the “pathways for driving change by the project”, not explicitly presented for the project in the initial project documents. The MTR process proposed to develop a ToC recommendation, based on the information MTR consultant proposed to collect and compile on the assessment of the level of implementation and project performance, from key stakeholders and project management, and discuss with the project management (UNEP & GoU)

Although, such a ToC development process proposed in the inception period, as requested by Project Management, the conditions in the field visit was not suitable to follow the ideal way to develop such a technical document, formally requiring more expert time and discussions with key stakeholders. Instead, MTR Consultant worked on the necessary revisions on the Results Framework, based on the findings and observations in the field visit and discussions in SAUEZM office in Kyiv, as discussed and agreed with UNEP Task Manager and UNEP/ROE Project Manager in Geneva meeting.

Below table presents the initial results framework information, mainly compiled from the Project Document and PIF reports as the first column and recommended revisions for the outcomes and outputs as the second (changes indicated in red).

Table 3.: Review of Results Framework			
Results hierarchy derived from ProDoc and PIF Reports		Recommended Revisions by MTR consultant	
Project Objective: Enhanced Conservation, and Management of Carbon Stocks and Biodiversity in Forest and non-Forest Lands in the Chernobyl Exclusion Zone (ChEZ), in Ukraine.		Enhanced Conservation and Management of Biodiversity and Carbon Stocks in the Chernobyl Exclusion Zone (ChEZ)	
Indicators	Targets	Indicators	Targets
1. Number of hectares declared as Biosphere Reserve with formalized links to Polesky Nature Reserve .	1. Presidential Decree upgrading the ChEZ to Biosphere Reserve (230,000 ha) status expected by mid-year 3;	1. Number of hectares declared as Biosphere Reserve with formalized links to Polesky Nature Reserve .	1. Presidential Decree upgrading the ChEZ to Biosphere Reserve (230,000 ha) status expected by mid-year 3;
2. A formally adopted Protected Area Management Plan for the ChEZ	2. By beginning of year 4 sustainable use activities through development and implementation of a “Triad Approach” has begun;	2. A formally adopted Protected Area Management Plan for the ChEZ	2. By beginning of year 4 sustainable use activities through development and implementation of a “Triad Approach” has begun;
3. Formally established and operational Research and Environmental Protection Coordination and Cooperation Structure/ Institution (REPC)	3. Results of the triad approach are apparent and are quantified by the end of year 4.	3. Formally established and operational ChEZ Research and Environmental Protection Coordination Center (REPC)	3. Results of the triad approach are apparent and are quantified by the end of year 4.
	4. At end of year 2/mid-year 3 a sustainable management plan has been developed for a 230,000 ha Biosphere Reserve , with formalized links to Polesky Nature Reserve .		4. At end of year 2/mid-year 3 a sustainable management plan has been developed for a 230,000 ha Biosphere Reserve , with formalized links to Polesky Nature Reserve .
	5. End of year 4 the Center is fully functional with full complement of staff, approved budget, and agreed upon research agenda.		5. End of year 4 the Coordination Center is fully functional with full complement of staff, approved budget, and agreed upon research agenda.
	6. A collaborative transboundary international program on radioecological research, monitoring and management of carbon stocks		6. A collaborative transboundary international program on radioecological research, monitoring and

	in forest and non-forest lands, and protected areas management is initiated with the Polessky State Reserve in Belarus.		management of carbon stocks and protected areas management is initiated in cooperation with the Polessky State Reserve in Belarus.
Outcomes	Outputs	Outcomes	Outputs
<p>1. Improved monitoring and research for large areas of forests, wetlands, and other habitat types and associated carbon benefits in the ChEZ</p> <p>Targets:</p> <p>1. Center based activities (e.g. publishing and making available monitoring data) begin by the end of year 3.</p> <p>2. End of year 3, linkages created with relevant international agreements and platforms (e.g. CBD, Ramsar, CCD).</p>	<p>1.1. The REPC established and fully functional</p> <p>Targets:</p> <p>1. 3 Mill annual budget allocation for the management of the Biosphere reserve by project end.</p> <p>2. By end of year 3 the REPC is fully staffed – up to 300 jobs created</p> <p>3. Required equipment purchased and operational;</p> <p>4. Implementation of related activities begins end year</p> <p>1.2. Comprehensive assessment of the current state and trends of natural ecosystems in ChEZ</p> <p>Targets:</p> <p>1. Programme for, targeted radioecological and sustainable forest and wetlands management research launched by beginning of year 3;</p> <p>2. A study of the impact of radioactivity related factors on selected habitats, species and populations of global importance published by end of year 4;</p> <p>3. Summary report of socio-economic benefits derived to date at end of year 4</p> <p>1.3. Assessment of the status of ecosystem services and their values, enhancement of carbon benefits in terms of meeting LULUCF targets in the ChEZ</p> <p>Targets:</p> <p>1. Assessment completed by the end of year 3 and forwarded to government:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> An assessment of the status and pattern of rehabilitation processes of forest and wetland habitats, and 	<p>1. Improved monitoring and research for large areas of forests, wetlands, and other habitat types and associated carbon benefits in the ChEZ</p> <p>Targets:</p> <p>1. Center based activities (e.g. publishing and making available monitoring data) begin by the end of year 3.</p> <p>2. End of year 3, linkages created with relevant international agreements and platforms (e.g. CBD, Ramsar, CCD).</p>	<p>1.1. The REPC established and fully functional</p> <p>Targets:</p> <p>1. 3 Mill annual budget allocation for the management of the Biosphere reserve</p> <p>2. The REPC is fully equipped, functional and staffed with up to 300 jobs</p> <p>4. Activities in line with the annual activity/research and outreach / communication plans</p> <p>1.2. Comprehensive assessment of the current state and trends of ecosystems in ChEZ</p> <p>Targets:</p> <p>1. Research Programme for targeted radioecological and sustainable forest and wetlands management</p> <p>2. A study of the impact of radioactivity related factors on selected habitats, species and populations of global importance</p> <p>3. Summary report of socio-economic benefits derived to date</p> <p>1.3. Assessment of the status of ecosystem services and their values, enhancement of carbon benefits in terms of meeting LULUCF targets in the ChEZ</p> <p>Targets:</p> <p>1. Assessment completed by the end of year 3 and forwarded to government:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> An assessment of the status and pattern of rehabilitation processes of forest and

	<p>evaluation of their role in terms of CC mitigation and meeting LULUCF targets completed by mid- year 3;</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Appropriate sustainable habitat management measures for the rehabilitation of Forests, Wetlands and Marshlands contributing to the conservation and enhancement of carbon stocks and meeting LULUCF targets developed by end of year 3. • A study of the ongoing natural succession processes in the various habitat types affected by radiation in the ChEZ completed and published by mid-year- year 3; • A fire monitoring system established within the ChEZ by end if year 3; • Peer reviewed research publications and monitoring results available end of year 4. 		<p>wetland habitats, and evaluation of their role in terms of CC mitigation and meeting LULUCF targets completed by mid- year 3;</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Appropriate sustainable habitat management measures for the rehabilitation of Forests, Wetlands and Marshlands contributing to the conservation and enhancement of carbon stocks and meeting LULUCF targets developed by end of year 3. • A study of the ongoing natural succession processes in the various habitat types affected by radiation in the ChEZ completed and published by mid-year- year 3; • A fire monitoring system established within the ChEZ by end if year 3; • Peer reviewed research publications and monitoring results available end of year 4.
<p>2. Improved management of natural resources and carbon stocks within and around the ChEZ.</p> <p>Targets:</p> <p>1. At end of year 2 a sustainable management plan has been developed for a 230,000 ha Biosphere Reserve, with formalized links to Polesky Nature Reserve, and submitted to government for approval.</p> <p>2. PA management structure in place end year 3;</p> <p>3. Records or public involvement contain gender-segregated data.</p>	<p>2.1. The ChEZ is upgraded to the status of Protected Area network to enhance the conservation and management of carbon stocks and secure the long-term basis for appropriate management, monitoring and research for large areas of forests, wetlands, and other habitat types</p> <p><i>ProDoc: Formal designation of the ChEZ as Biosphere Reserve for enhancing conservation and management of carbon stocks;</i></p> <p>Targets:</p> <p>1. Presidential Decree upgrading the ChEZ to Biosphere Reserve status expected by mid- year 3;</p> <p>2. Carbon stocks inventory complete end year 2;</p> <p>3. Comprehensive ecological and socioeconomic surveys are</p>	<p>2. Improved management of natural resources and carbon stocks within and around the ChEZ.</p> <p>Targets:</p> <p>1. At end of year 2 a sustainable management plan has been developed for a 230,000 ha Biosphere Reserve, with formalized links to Polesky Nature Reserve, and submitted to government for approval.</p> <p>2. PA management structure in place end year 3;</p> <p>3. Records or public involvement contain gender-segregated data.</p>	<p>2.1. Formal designation of the ChEZ as Biosphere Reserve for enhancing conservation and management of carbon stocks (as in Project Document)</p> <p>Targets:</p> <p>1. Presidential Decree upgrading the ChEZ to Biosphere Reserve status expected by mid- year 3;</p> <p>2. Carbon stocks inventory complete end year 2;</p> <p>3. Comprehensive ecological and socioeconomic surveys are conducted by end of years 2 and 4 containing gender segregated data by end of year 3.</p> <p>4. Final comprehensive PA management plan by mid-year 3.</p>

	<p>conducted by end of years 2 and 4 containing gender segregated data by end of year 3.</p> <p>4. Final comprehensive PA management plan by mid-year 3.</p>		
	<p>2.2. Measures developed to ensure financial and institutional sustainability of multi-sector conservation programs.</p> <p>Targets:</p> <p>1. A protected area management structure, an initial core team of staff, equipment and associated professional capacity on place by end of 3.</p> <p>2. By end of year 3 budget for the PA management formally part of approved MENR annual budget.</p> <p>3. Up to 300 jobs created</p>		<p>2.2. Measures developed to ensure financial and institutional sustainability of multi-sector conservation programs.</p> <p>Targets:</p> <p>1. A protected area management structure, an initial core team of staff, equipment and associated professional capacity on place by end of 3.</p> <p>2. By end of year 3 budget for the PA management formally part of approved MENR annual budget.</p> <p>3. Up to 300 jobs created</p>
<p>3. Increased availability and access to critical information needed for decision-making for effective sustainable management of the ChEZ.</p> <p>Targets:</p> <p>1. By end of year 4 comprehensive data base completed and located in the REPC;</p> <p>2. Repositories in place and access protocols and data sharing agreements finalized by end of year 4.</p>	<p>3.1. A set of lessons learned and practical recommendations developed and published on habitat rehabilitation, carbon stocks management and biodiversity conservation emerged from prior and ongoing work in the ChEZ, and applicable to similar situations</p> <p><i>(ProDoc: A set of lessons learned and practical recommendations on habitat rehabilitation, carbon stocks management and biodiversity conservation developed and published)</i></p> <p>Targets:</p> <p>1. Written summaries of project outputs of lessons learned and dissemination expanded upon at end of year 4</p> <p>2. By end of years 3, and 4 reports developed for ongoing work; end of year 4 Final Report of lessons learned and recommendations.</p>		<p>3.1. A set of lessons learned and practical recommendations developed and published on habitat rehabilitation, carbon stocks management and biodiversity conservation emerged from prior and ongoing work in the ChEZ, and applicable to similar situations</p> <p>Targets:</p> <p>1. Written summaries of project outputs of lessons learned and dissemination expanded upon at end of year 4</p> <p>2. By end of years 3, and 4 reports developed for ongoing work; end of year 4 Final Report of lessons learned and recommendations.</p>

	<p>3.2. The results are widely disseminated nationally and internationally</p> <p><i>(ProDoc: Knowledge sharing at national and international level and Training programme field tested and available for replication.)</i></p> <p>Targets:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Description of yearly distributions for all project years; 2. Trainers recruited and trained at end of year 3; 3. List of number of people trained at end of year 4; Final Report at end of year 4; 4. National education center opened at end of year 4. 	<p>3.2. Knowledge sharing at national and international level</p> <p>Targets:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Design and operate an online platform for knowledge management and information sharing. 2. Dissemination of information on the project results, lessons learned and sharing scientific information through the online portal 3. Produce/develop training materials for public and professionals to disseminate through the online portal 4. Establish a national training programme under REPCC 5. Develop a communication and community outreach strategy/ action plan (also covering the post-project period)
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5. REVIEW FINDINGS

The overall rating for the project scored as **Moderately Satisfactory**

Taking the framework detailed in the Inception Report as the basis for the Review, MTR Consultant received inputs from six main stakeholder groups, as defined in the above methodology parts of this MTR Report, and the Inception Report in detail. These are briefly; the central government institutions, academic institutions, local governments and ex-residents, International and bilateral organisations, local and national NGOs and professional organizations, and the project partners. Additionally, Skype conferences conducted with the consultant who prepared the PPG document and actively involved in the initial phases of preparation and implementation, and former Task Manager, as detailed in Section II of this report.

A. Strategic relevance

The Strategic Relevance of the project rated **Highly Satisfactory**.

1. Alignment to MTS and POW and the GEF strategic priorities

- The project defined as a multi-focal area Project, in the Biodiversity (BD-1), Climate Change (CCM-5) and Land Degradation (LD-3) Focal Areas of GEF, specifically;
 - BD-1 Improve sustainability of Protected Area Systems (Outcome 1.1 Improved Management Effectiveness of existing and new protected areas)
 - CCM-5 LULUCF: Promote conservation and enhancement of carbon stocks through sustainable management of land use, land use change and forestry (Outcome 5.1 Good management practices in LULUCF adopted both within the forestland and in the wider landscape)
 - LD-2 Integrated Landscape Management: Reduce pressures on natural resources from competing land uses in the wider landscape (Outcome 3.2 Good management practices in the wider landscape demonstrated and adopted by relevant economic sectors.)
- As indicated in the PIR 2019, also proposed to contribute to the achievement of:
 - Sustainable Development Goal 15 – Protect, restore and promote sustainable use of terrestrial ecosystems, sustainably manage forests, combat desertification, and halt and reverse land degradation and halt biodiversity loss. (Targets 15.1./ 15.1.1., 15.2.1.)
 - UN Environment Subprogramme 3 Healthy and productive ecosystems, defined in PoW 2018-19, (EA (a) The health and productivity of marine, freshwater and terrestrial ecosystems are institutionalized in education, monitoring and cross-sector and transboundary collaboration frameworks at the national and international levels / Indicator (i) Increase in the number of countries and transboundary collaboration frameworks that have made progress to monitor and maintain the health and productivity of marine and terrestrial ecosystems / Indicator (ii) Increase in the number of countries and transboundary collaboration frameworks that demonstrate enhanced knowledge of the value and role of ecosystem services
- The Project developed and implemented with an approach different than other GEF Projects, with a relatively higher level of scientific focus, and different management structure, which UNEP acts in both implementing and executing sides, due to extraordinary conditions.

2. Relevance to regional, sub-regional and national environmental priorities

- The Project considered as an important part of the international efforts of the Government of Ukraine on management of ChEZ and the Reserve, and in line with the UNDAF Partnership Framework Area: Environment and Climate Change / Outcome 1 – Government of Ukraine adopts policy frameworks and mechanisms to ensure reversal of environmental degradation, climate change mitigation and adaptation, prevention and response to natural and man-made disasters.
- Outputs and results of the project considered as reference for the improvement of the existing legislation related to the environmental management, nature conservation and for the management of ChEZ and Biosphere Reserve, and its management practice and institutional structure.

- It is also consistent with the bilateral agreement with Belarus, on cooperation between the Chornobyl Radiation and Ecological Biosphere Reserve and Polissia State Radiation and Ecological Reserve, as well as research and nature conservation priorities of EU.

B. Quality of project design

Scored as **Satisfactory**

The design of the project complies with the requirements of GEF by content and structure, in general. Project document covers the required sections; Project Identification, Intervention Strategy, Institutional Framework/ Implementation Arrangements, Stakeholder Participation, Monitoring and Evaluation Plan and Project Finance and Budget sections, followed by 14 appendices, fulfilling the requirements of a GEF Project Document

By means of the contents, project focus on a specific geographical area, with global importance in environmental, scientific and political concerns, and high potential for a model of a post-disaster nature conservation and protected area management.

Strength of the project design, can be mentioned as the detailed background information, stakeholder and risk analysis, monitoring and evaluation plan (linking with key deliverables and benchmarking), as the key elements of a well structured baseline and action plan, as well as a reflection of the importance of the project region and the context. Also, the project document wording is concise, well structured, defining the baseline situation, requirements and proposed actions well.

By means of timeframe, the PIF submission was on September 2011, PPG Approval January 2012, and CEO Endorsement on November 2014, and project officially started on March 2015. This indicates a process of 4 years between project identification and start of implementation. As reported in the PIR, and confirmed in MTR discussions, the political instability in the country had impacts on the implementation of the project, an extension requested and approved for an additional of 23 Months. Such a long period of time and delays could have a negative impact in the implementation process, especially in conducting the activities and achieving the proposed outputs. But, as understood from the project reports and MTR discussions, considering the risk analysis of the project, and conducting the proposed activities in this analysis with a cooperative approach supported improvements in implementation.

Main issues MTR consultant observed in the review of the Results framework tables of the approved Project Document (Appendix 4), PIRs and Progress Reports, provided from the Task Manager, can be listed as follows:

- The design of the project results framework found to have a concise, realistic and achievable content, regarding the importance of the project implementation site, both for global and national environmental benefits, the priorities and goals identified in the national strategy and action plans on conservation, improvement and restoration of disturbed ecosystems, and development of new and expanded protected areas, etc. as detailed in the project document⁴. Although defined indicators and their means of verification comply with the SMART criteria, and mostly relevant to measure the associated outcomes and outputs, revisions considering the status of implementation by MTR date, recommended in the Results Framework in Section IV of this report.
- The route for achieving the proposed objective “enhanced conservation and management of carbon stocks and biodiversity in forest and non-forest lands in the ChEZ” reflected as improvement of the institutional and operational capacities, with the establishment and active operation of the proposed REPC and Biosphere Reserve, supported with an improved and well-managed administrative, research (including data collection and knowledge management), monitoring and public relations-communication structure. This structure also proposed to facilitate the involvement of non-governmental stakeholders, including research institutions, general public in Ukraine, as well as efficient and operational trans-boundary cooperation with Belarus (Polesky) specifically.
- Inconsistencies exist in the expressions of some of the outputs in the relevant parts of these reports. For example, Output 2.1. defined as “Formal designation of the ChEZ as Biosphere Reserve for enhancing conservation and management of carbon stocks” in the approved project document, while the same output defined as: “The ChEZ is upgraded to the status of Protected Area network to enhance the conservation and management of carbon stocks and secure the long-term basis for appropriate management, monitoring and research for large areas of forests, wetlands, and other habitat types” in the PIR and Progress reports. Similar condition found for Output 3.1. and Output 3.2. Such differences found not to have impact on the general structure of the results framework, but need to be fixed for the consistency of the project related documents and reporting.

⁴ Project Document Section 2.4. Institutional, sectoral and policy context, p.26-28.

- There are differences observed between the activity definitions in the project document Appendix 5: Workplan and Timetable and the Steering Committee Workplan Updates in December 2017 documents. Also similar case observed in PIRs, for example, PIR 2018 details activities in Section 3.2., while PIR 2019 do not, although there are proposed revisions in December 2017 Steering Committee meeting. The project activities should be consistent with the initial design and related to the outputs throughout the project implementation period, only with minor modifications or re-defining the expressions where crucially required and accepted by SC.

C. Nature of the external context

Scored as **Unfavourable**

Main issue creating external impact on the project is the political instability and turmoil occurred in Ukraine, starting from the project preparation period. More than being an issue raising concerns on securing the management and implementation of the project with a special condition, it also seem to affect the project management structure and implementation process. The key government counterparts and staff, namely the ministers and assigned ministerial staff that were proposed to coordinate the project activities and manage the project budget, changed in this period.

This condition led to develop a project execution and implementation structure, which UNEP plays a more active and critical role, both as the executing and implementing agency, to secure the achievement of the project outcomes and objective. Management and supervision related issues shared in next sections.

Another issue is defining the project not as a standalone project, but an important part of the international cooperation efforts of GoU for the conservation and management of ChEZ, especially in the scientific research and management side. As noted by the Science Coordinator Dr. Sergiy Ziptsev and the CREBRO representatives, the project funding and most of the activities are of high importance for the complementing co-financing from other sources, as conditionality for the release of these supporting funds and conducting relevant activities.

D. Effectiveness

Scored as **Moderately Satisfactory**

1. Delivery of outputs

- The Project commencing date was proposed as January 2015 and the technical completion date as December 2018, with a total period of 48 months, in the signed Project Document. It actually started on 16 March 2015, soon after the GEF Approval on December 2014, with a three months delay from the proposed commencement date. Considering the challenges faced in the project preparation and approval period, mainly related to the staff mobility and political turmoil in the country, this delay seems reasonable at first sight. But in the initial stage after the inception period, the unavailability of a fixed locally recruited project team, affected to progress on time. Recently, the (current) assigned government officers and scientists highly involved, professional, dedicated and work actively to compensate the delayed time, and to achieve the project targets in the remaining time.
- As per the MTR report date, the status in the delivery of outputs, observed as progressing, compared to the previous stages, referring the PIRs and field visit discussions. Brief information of findings of the MTR Consultant on the status of progress in the project and followingly the Project status notes as provided by the Project Science Coordinator in informative Project Team briefing meeting on 9 December 2019, given below:
- Inconsistencies observed in the project activity definitions, between the approved project workplan and the latest 2019-2020 workplan and budget approved by the steering committee in 2018. Briefly, the activities defined under each output in 2018 workplan, differ from the ones in the Project Document (Appendix 5) Workplan and Timetable. Although the outputs do not change, such issue affects the consistency monitoring and reporting.

Table 4: Output Level MTR Finding Notes		
Outputs	Mid-Term Targets (as in Results Framework)	MTR Findings
Output 1.1. The Research and	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Beginning of year 2, center staffing and budgetary needs 	This output refer to the establishment of a center actively operates as a coordinating body for the

Environmental Protection Center (REPC) established and fully functional	<p>detailed and submitted to government for approval;</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Staff list and ToRs developed by end of year 1. • Procurement plans developed by end of year 2. • Research and business plan completed by end year 3. <p>(Implementation Status in PIR June 2019: 90 %)</p>	relevant activities in ChEZ. In recent conditions, such a center structure physically not established and operational as of the MTR period. Project Team and key stakeholder discussions in MTR field mission reflects that need for such an institutional structure, in addition to the existing three institutions operating in the region, mentioned as a time and resource consuming investment. Instead, a coordination structure for the existing three institutions, coordinated by the CREBRO recommended as the most convenient, efficient and operational solution.
Output 1.2. Comprehensive assessment of the current state and trends of natural ecosystems in ChEZ	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Research and field experimental program designed by mid-year year 2; • Program delivered to government with request for funding end of year 2; • By end year 2 extensive physical description of forest and wetland habitat completed; <p>(Implementation Status in PIR June 2019: 100 %)</p>	This output seem to be achieved by the research and field work of the CCNSRWR, as mentioned by the Science Coordinator and also reflected to the PIR 2019. The progress and achievement of the output confirmed in the field visit of the MTR Consultant discussions with the contributing scientists and CCNSRWR Experts.
Output 1.3. Assessment of the status of ecosystem services and their values, enhancement of carbon benefits in terms of meeting LULUCF targets in the ChEZ	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Terms of reference for ecosystem services assessment mid-year 2; • Assessment begins end year 2; (proposed to cover below topics and complete by the end of project: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - An assessment of the status and pattern of rehabilitation processes of forest and wetland habitats, and evaluation of their role in terms of CC mitigation and meeting LULUCF targets completed by mid- year 3; - Appropriate sustainable habitat management measures for the rehabilitation of Forests, Wetlands and Marshlands contributing to the conservation and enhancement of carbon stocks and meeting LULUCF targets developed by end of year 3. - A study of the ongoing natural succession processes in the various habitat types affected by radiation in the ChEZ completed and published by mid-year- year 3; - A fire monitoring system established within the ChEZ by end of year 3; - Peer reviewed research publications and monitoring results available end of year 4. <p>(Implementation Status in PIR June 2019: 90 %)</p>	<p>This output found to be the critical one in delay, although initial scientific research activities started and progressing, mostly with the in-kind contribution of the scientists and research institutions involved in the Project, as well as some external research and cooperation funding such as IIASA. However, delay in the provision of funding from UNEP mentioned to affect the progress and completion on time. Achievement of this output also have impacts on the qualified achievement of some other outputs, such as the success of the Biosphere Reserve operations under Output 2.1.</p> <p>Although scientific researches on carbon & fire management related components of the project started and progressed well with the methodology development, due to delayed funding for the field works, as emphasized by the Project Science Coordinator in the MTR mission meetings, relevant activities could not be completed on time. So, achieving the “end of project targets” defined for the delivery of this output needs, conducting the remaining field research activities in a reasonable and convenient time, and their soonest reporting. Such a process needs time extension to the project.</p>
Output 2.1. Formal designation of the ChEZ as Biosphere Reserve for	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A protected area zoning plan, defining areas with various degrees of carbon stocks enhancement and conservation potential developed by end of 	Official designation of the Chornobyl Radiation and Ecological Biosphere Reserve signed by the President of Ukraine in 2016, management plan is under development by the Center for Ecological Management as per the report date. The proposed

enhancing conservation and management of carbon stocks.	<p>year 2.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> First draft monitoring and research plan developed mid-year 2; Carbon stock, ecological and socioeconomic surveys initiated by beginning of year 2. <p>(Implementation Status in PIR June 2019: 100 %)</p>	<p>Management plan reported to cover following 5 years and be the baseline for the next strategy for 10 years.</p> <p>As the site specific carbon research could not progress as planned, activities to achieve the “end of Project targets” defined for the delivery of this output needs soonest completion of the remaining parts of the mentioned research topics .</p>
Output 2.2. Measures developed to ensure financial and institutional sustainability of multi-sector conservation programs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> End of year 2 MENR budgets and workplans contain financial and other resources specifically dedicated to sustainability of the new protected area. <p>(Implementation Status in PIR June 2019: 80 %)</p>	This output observed to be in progress with the establishment and improvement of the CREBRO structure with extended staff and fund allocations from state budget. This management and operations structure needs enhancement and improvements, to comply with international quality and management standards. .
Output 3.1. A set of lessons learned and practical recommendations on habitat rehabilitation, carbon stocks management and biodiversity conservation developed and published	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Written summaries of project outputs of lessons learned and dissemination available at end of year 2. End of year 2 report of lessons learned from prior work on habitat restoration, carbon stocks management and biodiversity conservation. <p>(Implementation Status in PIR June 2019: 80 %)</p>	This output not started yet, as it requires successful completion of the technical outputs. But, there are sufficient information and documentation that can be used to start preparing drafts by SAUEZM Project Team and discuss with the Technical Committee
Output 3.2. Knowledge sharing at national and international level and Training programme field tested and available for replication.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Distribution lists prepared by end of year 1; Distribution lists and description of yearly distributions at end of year 2. <p>(Implementation Status in PIR June 2019: 90 %)</p>	This output progressing, but requires the successful completion of the technical outputs for a reasonable progress and completion. For this output some outreach and communication activities of the CREBRO and the academic publications of the researchers and scientists involved in the Project activities can be considered as the initial activities under this topic.

2. Achievement of direct outcomes

Outcomes defined for the project found almost achieved, as all project team members (science coordinator and the CREBRO Experts), key stakeholders are all interested and involved in the successful completion of the project. The main issue is to increase the quality and reliability of the results with checked, confirmed and analysed field based scientific data .

Table 5: Outcome Level MTR Finding Notes		
Outcomes	Mid-Term Targets (as in Results Framework)	MTR Findings
1. Improved monitoring and research for large areas of forests, wetlands, and other habitat types and	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> By mid year 2 a stakeholder driven research plan developed; End of year 2 research plan forwarded to government for appropriate action. Linkages with at least four relevant 	This outcome has high potential to be achieved with the possible qualified completion of the proposed outputs and supporting scientific research. The technical and scientific structure with the cooperation of the relevant stakeholders almost complete, but an operational institutional

associated carbon benefits in the ChEZ	national and/or international educational institutions established.	framework required.
2. Improved management of natural resources and carbon stocks within and around the ChEZ.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Legislation focused on expanded ChEZ PA in place by mid-year 2; • Draft of ew/expanded protected area plan by mid- year 2; • Established cooperative arrangements with Polesky Nature Reserve end of year 2. • Public consultations have occurred by mid-year 2; 	Scientific and technical base for the outcome already in place, however, cooperation and consulting with the local and national institutions need improvement, as well as management structure for improved conservation and carbon management.
3. Increased availability and access to critical information needed for decision-making for effective sustainable management of the ChEZ.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • By end of year 2 establishment of a comprehensive data base that would drive efforts to physically or electronically repatriate critical knowledge in the REPC initiated. 	Not completed, but progressing by the report date. For achieving this outcome, the scientific information have to be transformed to the public, a detailed database developed and shared via an online portal with scientific community and public.

3. Likelihood of impact

The Project Long Term Objective, which also defines the proposed impact, given as “Enhanced Conservation, and Management of Carbon Stocks and Biodiversity in Forest and non-Forest Lands in the Chornobyl Exclusion Zone (ChEZ), in Ukraine”, in the Project Results Framework.

As previously mentioned, the project and the implementation site ChEZ has a special condition of being a unique site in the world, and a special site of international interest and concern, scientifically, environmentally, socially and politically. This project defined as one of the key projects and important component of the international efforts of the Ukrainian Government on improvement of the environmental conditions and conservation status of ChEZ, in cooperation with its academic and non-governmental stakeholders, as well as other international or bilateral non-UN/GEF funding partners.

The MTR Consultant finds the project highly progressing to achieve the overall objective that will lead to create the proposed social, environmental and scientific impact, with a successful and qualified achievement of the proposed outcomes, regarding the high level of achievement in the mid-term targets listed for the project objective in the Results framework.

But, the key issue that the Project success depends on the sustaining and enhancing the existing institutional structure and expertise of the CREBRO with its cooperating institutions (such as CCNSRWR), academic partners and the improvement of the necessary supporting national regulations related to ChEZ and the biosphere Reserve in line with the international agreements and bilateral cooperations (especially with Belarus)

Considering these conditions of high potential of achievement of proposed outcomes, being a part of a greater framework, and the the high level institutional and bureaucratic ownership of the Ukrainian Government, as reflected from the official meetings, discussions and other relevant documentation, MTR Consultant finds the project has a high “likelihood of impact” in general.

E. Financial management

Financial management of the project scored as **Moderately Satisfactory** considering the low financial performance of UNEP, including reporting, as commented in the MTR discussions, and observed in the annual financial reports, but complemented by satisfactory and efficient financial management of GoU – SAUEZM, and other co-financing parties.

1. Rate of spend

- The project total expenditure from GEF funds, as of 31 December 2018 reported as 3,079,378 USD in UNEP 2018 Financial Report, with a delivery rate of 63,31 %.; as of 31 December 2019 report indicates cumulative delivery of 3,540,756 USD with a delivery rate of 72,8 %.

- The cumulative co-financing amount of SAUEZM, representing GoU in the Project, is 17,958,879 USD, with a delivery rate of 63% as of July 2019; and a cumulative expenditure of 20,027,089 USD, with a delivery rate of 71,5 % as of 31 December 2019.
- Other in-kind and cash contributions from other co-financing resources from various project funds of OSCE, IIASA, JSC-SATREP, more than 400,000 USD⁵ also mobilized especially for the complementing research activities for the project implementation.

2. Quality and consistency of financial reporting

- The **completeness of financial information**, required for the management of the project collected and compiled by the UNEP and SAUEZM Project Teams, based on the official records of the institutional and financial documentations. The transfer of the UNEP financial operations system from IMIS to the UMOJA system commented to create problems in reporting processes and timely delivery of funds, in the MTR mission discussions. The key issue related to the reporting problems was the format of the reports and the information used in this reporting, which is not fully compliant with the requirements of GEF financial reports, and include inconsistent information especially in total approved budget figures by budget lines.
- Related to the **communication between financial and project management staff**, both UNEP and SAUEZM teams, MTR findings reflect a consistent communication between the financial and project management staff, especially in provision of financial data in reporting process and periods. Technical and financial reports compiled by UNEP Project Management, based on the information from the UNEP project management (UMOJA) system and the information provided from the SAUEZM.
- The project financial reporting process use the UMOJA system, used for the whole UNEP financial management operations, considered in **compliance with relevant UN financial management standards and procedures**, but not practically compatible with the GEF formats, as commented by the UNEP Project Team in MTR discussions and observed from the project financial reports shared by UNEP FMO. The missing issue in the financial reports seem to be lack of linking the approved budget and actual expenditures with the outputs and outcomes, and even activities that will be useful and practical for GEF project reports.

Table 6: Financial Management Table			
Financial management components:		Rating	Evidence/ Comments
1. Completeness of project financial information:		S	Needs to be compiled and kept in different formats useful for the project implementation.
Provision of key documents to the evaluator (based on the responses to A-G below)		S	Financial tables for 2019 was not prepared and shared by the report date.
A	Co-financing and Project Cost's tables at design (by budget lines)	YES	Project Document
B	Revisions to the budget	YES	Budget Revision B made during the extension of the ICA between UNEP Ecosystems Division and Europe Office
C	All relevant project legal agreements (e.g. SSFA, PCA, ICA)	YES	Project Document, Memorandum between UNEP and Biosphere Reserve
D	Proof of fund transfers	YES	Project financial reports from UNEP FMO, No audit report provided
E	Proof of co-financing (cash and in-kind)	YES	Project financial reports from UNEP FMO, and SAUEZM Office. No audit report provided
F	A summary report on the project's expenditures during the life of the project (by budget lines, project components and/or annual level)	YES	Project financial reports from UNEP FMO and SAUEZM Office
G	Copies of any completed audits and management responses (<i>where applicable</i>)	n/a	No audit report provided to MTR consultant
H	Any other financial information that was required for this project (list):	YES	A list of funding from external parties, considered as a co-financing contribution for the ChEZ and Project.
Any gaps in terms of financial information that could be		YES	Delays and inconsistencies occurred due to

⁵ As per the information from Project Science Coordinator and field experts involved in these projects. Official information about total amounts and actual expenses not received and verified as the information source is an external institution, not officially referred in the project document and reports.

indicative of shortcomings in the project's compliance with the UN Environment or donor rules		transfer to UMOJA system and previous reporting system was noncompliant with GEF formats.
Project Manager, Task Manager and Fund Management Officer responsiveness to financial requests during the evaluation process	S	Financial information should also be compiled in GEF project format, linking to output & outcome level, as well.
2. Communication between finance and project management staff	S	More improved coordination with GoU partners and science coordinator recommended, for better financial management. Also UNEP financial operations system UMOJA and the institutional setting observed to be the main issue in delays in financial processes that may result with critical problems in implementation. This should be considered as the main critical administrative issue by UNEP.
Project Manager and/or Task Manager's level of awareness of the project's financial status by the	S	
Fund Management Officer's knowledge of project progress/status when disbursements are done	S	
Level of addressing and resolving financial management issues among Fund Management Officer and Project Manager/Task Manager	S	
Contact/communication between by Fund Management Officer, Project Manager/Task Manager during the preparation of financial and progress reports	S	
Overall rating	S	

F. Efficiency

Scored as **Moderately Satisfactory**, considering the GoU contributions, and delays in UNEP financial processes and reporting.

- Project cash and in-kind contributions, in any case can be considered as cost-effective in such a special case, which is an invaluable and only area especially for scientific research on radioecology, and biodiversity conservation topics. Considering the project total budget and the total area of the Chernobyl Radiation and Ecological Biosphere Reserve (226,964.7 ha), an amount of 146,3 USD/ha investment for 4-5 years, where the GEF share is 21,43 USD/ha, considered highly cost-efficient for such a unique case.
- Timely release of funds and financial reporting is of critical importance and priority, especially for receiving high quality results from the scientific research field works and management efficiency. So, UNEP ROE, as the executing institution, highly recommended to focus more on financial processing and reporting issues.

G. Monitoring and reporting

Scored as **Moderately Satisfactory**

1. Monitoring design and implementation

- The Monitoring and Reporting framework proposed with the Project Document found not to be completely and functionally operational from the initial start of the project, due to various reasons, observed from the contents and process of the official reporting. The major reason found as the same with the delay in the Project implementation, specifically political and administrative issues mentioned in previous sections.
- An updated workplan and budget prepared and approved by the Steering Committee, for 2019-2020 period, which also provides a framework for the monitoring of the Project implementation. This could be supported with a detailed updated monitoring plan, for use of the Project Team, in cooperation and coordination with the involved experts and steering committee.
- Based on the review of the PIRs and relevant documentation, supported with the field interviews, MTR consultant finds a(n online) database especially for scientific information input to be used for field monitoring and reporting, as also a decision support system, is critical but do not exist. Such a tool for sound implementation and achieving the targets is crucial and required for such a specific Project and proposed achievements.
- SC meetings conducted annually since 2016, as understood from the Meeting Minutes provided from UNEP and SAUEZM. (December 2016, December 2017 documents received, 2018 and 2019 were not in the info pack)

2. Project reporting

- The Project technical reporting, complies with GEF and UNEP procedures. Improvements in the content and quality of the PIRs observed after the late start of the project in 2016, more improved in July 2019 report, in the document reviews. But, there are inconsistencies in the definition and/or expressions in outputs and activities that need to be reviewed, fixed and approved by SC.
- The reporting process conducted by the executing partner, in consultation with the SAUEZM team and science coordinator, especially in collecting the updated information from site and key local partners. UNEP ROE Project team compiling the information and preparing the official Project reports. Financial reports prepared by using UNEP financial operations system UMOJA, which commented to create delays and problems in the Project implementation and not easy to use for GEF and similar external funding reportings.
- To support a more qualified reporting process, periodical (bi-weekly or monthly) online meetings and information update documents in a format and content complies with the Project results framework, mostly updated workplan and budget will be beneficial for the Project partners for more efficient monitoring and reporting.
- Information on the other project contributions by the key stakeholders, partnering research institutions, other funding agencies (UNDP GEF SGP, EU, WB, etc.), recent co-financing sources for the research activities (EC, FR, USA, other IFIs, etc) not collected and mentioned in the progress reports/PIRs will be recommended. This issue is important to identify and evaluate the financial sustainability co-financing potentials and capacities and the impact of the Project, especially in terminal evaluation stage.

H. Sustainability

Scored as **Moderately Likely**

The special condition of ChEZ, specifically the Biosphere Reserve international interest and the government assurance of institutional and financial resources, provides opportunities for all dimensions of sustainability.

The key topic for evaluation sustainability in this project is the **socio-political** dimension, regarding the political instability and turmoil occurred in the country in the project development process. The MTR consultant observed the active involvement and ownership of the government institutions, from management to expert level, and interest in improving the administrative structures, as well as active and progressing cooperation with local administrations, non-governmental organisations and international or bilateral technical cooperations.

This policy and intention has a positive impression, but needs improvements by integrating the results, lessons learned and outcomes from the project to the national legislation, scientific research agendas and public policies related to the ChEZ and the conservation sites in general.

Institutional sustainability, for the project has two dimensions. First one is the formal institutions level, including the central and local governments, academic and research institutions and even the NGOs, that is crucial for the management of the site, in line with the established legal and technical procedures. The second is the public and community level institutions, required for the future operations and assuring the realization of the proposed impacts in public / community level.

The first level institutional sustainability found to be secured with the declaration of the Biosphere Reserve with the presidential decree, with the establishment of the CREBRO, and so its existence, acceptance and ownership by the state assured in the presidential and ministerial level. Also, the unique condition of ChEZ in international level and international environmental agreements, both provide opportunities for the institutional sustainability as well as creating an international enforcement and shared responsibility for sustaining institutional structure for the management of the ChEZ and the Reserve.

There are significant improvements in the outreach and community level awareness about the reserve, with the activities conducted by the Reserve central office and the field office in Ivankiv District, especially targeting youth and children. But, these community level activities requires improvement, periodical monitoring and enhancement throughout the country, starting with the ChEZ neighbouring areas.

Financial sustainability, of the project results, also linked to the institutional sustainability, and it is mainly a matter of provision and use of funding for the improvement and enhancing the capacities of the management of the Reserve and ChEZ. In this special and specific case, management do not only mean the site administration, but also scientific research with monitoring and capacity development. The existing conditions observed in the MTR field visit and review of the

related documentation shows that the high level of international interest creates multilateral and bilateral funding opportunities. In order to use these opportunities and for more cost-effective actions, a long-term strategy for 20 years would be beneficial.

I. Factors affecting performance

1. Preparation and readiness

Scored **Satisfactory**

Dedication and ownership, constructive and cooperative actions, progressive approaches of the management and responsible staff in the SAUEZM and especially CREBRO, as well as active involvement of the scientists, research institutions, and the local administrations, improving cooperation with the non-governmental organisations reflect a positive approach for preparation and readiness.

2. Quality of project management and supervision

Scored **Moderately Satisfactory**

Although the quality of the project management and supervision progressed compared to the initial phase of the Project implementation, improvements in management required, especially in timely reporting and financial operations such as release of funds by UNEP, especially for priority activities that are commented to be delayed in MTR discussions.

The Project management structure, executing by UNEP ROE observed as a practical and operational for the problematic initial phase of the Project. However, in the current status of the Project implementation, given that the UNEP/ROE Project Manager not fully assigned for the project, a full-time national project coordinator in the field, supporting the Project Manager and science coordinator for more improved and timely management, strongly recommended for the remaining time of the Project implementation, as also discussed in the MTR field mission discussions.

3. Stakeholders participation and cooperation

Scored **Moderately Satisfactory**

Local and national stakeholders' participation and involvement to the project and biosphere reserve related activities found as constructive and progressive, with a good cooperation opportunities between state agencies, local governments, academic institutions and NGOs, but needs improvements in cooperation, knowledge management and communication activities, as observed in the MTR field mission discussions.

4. Responsiveness to human rights and gender equity

Scored **Satisfactory**

Project focus on the improvement of the environmental-natural conditions for a healthy environment while developing a radio-ecological research and monitoring structure, which is also an issue of improving conditions to live in peace and healthy environment, which is a basic human right. Progress in the project implementation and achievement of outputs observed to have positive impacts, especially on women and youth in the neighboring settlements.

The project has a high level of active involvement of women in all stages of the relevant activities and improved expertise, especially observed in the local office of the Biosphere Reserve at Ivankiv. Also a reasonable level of participation and involvement of women observed in the field visit discussion, as mentioned and confirmed by two women senior manager, the mayor of Pryborsk, and Deputy Head of the Ivankiv Regional Council. Almost %55-60 of the local population of the neighbouring settlements mentioned as women, by the local administrators met in the field, and same ratio for apply for women recruited in the services for Reserve's Local Office, in expert and administrative positions.

5. Country ownership and drivenness

Scored **Satisfactory**

Country ownership for the Project and the improvement of the supporting activities observed as secured and progressing with the presidential decree on the establishment of the CREBR, as well as the assignment of the previous

Head of Agency in higher positions in central government, and increasing international cooperation and (cash and in-kind) funds provided for the research and operational activities in ChEZ and for the Reserve.

6. Communication and public awareness

Scored **Satisfactory**

In the field mission discussions with the CREBRO PR team in Kyiv and field office in Ivankiv, and review of the relevant online and printed materials listed in Annex 6, MTR consultant observed SAUEZM conduct various community outreach, countrywide and international level communication and raising awareness activities, mainly targeting children & youth in the region and countrywide, in addition to the general communication activities of SAUEZM on ChEZ and the Reserve. These include photo exhibitions, short documentary and promotional films, printing books and informative materials for kids, several competitions in schools, etc., as well as the Project, Reserve and SAUEZM websites (chornobyl-gef.com, zapovidnyk.org.ua, dazv.gov.ua) and scientific journals published by SAUEZM and the cooperating research institutions.

The most important issue is to keep these websites updated and increase the quality and number of dissemination activities. Developing a database for ChEZ and Reserve also discussed in MTR field mission, and found beneficial especially as an open access knowledge base especially for further research and information dissemination to public and interested institutions.

6. CONCLUSIONS and RECOMMENDATIONS

A. Conclusions

The main conclusions of the MTR process, regarding the initial review questions can be summarized as below:

- ***Regard of project activities to conserving, enhancing and managing of carbon stock and the extent of biodiversity benefits being demonstrated in Chornobyl***

The project region ChEZ is a part of the Polesia Landscape laying through Poland, Ukraine, Belarus and Russia, with more than 60 species in “Red Book” of Ukraine according to the 2017 research conducted under the Project, by the CCNSRWR. The Reserve also complementing the Poleski Radioecological Nature Reserve in Belarus, in forming the largest landscape for biodiversity conservation and research area of Europe, with linkages to cultural, social, historical heritage of the region.

The project, having scientific research based main components, also complementing the national interest and policy on the improvement of the biodiversity conservation and carbon management this unique area, as an important part of the international efforts of the GoU on the management and conservation of the zone. There is an agreement with the Government of Belarus on cooperation in research, monitoring and conservation of the greater Exclusion Zone, composed of these two zones.

As the first project on radioecology focus, funded by the GEF, it also has an important position by means of developing lessons, guidance and methodologies both for the greater Exclusion Zone area and some other similar landscapes,, especially the ones highly affected or threatened by either radioactivity or other toxic, pollutant materials in the world.

In this regard, improvements in the capacities of SAUEZM and its national partners, supporting their compliance with relevant international standards for carbon management and radioecology research and monitoring infrastructure and establishing the institutional and methodological setting for all, especially carbon management. This is an achievable condition with the improvement of the existing technical capacity, knowledge management, infobase and developing efficient management and operations structures, also considering the recommendations listed in this Report.

- ***Likelines of the project's establishment of a research and environmental protection centre to improve monitoring and research of the ChEZ***

Establishing a Research and Environmental Protection Centre is one of the main outcomes of the project, which was seen as an important condition of the active management and monitoring of the radioecological, biodiversity and carbon related operations, as well as sustaining and enhancing the project results after implementation.

In the implementation process of the project, the idea of operating a cooperation structure, instead of an institutional body, regarding the existence and active operation of cooperating institutions CCNSRWR, CREBRO and Eco-Center, raised and considered as a more efficient, functional and cost-effective solution. This proposal found feasible and convenient in the MTR discussions, as a coordination unit under the CREBRO, operating in cooperation with CCNSRWR, Eco-Center and other institutions represented in SC and Technical Committees.,

The operational and technical structure of the CREBRO officially defined in detail by the SAUEZM, currently with almost 150 staff and a targeting 600 staff in different technical, field and administrative positions, located in the central office, field office and in the field operations. When CCNSRWR added to this capacity, it increases both by quality and quantity, and technically covers the function proposed with the REPC in the project document.

Also, such a model have the potential to create an opportunity to enhance and improve cooperation and capacities of the key institutions involved in the project implementation and research activities, and transform the Steering and Technical Committees as an institutional part of this coordination structure.

- ***Support of the project activities to the central and local government to better manage natural resources and carbon stocks within and around the ChEZ***

The Project, treated as a part of the international efforts for the management of ChEZ rather than a standalone project, from the GoU –SAUEZM side, providing the complementing support to both the GoU and the scientific community dealing with ChEZ, to improve the work on radio-ecology and carbon management in this unique site and research field.

The project and the relevant activities implemented at the central government level only. Whereas, the involvement of local governments and NGOs indirectly involved to the process, a public and institutional cooperation structure, such as working groups or committees organised by the proposed coordination unit, will be functional for better management .

In this point, the main issue is the using and transforming the scientific information collected and compiled from the site into the policy and community based activities, local administration operations. This has to go beyond public awareness raising with some informative activities, but incorporating the results and lessons learned to the national and regional strategies and legislation, and improve the management structures benefiting from field expertise on the carbon management and nature conservation.

- ***Extent and ways the project considered an important initiative for the management and the protection of the Chernobyl Exclusion Zone (ChEZ), by the targeted communities, the Government partners, and the financial institutions***

Local administrations in the neighbouring areas of ChEZ, academic community and related national NGOs, work in good cooperation with the SAUEZM, and partially involve in the project activities as observed in the MTR field mission meetings with the local stakeholders. For example, operation and maintenance of the Field Office of the Reserve supported by the Ivankiv Regional Council, and Council cooperate in the dissemination of information especially in the community based communication and outreach activities, as well as improving the social and technical infrastructure of the region. This is a result of the significant work of SAUEZM and CREBRO, but still need some more informing and awareness of the local and national NGOs about the project progress and outputs

The project, as mentioned above, considered as a key component of the international efforts of the GoU for the conservation of the cultural and biodiversity values of ChEZ, by both the SAUEZM and the scientific community involved to the project. For this aim, the SAUEZM cooperating with international and bilateral organisations (especially with Belarus), bilateral funding agencies, as well as the local institutions, science community and NGOs for a better management and improvement of the potentials of ChEZ.

As a reflection of this framework, the project operates as a co-financing for the other activities conducted from external funds, and provides conditional support for activities complementing the project outputs. So, there is a need of timely release of project funds for the successful implementation of the project activities.

Additionally, the project and the proposed results observed to complement with the small and medium scale funding projects, such as UNDP-GEF SGP and some EU country funded research (by UK, FR, etc.), and have potentials for future phases for the project especially in community based projects, which the scientific research results and recommendations can be transformed and disseminated to public.

- ***Effective measuring of progress with implementation of a Monitoring and Evaluation system***

Monitoring and evaluation of the project reviewed in two levels. The first is the monitoring of progress in project implementation defined as Component 4 in the Project Document and the second is the monitoring system proposed with the project under Component 1

The delayed start of the Project due to the political and administrative changes found to affect the implementation of the Project activities and establishing an efficient monitoring and reporting system. In addition to this delay, changes in the project financial operation system of UNEP affected timely financial management and reporting.

The main tool for an effective monitoring of progress is the progress reports and steering committee meetings. Both seem not fully comply with the proposed performance, although quality of PIRs improved but SC and TC meetings not organised as required. So, earliest organisation of SC and TC meetings with extended agendas are crucial for the project progress.

As the second level of monitoring topic, the proposed monitoring and evaluation system could not be developed, due to the incomplete scientific research as of the MTR date. Based on the information provided from the science coordinator and the research teams, as well as the SAUEZM experts, , establishing such a system is possible, but needs the successful and reliable completion of the research process and transfer of the information to the SAUEZM. In this topic, the SAUEZM need to improve its capacity on monitoring and evaluation, both on site and operational issues, and for this need to develop an M&E infrastructure in line with the international methods and standards, in the remaining time of the project implementation.

Table 7: Evaluation ratings⁶

Evaluation criteria	Rating	Score	Weight	Weighted Score
Strategic Relevance (select the ratings for sub-categories)	Highly Satisfactory	6,00	6,00	0,36
Alignment to MTS and POW	Highly Satisfactory	6,00	0,50	
Alignment to UNEP/GEF/Donor strategic priorities	Highly Satisfactory	6,00	0,50	
Relevance to regional, sub-regional and national issues and needs	Highly Satisfactory	6,00	2,50	
Complementarity with existing interventions	Highly Satisfactory	6,00	2,50	
Quality of Project Design	Satisfactory	5,00	4,00	0,20
Nature of External Context	Unfavourable			
Effectiveness (select the ratings for sub-categories)	Moderately Satisfactory	4,00	45,00	1,80
Delivery of outputs	Moderately Satisfactory	4,00	5,00	
Achievement of direct outcomes	Moderately Satisfactory	4,00	30,00	
Likelihood of impact	Moderately Likely	4,00	10,00	
Financial Management (select the ratings for sub-categories)	Moderately Satisfactory	4,00	5,00	0,20
Completeness of project financial information	Moderately Satisfactory	4,00		
Communication between finance and project management staff	Moderately Satisfactory	4,00		
Efficiency	Moderately Satisfactory	4,00	10,00	0,40
Monitoring and Reporting (select the ratings for sub-categories)	Moderately Satisfactory	3,67	5,00	0,18
Monitoring design and budgeting	Moderately Satisfactory	4,00		
Monitoring of Project Implementation	Moderately Satisfactory	4,00		
Project Reporting	Moderately Unsatisfactory	3,00		
Sustainability (select the ratings for sub-categories)	Moderately Likely	4,00	20,00	0,80
Socio-political sustainability	Moderately Likely	4,00		
Financial sustainability	Moderately Likely	4,00		
Institutional sustainability	Likely	5,00		
Factors Affecting Performance (select the ratings for sub-categories)	Satisfactory	4,67	5,00	0,23
Preparation and readiness	Satisfactory	5,00		
Quality of project management and supervision	Moderately Satisfactory	4,00		
Stakeholder participation and cooperation	Moderately Satisfactory	4,00		
Responsiveness to human rights and gender equity	Satisfactory	5,00		
Country ownership and driven-ness	Satisfactory	5,00		
Communication and public awareness	Satisfactory	5,00		
			100,00	4,18
				Moderately Satisfactory

B. Lessons Learned

- The socio-political conditions raised in the project preparation period and continued in the initial phase of the project implementation, result with a project management modality different than usual GEF projects execution, as UNEP/ROE executing the project, without a national project coordinator in the field, although defined in the project document and budget lines. This modality seem helped the project at least stay alive and progress relatively slow than planned, in the initial period. With the establishment of the Reserve in 2016, the implementation progressed with the work of the dedicated staff and government funding of the CREBRO, which also mostly handled the function of the proposed REPCC, with its central and local offices, in cooperation with other relevant government and scientific institutions. The lesson learned in this process can be noted as the importance of establishing a functional, practical, field level, professional coordination structure for timely and progressing project management, monitoring and reporting, also increasing professional capacity and expertise in project management in country level.
- As a unique and specific case, the project has a significant level of scientific research base and dissemination of its results to achieve the proposed impact depend on the compilation and translation of these results into policy and management, as well as to the public awareness tools and activities. This needs a strong and cooperative coordination with local people and its representatives. The project has references to socio-economic surveys to identify status and needs in the region especially for the development of management plan, but, as also mentioned in the MTR discussions, the social component of the project not so strong to develop a societal base for the sustainability of project results. The lesson from the process as of MTR period can be noted as the importance of involving local people, NGOs, social sectors and local government representatives to the project implementation processes. This is crucial for better communication of results, high level of country ownership and increase sustainability in social dimension.

⁶ MS Excel Template provided by Task Manager used for this table.

C. Recommendations

1. Management

- **Establishing a coordination unit under the CREBRO**, acting as the REPCC proposed in the project, in cooperation with CCNSRWR, Eco-Center and other institutions represented in SC and TC.
- **Recruitment of a national coordinator for the remaining period of the Project implementation.**, who will be responsible for the implementation of the workplan and coordination between UNEP ROE, SAUEZM, Science coordinator, SC, TC and the stakeholders. Such a position was also defined in the Project document and budgeted as National Coordinator.
- **A no-cost extension for up to 15 months**, considering the need for the qualified completion of the site-specific research (instead of using the general models for carbon management, etc.) and interconnected activities, such as the scientific research inputs to management planning of the reserve, development and implementation of a monitoring and decision support system, as discussed in the MTR group discussions,
- **Organisation of periodical (monthly) Project progress update (online) meetings** for sharing technical and financial information by UNEP/ROE Project Management and SAUEZM Project team, with each other, complementing the SC and TC meetings organised once in a year and strengthening the communication for better management..
- **Capacity enhancement activities to improve the institutional structure of the SAUEZM and the Reserve**, such as seminars on different topics (like integrated management, knowledge management, based on lessons learned and best practices in similar cases in the world, under Component 3 of the Project.

2. Technical

- **Updating the Project results framework** considering the recommendations in the Theory of Change section of this MTR report, and **an updated workplan and detailed monitoring plan for the remaining time of the project** revising the inconsistencies in the activity level definitions, comparing with the official Project document, After this revision and approval by SC, all reports and relevant project documentation should use this content.
- **Conducting a periodical socio-economic survey** in the ChEZ neighbouring areas of Ivankiv and Zythomyr districts will be beneficial to update the social and economic status of the region, and define activities for the dissemination of the Project results and further improvement of the management plan and proposed impacts from the project especially in social dimension, as referred in Output 2.1. in Project Results Framework.
- **Periodical updates for informing the local governments and all relevant local and national NGOs** involved in the nature conservation, radioecology and environmental protection issues and the ChEZ area, on the progress in the Project achievements and outputs, and public activities, via all communication media (website, social media, TV, etc.) strongly recommended. For this, **preparing a communication plan** will be beneficial
- **Developing an open access database for ChEZ and Reserve**, as a knowledge base especially for further research and information dissemination to public and interested institutions, as a part of the proposed monitoring system referred in Outcome 1 indicators, as well as a knowledgebase for learning and dissemination referred in Outcome 3.

7. ANNEXES

ANNEX 1. Response to stakeholder comments received but not (fully) accepted by the reviewers, where appropriate.

This MTR Report prepared in cooperation with the UNEP GEF Task Manager Mr. S.Ersin ESEN, all his comments and recommendations reflected to the draft report shared with the Project Manager Mr. Mahil Aliyev (UNEP ROE), Project Science Coordinator Prof. Dr. Sergiy Zibtsev, and the Chernobyl Radiation and Ecological Biosphere Reserve Office for comments and recommendations. The responses from Prof. Dr. Sergiy Zibtsev, and Mr. Mahil Aliyev all reflected to the final document.

Comments of Mrs. Marieta Sakalian, former Task Manager, considered and reflected to the relevant sections. Some of her comments that MTR Consultant finds beneficial to provide clarification, are given below:

Paragraph	Comment and Response
Inconsistencies exist in the expressions of some of the outputs in the relevant parts of these reports. For example, Output 2.1. defined as “Formal designation of the ChEZ as Biosphere Reserve for enhancing conservation and management of carbon stocks” in the approved project document, while the same output defined as: “The ChEZ is upgraded to the status of Protected Area network to enhance the conservation and management of carbon stocks and secure the long-term basis for appropriate management, monitoring and research for large areas of forests, wetlands, and other habitat types” in the PIR and Progress reports. Similar condition found for Output 3.1. and Output 3.2. Such differences found not to have impact on the general structure of the results framework, but need to be fixed for the consistency of the project related documents and reporting. (Page 28)	<p>Comment: Please note that one is output formulation the second report on status of achievement, so there is not inconsistency</p> <p>Response: The commented issue exist in the “Outputs” section of the referred reports, not in “achievements” parts. Any modification of the output and outcome definitions means modifying the Results Framework. As there is no clear document or evidence provided to the MTR consultant on the reason or process of such changes in the “Output” definitions.</p>
There are differences observed between the activity definitions in the project document Appendix 5: Workplan and Timetable and the Steering Committee Workplan Updates in December 2017 documents. Also similar case observed in PIRs, for example, PIR 2018 details activities in Section 3.2., while PIR 2019 do not, although there are proposed revisions in December 2017 Steering Committee meeting. The project activities should be consistent with the initial design and related to the outputs throughout the project implementation period, only with minor modifications or re-defining the expressions where crucially required and accepted by SC. (Page 29)	<p>Comment: Ye WP has been updated annually as part of project implementation review- this is an adaptive management measure. The updated activities and outputs and in several cases indicators were reflected in the PIR. Each year.</p> <p>Responses:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> * I understand the updates in activity level, as an adaptive measure. But, the issue here is (representing) the missing link with the initial workplan and defined activities. For example, initial activity 1.2.1. is so much different than the latest activity 1.2.1., and this applies for all activities. An activity can be re-phrased, cancelled or added in the workplans, but the initial structure of the results framework and links between the outputs-activities should be kept, especially for monitoring and reporting process. * The commented issue exist in the “Outputs” section of the referred reports, not in “achievements” parts. Any modification of the output and outcome definitions means modifying the Results Framework. As there is no clear document or evidence provided to the MTR consultant on the reason or process of such changes in the “Output” definitions.
Inconsistencies observed in the project activity definitions, between the approved project workplan and the latest 2019-2020 workplan and budget approved by the steering committee in 2018. Briefly, the activities defined under each output in 2018 workplan, differ from the ones in the Project Document (Appendix 5) Workplan and Timetable. Although the outputs do not change, such issue affects the consistency monitoring and reporting.) (Page 29)	
Financial management of the project scored as Moderately Satisfactory considering the low financial performance of UNEP, including reporting, as commented in the MTR discussions, and observed in the annual financial reports, but complemented by satisfactory and efficient financial management of GoU – SAUEZM, and other co-financing parties. (Page 32)	<p>Comment: Each statement should be supported with justification.</p> <p>Response: Sentence revised with reference to the financial reports. Also the following sections reflect the financial status. As there is no audit report provided to MTR consultant, financial reports and comments of the project team referred for the MTR.</p>

ANNEX 2. Review itinerary

Date	Venue	Content	Participants
09.12.2019	Chornobyl Radiation and Ecological Biosphere Reserve Office	Presentation of the status of the project from Project Team and Science Coordinator Dr. S.Zibtsev Presentation on the MTR process by MTR Consultant Mr. M.Çevik	Mr. Oleksandr Galushchenko Mr. Taras Melnychuk Mr. Valeriy Maliarenko Mr. Victor Aliyev Mr. Denis Vishnevskiy Ms. Alona Varukha Dr. Sergiy Zibtsev
	State Agency of Ukraine for Exclusion Zone Management (SAUEZM)	Brief information on the MTR process, field mission programme by Project Team and Mr.Çevik Discussion on the project activities, comments, recommendations, etc.	Mr. Alexander Kovalchuk Ms. Tamara Danylchenko Mr. Taras Melnychuk Mr. Valeriy Maliarenko Mr. Victor Aliyev
10.12.2019	Chornobyl Exclusion Zone & Ivankiv District centre	Site visit to ChEZ and neighbouring locations to meet the field office of the Reserve and Chornobyl Center for Nuclear Safety, Radioactive Waste & Radioecology	Mr. Taras Melnychuk Mr. Valeriy Maliarenko Mr. Denis Vishnevskiy Mr. Valeriy Potienko Mr. Oxana Shumak Ms. Maria Tolochine Ms. Julia Kosko Ms. Marina Bizchastna Mr. Alexandr Syrota Dr. Sergey Gashchak Dr. Dmytro Holiaka
11.12.2019	National University of Life and Environmental Sciences Institute of Forestry and Landscape-Park Management	Presentations on the scientific researches under the scientific components of the projects by the experts Discussions on the problems, potentials, comments and recommendations	Mr. Valeriy Maliarenko Mr. Denis Vishnevskiy Dr. Sergiy Zibtsev Dr. Petro Lakyda Dr. Victor Myroniuk Dr. Andrii BILOUS Mr. Mykhaylo Bondarkov Dr. Sergey Gashchak Dr. Dmytro Holiaka
12.12.2019	Chornobyl Radiation and Ecological Biosphere Reserve Office	Presentation on the management plan details by Dr. Kolomyichuk, discussions on the plan, social, ecological and management issues. Discussion on the involvement of NGOs to the project and related activities in ChEZ and the Reserve.	Mr. Taras Melnychuk Mr. Valeriy Maliarenko Mr. Denis Vishnevskiy Dr. Vitaliy Kolomyichuk Mr. Heorhiy Veremiychyk
13.12.2019	UNDP-GEF SGP Ukraine Office SAUEZM Office	Discussion on the SGP activities related to ChEZ and Neighbouring settlements. Wrap-up meeting on the preliminary findings discussion with the SAUEZM and Reserve's Project Team	Mr. Alexander Kovalchuk Ms. Tamara Danylchenko Mr. Oleksandr Galushchenko Mr. Taras Melnychuk Mr. Valeriy Maliarenko Mr. Denis Vishnevskiy

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ANNEX 3. Summary of co-finance information and a statement of project expenditure by activity (as of December 2019)

REPORT OF PLANNED AND ACTUAL CO-FINANCE BY BUDGET LINE										
Name:		UN Environment Programme								
Project title:		Conserving, Enhancing and Managing Carbon Stocks and Biodiversity in the Chernobyl Exclusion Zone								
Project number:		GFL-5060-2711-AC40 / SB-000687.37 / S1-32GFL-000370								
Project executing partner:		UNEP-Europe Office								
Project reporting period:		From: 2015 To: 2019								
		US\$	US\$	US\$	US\$	US\$	US\$	US\$	US\$	US\$
		Prior Year	Prior Year	Cash Co-finance	In-kind Co-finance	Total for year	Total for year	Total for year	Total for year	Cumulative
		2015-2017	2018	2019	2019	2019	2019	2019	2019	2019
		Actual Total	Actual Total	Planned	Actual	Planned	Actual	Planned	Actual	Actual Total
		A	B	C	D	E	F	G=C+E	H=D+F	I=A+B+H
GFL Budget Lines										
1100	Project personnel	3 139 642	3 052 987	5 370 839	5 370 839	-	-	5 370 839	5 370 839	11 563 048
1200	Consultants	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
1300	Administrative support	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
1600	Travel on official business (above staff)	158 911	210 240	166 463	166 463	-	-	158 463	156 463	525 613
2100	Sub-contracts (UN entities)	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
2200	Sub-contracts (supporting organizations)	1 347 767	593 129	463 317	463 317	-	-	463 317	463 317	2 403 213
2300	Sub-contracts (commercial purposes)	-	-	483 359	483 359	-	-	483 359	483 359	483 359
3200	Group training (study tours, field trips, workshops, seminars, etc.)	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
3300	Meetings/conferences	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
4100	Expendable equipment	256 413	305 256	267 860	267 860	-	-	267 860	267 860	832 529
4200	Non-expendable equipment	90 647	852 470	169 431	169 431	-	-	169 431	169 431	1 132 748
4300	Premises (office rent, maintenance of premises, etc.)	31 005	139 091	40 149	40 149	-	-	40 149	40 149	219 816
5100	Operation and maintenance of equipment	-	1 500	2 544 705	2 544 705	-	-	2 544 705	2 544 705	2 546 205
5200	Reporting costs (publications, maps, newsletters, printing, etc.)	-	7 900	10 238	10 238	-	-	10 238	10 238	17 758
5300	Sundry (communications, postage, freight, clearance charges, etc.)	75 206	75 142	63 470	63 470	-	-	63 470	63 470	211 820
5400	Hospitality and entertainment	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
5500	Evaluation (consultants fees/travel/DSA, admin support, etc.)	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
TOTAL COSTS		5 140 794	5 238 465	9 588 530	9 588 530	-	-	9 588 530	9 588 530	20 927 889
HALF-YEARLY EXPENDITURE STATEMENT AND UNLIQUIDATED OBLIGATIONS REPORT (US\$)										
Project title:		Conserving, Enhancing and Managing Carbon Stocks and Biodiversity in the Chernobyl Exclusion Zone								
Project number:		GFL-5060-2711-AC40 / SB-000687.37 / S1-32GFL-000370								
Project implementing agency/organization:		UNEP-Europe Office								
Project implementation period:		From: 01-Jan-15 To: 31-Dec-20								
Reporting period:		From: 01-Jul-19 To: 31-Dec-19								
UNEP Budget Line		UNEP approved budget Total project budget	Current YEAR budget	Cumulative expenditures for current YEAR	Disbursements for current HALF-YEAR	Unliquidated obligations for current HALF-YEAR	Actual expenditures incurred* Total expenditures for current HALF-YEAR	Cumulative expenditures for previous YEARS	Total cumulative expenditures to date	Cumulative unspent balance to-date
		A	B	C	D	E	F=D+E	G=C+F	H	I=G+H
1100	Project Personnel									
1101	National Project Manager	100,000	60,000	-	-	-	-	-	-	100,000
1102	Associate Programme Officer (UNEP/EUROPE)	384,080	125,300	-	-	-	-	-	201,856	182,225
1103	National Science Coordinator	96,721	45,000	-	-	-	-	1,809	1,809	94,910
1199	Sub-Total	880,801	230,300	-	-	-	-	203,665	203,665	377,140
1200	Consultants									
1201	International Technical Advisor -	170,800	70,000	-	-	-	-	11,760	11,760	159,040
1202	National Consultant(s) - Forestry	63,759	30,000	-	-	-	-	5,773	5,773	77,996
1203	International Consultant(s) - Forestry	100,000	60,000	-	-	-	-	497	497	99,603
1204	National Consultant(s) - Stakeholder Communication	1,253	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1,253
1205	National Consultant(s) - Carbon Stocks	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
1206	International Consultant(s) - Carbon Stocks	-	-	-	-	-	-	1,721	1,721	(1,721)
1207	National Consultant(s) - Resource Economist	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
1208	International Consultant(s) - Resource Economist	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
1299	Sub-Total	355,822	160,000	-	-	-	-	19,751	19,751	336,071
1300	Administrative Support									
1301	Administrative Assistant	10,748	10,000	-	-	-	-	-	-	10,748
1302	National Support Staff	162,694	20,000	-	-	-	-	-	-	162,694
1399	Sub-Total	173,432	30,000	-	-	-	-	-	-	173,432
1600	Travel on Official Business									
1601	International Project staff	23,479	5,000	-	-	-	-	133,938	133,938	(110,459)
1602	National Project Staff	11,599	5,000	-	-	-	-	653	653	10,900
1699	Sub-Total	35,078	10,000	-	-	-	-	134,591	134,591	(99,559)
1999	Component Total	1,145,123	410,300	-	-	-	-	358,003	358,003	787,120
SUB-CONTRACT COMPONENT										
2200	Sub-contracts									
2201	Chernobyl Research Center	226,490	100,000	166,100	66,100	(66,100)	-	166,100	420,140	(361,750)
2202	Global Fire Monitoring Center	509,576	150,000	-	-	-	-	-	-	509,576
2203	National Research Institutions	1,343,440	300,000	293,278	-	-	-	293,278	2,266,078	(1,212,438)
2204	Regional Research Institutions	999,896	412,277	-	667,090	(667,090)	-	-	-	999,896
2299	Sub-Total	3,038,804	962,277	461,378	735,189	(735,189)	-	461,378	2,882,840	(106,714)
2999	Component Total	3,038,804	962,277	461,378	735,189	(735,189)	-	461,378	2,882,840	(106,714)
TRAINING COMPONENT										
3300	Meetings/Conferences									
3301	Inspection Workshops	4,239	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	4,239
3302	Project Steering Committee Meetings	11,333	5,000	-	-	-	-	-	-	11,333
3303	Local Technical Level Meetings	29,239	20,000	-	-	-	-	-	-	29,239
3304	Regional Thematic Meetings	40,000	40,000	-	-	-	-	-	-	40,000
3399	Sub-Total	84,811	65,000	-	-	-	-	-	-	84,811
3999	Component Total	84,811	65,000	-	-	-	-	-	-	84,811
EQUIPMENT & PREMISES COMPONENT										
4100	Expendable equipment (items under \$1,000 each)									
4101	Office supplies	10,000	5,000	-	-	-	-	70	70	9,930
4199	Sub-Total	10,000	5,000	-	-	-	-	70	70	9,930
4200	Non-expendable equipment (items above US\$ 1,000 each)									
4201	Office Equipment	40,000	20,000	-	-	-	-	-	-	40,000
4202	Laboratory Equipment	100,000	100,000	-	-	-	-	3,184	3,184	96,816
4203	Monitoring Equipment	270,000	150,000	-	-	-	-	35,000	35,000	235,000
4299	Sub-Total	410,000	270,000	-	-	-	-	38,184	38,184	371,816
4300	Premises (office rent, maintenance of premises etc)									
4301	Office Charges, Maintenance and Rent	28,898	-	-	-	-	-	181	181	28,717
4399	Sub-Total	28,898	-	-	-	-	-	181	181	28,717
4999	Component Total	448,898	275,000	-	-	-	-	38,435	38,435	410,463
MISCELLANEOUS COMPONENT										
5200	Reporting costs									
5201	Printing and Dissemination	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
5202	Training Materials	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
5299	Sub-Total	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
5300	Sundry									
5301	Communication	6,519	2,000	-	-	-	-	-	-	6,519
5399	Sub-Total	6,519	2,000	-	-	-	-	-	-	6,519
5500	Evaluation									
5501	Mid term evaluation	60,000	60,000	-	-	-	-	-	-	60,000
5502	Final Evaluation	60,000	0	-	-	-	-	-	-	60,000
5503	Audit Report	20,000	10,000	-	-	-	-	-	-	20,000
5599	Sub-Total	140,000	70,000	-	-	-	-	-	-	140,000
5999	Component Total	146,519	72,000	-	-	-	-	-	-	146,519
99	GRAND TOTAL	4,863,955	1,784,577	461,378	735,189	(735,189)	-	461,378	3,079,378	3,540,756

*The actual expenditures should be reported in accordance with the specific budget lines of the approved budget (Appendix 1) of the project document in Annex 1
The appended schedule "Explanation for expenditures reported in quarterly expenditure statement" should also be completed

ANNEX 4. Review Bulletin

The UN Environment Programme (UNEP) implements the full-sized, multi-focal area project, “Conserving, Enhancing and Managing Carbon Stocks and Biodiversity in the Chernobyl Exclusion Zone (ChEZ)”, in the Biodiversity (BD-1), Climate Change (CCM-5) and Land Degradation (LD-3) Focal Areas of GEF, in cooperation with the Government of Ukraine (GoU). The project officially started as of 16.03.2015, but the implementation process was delayed due to political instabilities in the Ukraine and other administrative issues, extended at a no-cost basis for 23 months to be completed by the date of 31.12.2020, and financial closure by 31 August 2021.

The total proposed budget for the project is 33,203,955 USD; with a GEF allocation of 4,863,955 USD, and total co-financing of 28,340,000 USD, from GoU, GFMC and UNEP.

The project objective is enhanced conservation and management of carbon stocks and biodiversity in forest and non-forest lands in the Chernobyl Exclusion Zone (ChEZ). The project aims to expand current use of the Chernobyl Exclusion Zone to encompass ecosystem values and in so doing provide ecosystem services to the benefit of local, national and international stakeholders. Project developed as an Intervention to; improve monitoring and research for large areas of forests, wetlands, and other habitat types and associated carbon benefits in the ChEZ; improve management of natural resources and carbon stocks within and around the ChEZ; and increase availability and access to critical information needed for decision-making for effective sustainable management of the ChEZ, which also defined as the project outcomes.

The project consists of local, national, regional and international scale activities, proposed to contribute to development and implementation of an expanded protected area network in and around the ChEZ, and accompanying management processes in the context of a governmental commitment to expand current productive uses in the ChEZ to the social, economic and environmental benefit of all stakeholders. While the central focus of the Project is the Ukrainian part of ChEZ, Belarus part, namely the Polesky Nature Reserve, involved in the preparation process and a cooperation agreement with has been signed in the early stages of the project implementation.

The Mid-Term Review (MTR) assess project performance to date, in terms of relevance, effectiveness and efficiency, and determine the likelihood of the project achieving its intended outcomes, including their sustainability; also address a number of strategic questions that are questions of interest to GEF and the implementing agency, and to which the project is believed to be able to make a substantive contribution. MTR also contribute to the implementing and executing partners, for further improvement of both ongoing project-related processes and recommendations for post-implementation strategies.

The MTR process cover the preparation of the inception report based on the review of the existing project documents as the first; the field mission to Kyiv and ChEZ to meet and discuss with the the GoU officers, key stakeholders, collect most up-to-date information with document reviews, focus group meetings, stakeholder discussions and teleconferences where required, and meeting with the UNEP in Geneva for a preliminary discussion of findings as the second steps. Final step is the preparation and submission of the MTR Report.

The Project rated as Moderately Satisfactory, based on the findings in the MTR process, considering the evaluation criterias defined in the ToR and relevant guidelines.

The Project is a part of the international efforts of the Government of Ukraine for enhancing its capacity in conservation and management of the Chornobyl Exclusion Zone. It has a unique character and position worldwide, not only in GEF Projects, but also other environment and nature conservation projects as being the only site for radio-ecological research and conservation, also with its connection to neighbouring Polesky Biosphere Reserve in Belarus.

The main improvement in the project implementation process can be mentioned as the establishment of the Chornobyl Radological Ecological Biosphere Reserve and its Office (CREBRO), with its enhancing operational capacity on site, although the establishment of the project management structure and start of project activities delayed due to administrative processes.

The dedication and expertise of the SAUEZM management and CREBRO team, their close cooperation with the key stakeholders observed in the MTR Process, and considered as the main reason for this improvement. Also, as per the MTR date, the key activities in the scientific research, preparation of the management plan and establishing a knowledge base and monitoring infrastructure for the dissemination and further operation of the project outputs, observed as almost achieved, but need some more focused work and experts' time, as well as the release of the required financing and reportings on time.

The administrative issues, mostly conducted by UNEP/ROE, such as financial management and reporting needs urgent improvement, as they are commented in the MTR Process, as the most problematic and critical activities for the success of the project implementation in the remaining time.

MTR consultant provides a list of recommendations for further improvement of the project implementation and the conditions referred in the evaluation ratings before the completion of the project implementation, summarized below:

- Establishing a coordination unit under the CREBRO, acting as the REPCC proposed in the project, in cooperation with CCNSRWR, Eco-Center and other institutions represented in SC and TC.
- Recruitment of a national coordinator for the remaining period of the Project implementation.
- A no-cost extension for up to 15 months , considering the need for the qualified completion of the key activities such as the site-specific research
- Organisation of periodical (monthly) Project progress update (online) meetings by UNEP/ROE with GoU (SAUEZM - CREBRO).
- Capacity enhancement activities to improve the institutional structure of the SAUEZM and the Reserve.
- Updating the Project results framework considering the recommendations in the MTR report, and an updated workplan and detailed monitoring plan for the remaining time of the Project.

Also,

- Conducting a periodical socio-economic survey in the ChEZ neighbouring areas of Ivankiv and Zythomyr districts will be beneficial to update the social and economic status of the region, and define activities for the dissemination of the Project results and further improvement of the management plan and proposed impacts from the project especially in social dimension, as referred in Output 2.1. in Project Results Framework.
- Periodical updates for informing the local governments and all relevant local and national NGOs involved in the nature conservation, radioecology and environmental protection issues and the ChEZ area, on the progress in the Project achievements and outputs, and public activities, via all communication media (website, social media, TV, etc.) strongly recommended . For this, preparing a communication plan will be beneficial
- Developing an open access database for ChEZ and Reserve, as a knowledge base especially for further research and information dissemination to public and interested institutions, as a part of the proposed monitoring system referred in Outcome 1 indicators, as well as a knowledgebase for learning and dissemination referred in Outcome 3.

ANNEX 5. Any other communication and outreach tools used to disseminate results (e.g. power point presentations, charts, graphs, videos, case studies, etc.)



Conserving, Enhancing and Managing Carbon Stocks and Biodiversity in the Chernobyl Exclusion Zone Project

Mid-Term Review
-Notes on Preliminary Findings -
(Field Mission)
17 December 2019

Iry Murat CEVIK
Regional Planner, MSc., Geographer, PhD,
MTR Consultant
murcevik@gmail.com

Conserving, Enhancing and Managing Carbon Stocks and Biodiversity in the Chernobyl Exclusion Zone Project
Mid-Term Review - OBJECTIVE & STRATEGIC QUESTIONS

The Mid-Term Review (MTR) undertaken approximately half way through project implementation to **analyse** whether the project is on-track, what problems or challenges the project is encountering, and what **corrective actions** are required. MTR assess project performance to date in terms of **relevance, effectiveness and efficiency**, and determine the **likelihood** of the project achieving its intended outcomes, including their sustainability.

Key Strategic Questions

- What evidence is available that the project activities regard to conserving, enhancing and managing of carbon stocks? To what extent are biodiversity benefits being demonstrated in Chernobyl?
- What evidence is present to suggest that the project's establishment of a research and environmental protection centre and body to improve monitoring and research of the CNEZ are?
- What evidence is available that the project activities are helping the central and local government to better manage natural resources and carbon stocks within and around the CNEZ?
- To what extent and in what ways is the project considered an important initiative for the management and the protection of the Chernobyl Exclusion Zone (CNEZ), by the targeted communities, the Government partners, and the financial institutions?
- What evidence is available of the implementation of a Monitoring and Evaluation system that effectively measures progress?

Conserving, Enhancing and Managing Carbon Stocks and Biodiversity in the Chernobyl Exclusion Zone Project
Mid-Term Review - FIELD MISSION PROGRAMME

Date	Venue	Content	Participants
09.12.2019	Chernobyl Radiation and Ecological Biosphere Reserve Office	Presentation of the status of the project from Project Team and Science Coordinator. Dr. S. Ziborev Presentation on the MTR process by MTR Consultant Mr. M. Cevik	Mr. Oleksandr Galushchenko Mr. Taras Melnychuk Mr. Valeriy Malarenko Mr. Victor Alyev Mr. Denis Vohovitskiy Mr. Anna Vasyukha Dr. Sergey Ziborev
	State Agency of Ukraine for Exclusion Zone Management (SAUEM)	Brief information on the MTR process, field mission programme by Project Team and Mr. Cevik Discussion on the project activities, comments, recommendations, etc.	Mr. Alexander Koshchuk Mr. Tamara Danylochenko Mr. Taras Melnychuk Mr. Valeriy Malarenko Mr. Victor Alyev
10.12.2019	Chernobyl Exclusion Zone & Ivankiv District centre	Site visit to CNEZ and neighbouring locations to meet the field office of the Reserve and Chernobyl Center for Nuclear Safety, Radioactive Waste & Radiobiology.	Mr. Taras Melnychuk Mr. Valeriy Malarenko Mr. Denis Vohovitskiy Mr. Valeriy Potapenko Mr. Oksana Zhuravsk Mr. Maria Tolstuchina Mr. Julia Sokol Mr. Marina Bocharova Mr. Alexander Lytvin Mr. Alexander Sytyuk Dr. Sergey Gashchuk Dr. Dmytro Holitskiy

Conserving, Enhancing and Managing Carbon Stocks and Biodiversity in the Chernobyl Exclusion Zone Project
Mid-Term Review - FIELD MISSION PROGRAMME

Date	Venue	Content	Participants
11.12.2019	National University of Life and Environmental Sciences Faculty of Livestock Breeding and Water Resources	Presentations on the scientific researches under the scientific components of the projects by the experts. Discussion on the problems, proposals, comments and recommendations.	Mr. Valeriy Malarenko Mr. Denis Vohovitskiy Dr. Sergey Ziborev Dr. Petro Lakota Dr. Victor Myronchuk Dr. Andrii BILCOB Mr. Mykhailo Bondarenko Dr. Sergey Gashchuk Dr. Dmytro Holitskiy
12.12.2019	Chernobyl Radiation and Ecological Biosphere Reserve Office	Presentation on the management plan details by Dr. Koshchuk, discussions on the plan, social, ecological and management issues. Discussion on the involvement of NGOs to the project and related activities in CNEZ and the Reserve.	Mr. Taras Melnychuk Mr. Valeriy Malarenko Mr. Denis Vohovitskiy Dr. Valeriy Koshchuk Mr. Heorhiy Vovchynskyi
13.12.2019	UNEP-GEF MFP Ukraine Office SAUEM Office	Discussion on the GEF activities related to CNEZ and Neighbouring settlements. Wrap-up meeting on the preliminary findings discussion with the SAUEM and Reserve's Project Team	Mr. Alexander Koshchuk Mr. Tamara Danylochenko Mr. Oleksandr Galushchenko Mr. Taras Melnychuk Mr. Valeriy Malarenko Mr. Denis Vohovitskiy

Conserving, Enhancing and Managing Carbon Stocks and Biodiversity in the Chernobyl Exclusion Zone Project
Mid-Term Review - FIELD MISSION PROGRAMME

Person(s)	Position	Institution
Mr. Oleksandr Galushchenko Mr. Taras Melnychuk Mr. Valeriy Malarenko Mr. Victor Alyev Mr. Denis Vohovitskiy Mr. Anna Vasyukha	Director Deputy Director Chief of Dep. of Int. Relations Dep. Chief of Dep. of Int. Relations Chief of Scientific Department Senior Researcher	Chernobyl Radiation and Ecological Biosphere Reserve
Dr. Sergey Ziborev Dr. Petro Lakota Dr. Andrii Bilcob Dr. Victor Myronchuk	Scientific Coordinator, Prof. of Forestry Dean of the Faculty Head of Department	National University of Life and Environmental Sciences
Mr. Alexander Koshchuk Mr. Tamara Danylochenko Mr. Valeriy Potapenko Mr. Oksana Zhuravsk Mr. Maria Tolstuchina Mr. Julia Sokol	Head of Agency (Field) Expert Head of Council Deputy Head of Council Account Manager PM Manager	State Agency for CNEZ Regional Council of Ivankiv
Mr. Mykhailo Bondarenko Mr. Sergey Gashchuk Dr. Dmytro Holitskiy	Director Deputy Director Researcher	Chernobyl Center for Nuclear Safety, Radioactive Waste & Radiobiology Res. Inst. of Agricultural Radiology
Mr. Marina Bocharova Mr. Alexander Lytvin Mr. Valeriy Koshchuk	Mayor Chief Director Deputy Director	Phylosov Settlement Project CNEZ NEP National Univ. of Kiev Botanical Garden
Mr. Heorhiy Vovchynskyi Mr. Serhiy Nigorenko	Head of Inspection Directorate National Coordinator	National Ecological Center of Ukraine, NEP UNEP-GEF Small Grants Programme Ukraine

Conserving, Enhancing and Managing Carbon Stocks and Biodiversity in the Chernobyl Exclusion Zone Project
Mid-Term Review - FIELD MISSION



Conserving, Enhancing and Managing Carbon Stocks and Biodiversity
in the Chernobyl Exclusion Zone Project - Mid-Term Review
Final Report – March 2020

Conserving, Enhancing and Managing Carbon Stocks and Biodiversity in the Chernobyl Exclusion Zone Project Mid-Term Review – MAIN FINDINGS		
Criteria	Main Findings	Notes/Recommendations
1. Strategic Relevance		
1. Alignment to MTS and POW and the GEF strategic priorities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The Project, developed and implemented with an approach different than other ODF Projects, with a relatively higher level of scientific focus. Comply with the UNEP and GEF priorities and programmes, in the area of preparation and approval. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Consilience with the closely updated documents will also be reviewed in MTR Report.
2. Relevance to regional, sub-regional and national environmental priorities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Project considered as an important part of the international efforts of the Government of Ukraine on management of ChEZ and the Reserve. Outputs and results of the project considered as reference for the improvement of the management, as well as legislation related to the ChEZ, specifically Biosphere Reserve, (ongoing government restructuring). 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Project Team of Chernobyl Radiation and Ecological Biosphere Reserve will provide more details on the relevant legislation and final government structure also regarding ongoing restructuring in the Government.

Conserving, Enhancing and Managing Carbon Stocks and Biodiversity in the Chernobyl Exclusion Zone Project Mid-Term Review – MAIN FINDINGS		
Criteria	Main Findings	Notes/Recommendations
2. Effectiveness		
1. Delivery of outputs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Late start of the project due to various reasons affected the progress on time, but the assigned government officers and scientists highly involved, professional, dedicated and work actively for the success of the project. Carbon & forestry management related components of the project not progressed as anticipated, although scientific research on the issue progressed, but due to delayed funding from UNEP, not completed on time. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Results framework needs prior modification and fixing the texts in different documents will be detailed in MTR report. Project may need 6-12 months extension for qualified completion of the site-specific research (instead of using the general models for carbon management). International and cross-border cooperation on the management and conservation of the region, and developing as a science-hub on radiocology to be considered as a focus topic for increasing impact.
2. Achievement of direct outcomes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Outcomes defined for the project finally, to be achieved by the end of the project, but may need improvement of the quality. 	
3. Likelihood of impact, where appropriate/ feasible	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Proposed impacts and achievement of the project objective likely to be achieved, unless there is no problem in political or governmental situations. Regarding the international and cross-border status of the region, there is and will be an increasing interest in science society and researchers. 	

Conserving, Enhancing and Managing Carbon Stocks and Biodiversity in the Chernobyl Exclusion Zone Project Mid-Term Review – MAIN FINDINGS		
Criteria	Main Findings	Notes/Recommendations
3. Financial Management		
1. Rate of spend	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Cumulative co-financing of the Ukrainian Government reported as almost 18 million USD, as of July 2019, covering 2015-2019 period, which is almost double amount of the co-financing proposed in the project (ChEZ Reserve Office). Total disbursement as of June 2019 is almost 3.5 million USD and expenditures almost 2.1 million USD (PR June 2019). Other in-kind and cash contributions from scientific teams, other project funds (EU, PR, USA, etc.) and Chernobyl Center exists. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Monthly updated amounts to be received from UNEP Project Management and reviewed in detail in MTR Report. Monthly project progress updates with financial information may be beneficial for the project partners. Information on the other project contributions should be collected and mentioned in the progress reports/PRA.
2. Quality and consistency of financial reporting	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Technical and financial reporting complied by UNEP Project Management, based on the documentation provided by the Reserve Office. 	

Conserving, Enhancing and Managing Carbon Stocks and Biodiversity in the Chernobyl Exclusion Zone Project Mid-Term Review – MAIN FINDINGS		
Criteria	Main Findings	Notes/Recommendations
4. Efficiency	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Project costs and in-kind contributions, in any case can be considered as cost-effective in such a special case, as invaluable area for research and conservation. Timely release of funds are critical, especially for scientific field works and generating qualified studies/ results. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Co-financing to the project and the reserve activities from other institutions (EC, PR, USA, other etc.) monitored and reported. Recommendations for management efficiency for SAUCM and Reserve office.
5. Sustainability	<p>The special condition of ChEZ, the Reserve, international interest and the government assurance of institutional and financial resources provides opportunities for all dimensions of sustainability.</p>	<p>An institutional structure for the management can be provided to the SAUCM and the Reserve, based on lessons learned and best practices.</p>

Conserving, Enhancing and Managing Carbon Stocks and Biodiversity in the Chernobyl Exclusion Zone Project Mid-Term Review – MAIN FINDINGS		
Criteria	Main Findings	Notes/Recommendations
6. Monitoring and Reporting		
1. Monitoring design and implementation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> An online database for scientific information input and as a decision support system is a missing component for sound implementation and achieving the targets, apart from project monitoring. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> A monitoring plan for the project, considering the updated workplan will be beneficial. (A draft framework to be recommended in MTR Report).
2. Project reporting	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Project reporting improving after the late start of the project in 2018. Quality and content of the PR 2019 is more improved than previous years. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> More detailed status reports will be provided in MTR Report.

Conserving, Enhancing and Managing Carbon Stocks and Biodiversity in the Chernobyl Exclusion Zone Project Mid-Term Review – MAIN FINDINGS		
Criteria	Main Findings	Notes
7. Factors Affecting Performance		
1. Preparation and readiness	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Dedication of the responsible staff in the State Agency and the Reserve, constructive and cooperative action, progressive approach. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Local governments and all NGOs related to project concept and the area should be informed on the project progress periodically.
2. Quality of project management and supervision	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Reporting and financial activities such as release of funds committed to be delayed. A need for a project coordinator/manager in the field for more improved and timely management. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Periodical (monthly) meetings with Project Team in ChEZ, and brief reports for them the local partners recommended.
3. Stakeholders participation and cooperation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Local and national stakeholders' participation and involvement to the project and biosphere reserve related activities, are progressive. A good and constructive cooperation between state agencies, local governments, universities and NGOs. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Project progress and outcomes recommended to be shared with public, and the project website updated.
4. Responsiveness to human rights and gender equity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Project has a special focus on ChEZ. Progress in the project implementation and achievement of outputs will have impact on women and youth in the neighboring settlements. Almost 905-90 women in the region, and same ratio for women working in the ChEZ & Reserve. 	
5. Country ownership and diligence	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Country's ownership highly around and progressing with the presidential decree on the Reserve, assignment of the Head of Agency in higher levels in government, and funds provided for the implementation. 	
6. Communication and public awareness	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Reserve's office has an improved and progressive community outreach activities, targeting children & youth. 	

Conserving, Enhancing and Managing Carbon Stocks and Biodiversity in the Chernobyl Exclusion Zone Project Mid-Term Review		
Thank you for your interest...		
Next Steps:		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Developing Theory of Change Draft MTR Report Final MTR Report 		
Any questions ?		

ANNEX 6. List of documents and individuals consulted in MTR process
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Project Documents

- Project Preparation and Approval Documents
- Project Document (Signed) and Appendix
- Project Implementation Reviews for 2016, 2017, 2018 and 2019
- UNEP Half Yearly Progress Report for June-December 2017
- Project Steering Committee Meeting Reports for December 2016 and December 2017
- Co-financing Report of SAUEZM for 2015-2018 and 2015-2019
- UNEP Expenditure Statement and Unliquidated Obligations Report for 2015-2019 (5 reports)
- Memorandum between UNEP and SAUEZM on the implementation of Project

Other related documents

- Cooperation Agreement between between the Chornobyl Radiation and Ecological Biosphere Reserve (Ukraine) and the Polissya State Radiation and Ecological Reserve (Republic of Belarus).
- Official Documents on Establishment of Chornobyl Radiation and Ecological Biosphere Reserve
- Brief Report on Outreach Activities of Chornobyl Radiation and Ecological Biosphere Reserve Office
- Chornobyl Radiation and Ecological Biosphere Reserve Informative Booklet, Brochures and Painting Book for kids
- Brief Overview of the works performed by the Institute for Radiation Measurement and Development, 11.2017-07.2018
- Progress report of CCNSRWR on results of studies on assessments on natural landscape and biodiversity for the period 08.2017-10.2019
- “Problems of Chornobyl Exclusion Zone” Journal, No.18, Published by SAUEZM
- “10 Years of People Empowerment Success” Projects Book of UNDP-GEF SGP Ukraine
- Info sheet and brochures of UNDP-GEF SGP funded Project of pripyat.com NGO Ref: UKR/SGP/OP6/Y2/CORE/CC/16/04 “Chornobyl, Territory of Change: empowering local communities”
- Terms of Reference for Mid-Term Review
- Sample MTR Reports

Presentations

- Progress in Project Implementation by Dr. Sergiy Zibtsev, Project Science Coordinator
- “Main results of the work within the development of the Management Plan for the Chornobyl Radiation and Ecological Biosphere Reserve and Protection of its Nature Complexes”, Vitaliy Kolomiychuk, PhD, Assoc. Prof. The Environmental Management Center
- “Carbon stocks assessment, management and conservation research in ChEZ: IIASA and NUBiP input”, Petro Lakyda, Andrii Bilous, Victor Myroniuk, Roman Vasylyshyn, Ivan Lakyda from National University of Life and Environmental Sciences of Ukraine
- Progress report of CCNSRWR on results of studies on assessments on natural landscape and biodiversity for 2017-2019

Online and audio-visual resources

- SAUEZM, Project and Reserve’s websites: dazv.gov.ua, chornobyl-gef.com , zapovidnyk.org.ua
- Brief information on SATREPS funded project “ Strengthening of the Environmental Radiation Control and Legislative Basis for the Environmental Remediation of Radioactively Contaminated Sites Enable safe and effective management of the Chornobyl Exclusion Zone” (https://www.jst.go.jp/global/english/kadai/h2803_ukraine.html)
- Pripyat.com
- Regional Eastern Europe Fire Monitoring Center (REEFMC) (<https://nubip.edu.ua/en/node/9087/6>)
- “The Real Chornobyl” Documentary by Sky on youtube
- “The Story of Chornobyl’s New Safe Confinement” by EBRD on youtube
- “Wolves of Chornobyl” documentary on youtube
- “Chornobyl” Series by HBO on beinconnect

Individuals

Person(s)	Position	Institution
Mr. Oleksandr Galushchenko Mr. Taras Melnychuk Mr. Valeriy Maliarenko Mr. Victor Aliyev Mr. Denis Vishnevskiy Ms. Alona Varukha	Director Deputy Director Chief of Dept. Int. Relations Dep.Chief of Dep.Int. Relations Chief of Scientific Department Junior Researcher	Chornobyl Radiation and Ecological Biosphere Reserve
Dr. Sergiy Zibtsev Dr. Petro Lakyda Dr. Andrii BILOUS Dr. Victor Myroniuk	Scientific Coordinator, Prof. of Forestry Dean of the Faculty Head of Department	National University of Life and Environmental Sciences
Mr. Alexander Kovalchuk Ms. Tamara Danylchenko	Head of Agency (Acting) Expert	State Agency for ChEZ
Mr. Valeriy Potienko Ms. Oxana Shumak	Head of Council Deputy Head of Council	Regional Council of Ivankiv
Ms. Maria Tolochine Ms. Julia Kosko	Account Manager PR Manager	Ivankiv Field Office of Chornobyl Radiation and Ecological B. Reserve
Mr. Mykhaylo Bondarkov Mr. Sergey Gashchak	Director Deputy Director	Chornobyl Center for Nuclear Safety, Radioactive Waste & Radioecology
Dr. Dmytro Holiaka	Researcher	Res. Inst. of Agricultural Radiology
Mr. Marina Bizchastna	Mayor	Pryborsk Settlement
Mr. Alexandr Syrota	Chair/Founder	Pripyat.com NGO
Mr. Vitaliy Kolomiychuk	Deputy Director	National Univ. of Kyiv Botanical Garden
Mr. Heorhiy Veremiychyk	Head of Inspection Committee	National Ecological Center of Ukraine, NGO
Ms. Svitlana Nigorodova	National Coordinator	UNDP-GEF Small Grants Programme Ukraine
Mr. S. Ersin ESEN Mr. Ulrich PIEST Mr. Mahir ALIYEV Mrs. Marieta SAKALIAN	Task Manager Acting Task Manager Regional Coordinator (ROE) & Project Manager Senior Programme Officer & Former Task Manager	United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP)
Mr. David LaRoche	Independent Consultant	

ANNEX 7. Brief CV of the consultant

Mr. MURAT ÇEVİK

City and Regional Planner, MSc. & Geographer, PhDc

SUMMARY

Experienced Senior Expert with a demonstrated history of working in urban and regional planning, nature conservation, environment and sustainable development, strategy and management planning, and consulting sector, with an MSc. in Regional Planning and Doctor of Philosophy candidate (PhDc) in (Human) Geography. Skilled in sustainable development, strategic planning, project management, monitoring and evaluation, non-governmental and community based organisation management and advisory services, socio-economic, socio-ecological and spatial research, rural development, management and planning.

EDUCATION

Doctor of Philosophy (Ph.D.) in Geography, Ankara University (candidate)

Master of Science (MSc.) in Regional Planning, Middle East Technical University

Bachelor of Science (BSc.) in City Planning, Dokuz Eylül University

High School Diploma in Maths & Science from TED Karabük Foundation Private Schools

SELECTED PROFESSIONAL EXPERIENCE

Recent Position

Managing Partner & CEO

Akademia Management, Training, Research, Consultancy, Equestrian Services Co.Ltd., April 2014 - Present

Partner and Principal in charge of the overall coordination of company activities on project development, cooperation with institutions and solution partners, international networking, strategic planning, environment, energy and sustainable development topics.

Senior Advisor/ Freelance Consultant

Various NGOs and Private Sector Companies, May 2009 - Present

Senior Advisor/Expert on Regional Planning, Environment and Sustainable Development, Nature Conservation, Natural Resource Management, Strategic Planning, Programme/Project Development, Management, Monitoring and Evaluation, Impact Assessment.

Relevant Experience on Project Management, Monitoring and Evaluation

United Nations Environment Programme, July 2019 – April 2020

Consultant for the Mid Term Review of the, full scale, "The Enhanced Conservation and Management of Carbon Stocks and Biodiversity in Forest and non-Forest Lands in the Chernobyl Exclusion Zone in Ukraine Project", funded by Global Environment Facility (GEF) and implemented by UN Environment Programme in Ukraine.

Food and Agriculture Organisation of UN (FAO), July 2018 - March 2019

National Consultant (Monitoring and Evaluation Specialist) of FAO(Turkey) with a special focus on the GEF funded projects: 'Conservation and Sustainable Management of Turkey's Steppe Ecosystems' (GCP/TUR/061/GFF) and 'Sustainable Land Management and Climate-Friendly Agriculture' (GCP/TUR/055/GFF), and EU funded project on 'Agricultural Implication for Ecosystem Based Adaptation (EBA) to Climate Change in Steppe Ecosystems (GCP/TUR/063/EC)', implemented in partnership with the Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry of Turkey. Represent FAO Turkey and in UN Results Monitoring Work Group, and Environment and Sustainable Development Results Group, and support the review of Country Programming Framework (CPF) and country reporting.

United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) Türkiye, May - June 2018

Consultant for the Final Evaluation of the GAP Regional Development Agency- UNDP Organic Agriculture Cluster Project.

United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) Türkiye, March 2018 - June 2018

Consultant for UNDP-GEF PIMS 4833: POPs Legacy Elimination and POPs Release Reduction Project Mid-Term Review.

Food and Agriculture Organisation of UN (FAO), September 2017 - January 2018

Member of the Mid-Term Evaluation Team of the "GCP /TUR/056/GFF-Sustainable Land Management and Climate-Friendly Agriculture" Project, co-financed by Global Environmental Facility (GEF), TR Ministry of Forestry and Water Affairs, TR Ministry of Food, Agriculture and Livestock, implemented by Food and Agriculture Organisation of UN (FAO), as Natural Resource Management Expert.

ICF International Consulting, September 2015 - October 2015 & October 2017 - December 2017

National consultant for Turkey section of the external evaluation of the ESMA and ASTAE programmes of World Bank in 2015 and the evaluation of Climate Investment Fund (CIF) implementation in Türkiye in 2017, conducted by ICF Management Consulting..

Ardahan Provincial Special Administration, March 2017 - January 2018

Senior Project Advisor to Ardahan Provincial Special Administration and Operation Coordination Unit Expert for the implementation of Ardahan Yalnızçam Winter Tourism Centre Project, co-funded by EU under IPA Regional Competitiveness Operational Programme (RCOP) executed by TR Ministry of Science, Industry and Technology.

United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) Türkiye, October 2015 - February 2017

Regional Administrator of the Ardahan-Kars-Artvin Development Project executed by the TR Ministry of Food, Agriculture and Livestock GD of Agricultural Reform, in cooperation with UNDP and co-financed by IFAD.

United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) Türkiye, February – November 2014

Monitoring Consultant for the UNDP-GEF PIMS 4014: "Market Transformation of Energy Efficient Appliances Project" Grant Programme, responsible for the monitoring of the grant projects implemented by 5 universities in Türkiye

United Nations Industrial Development Organisation, June 2010 - September 2013

National Programme Coordinator for the implementation of Montreal Protocol National Programme activities of UNIDO including project development, institutional strengthening of National Ozone Unit (Ministry of Environment and Urbanisation), and related research, partnership development and cooperation activities.

United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) Türkiye, September 2007 - April 2009

Project Manager of UNDP-BTC Small Investments Fund Project Phase II responsible for the coordination of the administrative and grants component activities.

United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) Türkiye, December 2006 - September 2007

Grant Programme Monitoring Expert for monitoring and technical assistance for the implementation of the grants component of Integration of Sustainable Development into Sectoral Policies Project, funded by EU, implemented by UNDP, under the national coordination of State Planning Organisation.

World Wide Fund for Nature (WWF) – Türkiye, September 2003 - October 2006

Freshwater Programme Project Officer responsible for the coordination of the Beyşehir Lake and Uluabat Lake Wetland Management Projects, project development and administrative tasks under the projects and followingly **Programme Director** conducting the management and coordination of the Freshwater Programme activities, programme development and administrative activities

Other Selected Experience

Part-Time Lecturer at Atatürk University, Faculty of Architecture and Design, Department of City and Regional Planning 2nd Class Planning Studio in Spring 2016 **and Invited Expert/Lecturer Bilkent University** Faculty of Fine Arts and Architecture, Department of Urban Design and Landscape Architecture in 2019

Regional Planning Expert at Economic Policy Research Foundation of Türkiye (TEPAV) as a member of the experts' team developing National Spatial Strategy of Türkiye, January 2015 - March 2015

City and Regional Planner and Advisor to various urban planning projects of local administrations, private sector and academic institutions.

CONTACT INFORMATION

e-mail : murcevik@gmail.com , mcevik@akademia-ltd.com
Linkedin : <https://www.linkedin.com/in/murat-cevik-16b6a417/>
Academia.edu : <https://independent.academia.edu/MuratCevik1>

ANNEX 8. Review TOR (without annexes).

TERMS OF REFERENCE⁷

Mid-Term Review of the UN Environment/Global Environment Facility project
“Conserving, Enhancing and Managing Carbon Stocks and Biodiversity in the Chernobyl Exclusion Zone”

Section 1: PROJECT BACKGROUND AND OVERVIEW

1. Project General Information

Table 1. Project summary

UNEP Sub-programme:		UNEP Division/Branch:	
Expected Accomplishment(s):		Programme of Work Output(s):	
Project Title:	Conserving, Enhancing and Managing Carbon Stocks and Biodiversity in the Chernobyl Exclusion Zone		
Executing Agency:	UNEP/ROE		
Project partners:	GEF, Government of Ukraine		
Geographical Scope:	National		
Participating Countries:	Ukraine		
GEF project ID:	4634	IMIS number*⁸:	GFL/5060-2711-4C40
Focal Area(s):	BD; CCM; LD	GEF OP #:	00785
GEF Strategic Priority/Objective:	BD1 CCM-5 LD-3	GEF approval date*:	12.12.2014
UNEP approval date:		Date of first disbursement*:	16.03.2015
Actual start date⁹:	16.03.2015	Planned duration:	48 months
Intended completion date*:	31.12.2018	Actual or Expected completion date:	31.12.2019
Project Type:	Full Sized Project	GEF Allocation*:	US\$ 4,863,955
PPG GEF cost*:	US\$ 181,818	PPG co-financing*:	US\$ 181,818
Expected MSP/FSP Co-financing*:	US\$ 28,340,000	Total Cost*:	US\$ 33,203,955
Mid-term review/eval. (planned date):	30.09.2019	Terminal Evaluation (actual date):	
Mid-term review/eval. (actual date):		No. of revisions*:	
Date of last Steering Committee meeting:	12.12.2017	Date of last Revision*:	
Disbursement as of 30 June 2018*:	US\$ 1,626,429	Date of financial closure*:	
Date of Completion¹⁰*:	31.12.2019	Actual expenditures reported as of 30 June 2018¹¹:	US\$ 3,082,349
Total co-financing realized as of 30 June 2016¹²:	US\$ 8,924,697	Actual expenditures entered in UMOJA as of 31 June 2018*:	US\$ 3,082,349
Leveraged financing¹³:			

⁷ The updated and extended version shared by the Task Manager with the MTR Consultant.

⁸ Fields with an * sign (in yellow) should be filled by the Fund Management Officer

⁹ Only if different from first disbursement date, e.g., in cases where a long time elapsed between first disbursement and recruitment of project manager.

¹⁰ If there was a “Completion Revision” please use the date of the revision.

¹¹ Information to be provided by Executing Agency/Project Manager

¹² Projects which completed mid-term reviews/evaluations or terminal evaluations during FY14 should attach the completed co-financing table as per GEF format. See Annex 1

¹³ See above note on co-financing

2. Project rationale

The project objective is enhanced conservation and management of carbon stocks and biodiversity in forest and non-forest lands in the Chernobyl Exclusion Zone (ChEZ). The project aims to expand current use of the Chernobyl Exclusion Zone to encompass ecosystem values and in so doing provide ecosystem services to the benefit of local, national and international stakeholders. Biodiversity focused management is to be mainstreamed into the public sectors responsible for the use and management of the natural resources of the ChEZ. In order to do this in a sustainable way, project involvement and support of social and stakeholder engaged processes are ensured where science and policy work together to allow for the uptake of the results of the project. The project consists of local, national, regional and international scale activities which will contribute to development and implementation of an expanded protected area network in and around the ChEZ, and accompanying management processes in the context of a governmental commitment to expand current productive uses in the ChEZ to the social, economic and environmental benefit of all stakeholders. Mainstreaming of project results will be aided by the participation and ownership of stakeholders in this project. In order to facilitate this participation, close communication channels between project managers, governmental ministries, agencies and departments, scientists at national and international levels, and inhabitants around the ChEZ will be established. This communication will inform scientists as they strive to fill important data and information gaps, while communications between scientist and stakeholder will ensure buy-in and ownership. While the central focus of the Project is the ChEZ, officials from Belarus generally, and specifically from the Polesky Nature Reserve (Reserve), were involved during project preparation. Close cooperation and joint activities with the Reserve will continue during project implementation.

The project has three substantive components and two additional components for project management and monitoring and evaluation. Component 1 is improved monitoring and research for large areas of forests, wetlands, and other habitat types and associated carbon benefits in the ChEZ. It will result in creation of a Research and Environmental Protection Centre, which will take the lead in efforts to collect and synthesize existing research, undertake a gap analysis, and develop and implement a research program consistent with Component 2 is establishment and management of a full protected area network. The new protected area network will enable protection of biodiversity, mitigate land degradation and maintain carbon stocks in large areas of forest and non-forest lands, including wetlands and other habitat within the ChEZ. This component will include a wide reaching dissemination strategy to secure participation, build and strengthen partnerships, and contribute to further understanding and appreciation of the social, economic, and environmental benefits that will accrue to the ChEZ and surrounding area. Civil society engagement will include informal presentations and media communications on the project and its relevance to society at large. Component 3 captures lessons learned, field-testing and dissemination of results. Component 3 will ensure mainstreaming of project results. The communication process of this Component will include traditional scientific publications to demonstrate the credibility and applicability of project results. The participation of international scientific organizations in project activities will facilitate the communication of results as well as help in ensuring replication in other areas as necessary. Lessons learned will be made widely available through written reports, the project website, and through training manuals developed and distributed by the Research and Environmental Protection Center.

The project will deliver the above mention objectives through the following components:

Project Component	Expected Outcomes	Expected Outputs
1. Establishment of a Research and Environmental Protection Center	Improved monitoring and research for large areas of forests, wetlands, and other habitat types and associated carbon benefits in the ChEZ.	1.1 The REPC established and fully functional; 1.2 Comprehensive assessment of the current state and trends of natural ecosystems in the ChEZ; 1.3 Assessment of the status of ecosystem services and their values and enhancement of carbon benefits in terms meeting LLUCF targets in the ChEZ

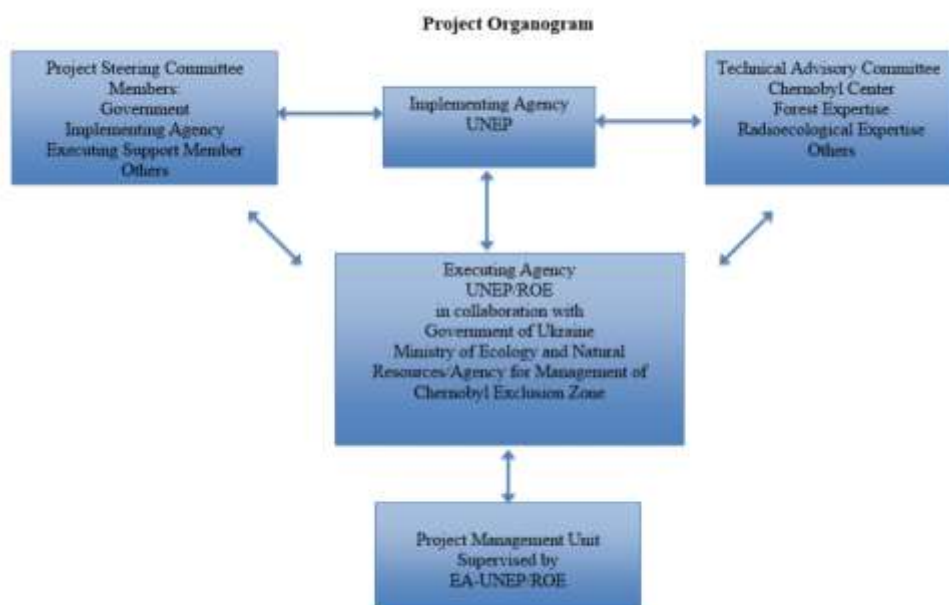
2. Establishment and Management of a Full Protected Area Network	Improved management of natural resources and carbon stocks within and around the ChEZ.	2.1 Formal designation of the ChEZ as Biosphere Reserve for enhancing conservation and management of carbon stocks; 2.2 Measures developed to ensure financial and institutional sustainability of multi-sector conservation programs
3. Learning, Field Testing and Dissemination	Increased availability and access to critical information needed for decision-making for effective sustainable management of the ChEZ.	3.1 A set of lessons learned and practical recommendations on habitat rehabilitation, carbon stocks management and biodiversity conservation developed and published; 3.2 Knowledge sharing at national and international level and Training programme field tested and available for replication.
4. Monitoring and Evaluation and knowledge management	The evaluation of the progress made to achieve the project objectives and outcomes are evaluated and the lessons learned, and future implementations are facilitated.	4.1 M&E system established to measure project progress and impact and effectively implemented. 4.2 Project progress reports, Midterm and terminal evaluation carried out and reports available. 4.3 Publications, project web site and other multimedia outreach products.

3. Executing Arrangements

1. The United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) will implement the Project and bring to bear its combined body of scientific and empirical experience of critical relevance to the objectives of the project. The UNEP through its Regional Office for Europe (ROE) maintains an active programme of collaboration with Ukraine and leads the work of the Environmental pillar of the UN Development Assistance Framework (UNDAF) in Ukraine.
2. UNEP's Ecosystems Division is the GEF Implementing Agency for this Project and will provide: overall coordination of the activities of national, and any international partners; technical and scientific expertise and enhancement of regional and international cooperation. UNEP will be responsible for the overall project supervision to ensure consistency with GEF and UNEP policies and procedures and will provide guidance on linkages with related UNEP and GEF-funded activities. UNEP will also monitor implementation of the activities undertaken during the execution of the project and will provide the overall coordination and ensure that the project is in line with the UNEP Medium-Term Strategy and its Programme of Work (PoW), as approved by the UNEP Governing Council.
3. More specifically UNEP shall:
 - Provide project oversight to ensure that GEF policies and criteria are adhered to and that the project meets its objectives and achieves expected outcomes in an efficient and effective manner. Project supervision is entrusted to the UNEP/GEF Task Manager and Fund Management Officer. Project supervision missions by the Task Manager and/or Fund Management Officer will be stipulated in the project supervision plan to be developed during project appraisal phase. Enter into an Execution Agreement with Bioversity International as the lead executing agency for the provision of services to the project;

- Have a representative on the project steering committee; Report to the GEF Secretariat on the progress against milestones outlined in the CEO approval letter;
 - Inform the GEF Secretariat whenever there is a potentially substantive co-financing change (i.e. one affecting the project objectives, the underlying concept, scale, scope, strategic priority, conformity with GEF criteria, likelihood of project success, or outcome of the project);
 - Report to the GEF Secretariat on the progress against milestones outlined in the CEO approval letter;
 - Inform the GEF Secretariat whenever there is a potentially substantive co-financing change (i.e. one affecting the project objectives, the underlying concept, scale, scope, strategic priority, conformity with GEF criteria, likelihood of project success, or outcome of the project);
 - Be responsible to submit the overall annual Project Implementation Review report to the GEF Secretariat and Evaluation Office and rate the project on an annual basis in terms of progress in meeting project objectives, project implementation progress, risk, and quality of project monitoring and evaluation, and report to the GEF Secretariat through the Project Implementation Review (PIR) report;
 - Review and clear manuscripts prepared by the Executing Agency before publication, and review and agree any publishing contracts;
 - Undertake a mid-term management review of the entire project or request the Evaluation and Oversight Unit (EOU) to perform an independent mid-term evaluation;
 - Ensure that EOU of UNEP arrange for an independent terminal evaluation and submits its report to the GEF Evaluation Office;
 - As deemed appropriate, facilitate access to information, advisory services, technical and professional support available to UNEP and assist the Executing Agency to access the advisory services of other United Nations Organizations, whenever necessary; and
 - Manage and disburse funds from GEF in accordance with the rules and procedures of UNEP.
4. The UNEP Regional Office for Europe (UNEP-ROE) in close collaboration with the Ministry of Ecology and Natural Resources (MENR), the Agency responsible for the management of the Chernobyl Exclusion Zone will be the Project Executing Agency.
 5. UNEP-ROE will be responsible for the overall execution of the project and will provide appropriate support and technical expertise as required by the MENR and project partners in accordance with the objectives and key activities outlined in Section 3 of this document. UNEP-ROE will assign its Regional Coordinator for projects and activities in Eastern Europe (as cash contribution to the project) to act as Project Director and lead the overall project execution towards the objectives outlined in Section 3 of this document. An Associate Programme Officer will be appointed in UNEP-ROE to assist the Project Director with daily oversight of project execution, as well as to provide backstopping to the Project Management Unit to be based in the UN premises in Kiev. The project will rent an office space in the UN common project facility in Ukraine. Project procurement and disbursements in Ukraine will be undertaken through the UNDP Country Office in Ukraine.
 6. A full-time National Project Manager will be appointed by UNEP-ROE to be in charge of all aspects of project implementation at national level, lead the project team and coordinate with Government stakeholders to ensure the delivery of the expected project outputs.
 7. Project Management Unit (PMU) will be established in Kiev, Ukraine under the overall supervision of the UNEP Project Director and the direct supervision of the National Project Manager. The PMU will consist of the National Project Manager, Administrative Assistant and thematic consultants (on a needs basis). The TORs for staff in the PMU are provided in Appendix 9. The core PMU staff will work in tandem with designated staff of the MENR, the Agency for Management of the Exclusion Zone, the Chernobyl Research Center, staff of other relevant government ministries and agencies, and researchers and research institutions at national and international level.
 8. Further, the PMU will be assisted by the UNEP's Ecosystems Division, through several of its units/branches, including the UNEP/DEPI Terrestrial Ecosystems Unit (TEU - Nairobi) and its Forest team; the GEF BD/LD/BS Unit (Nairobi) and the Ecosystem Services Economics Unit (ESE - Nairobi).
 9. The PMU will serve as the critical link between the project pilot sites, the different groups engaged in project activities and the lead Project Executing Agency, to ensure that lessons learned are shared among sites and within national committees and to provide visibility of the project at the national and international level. The PMU and UNEP-ROE will be responsible for ensuring adequate communication of information to all national and international partners.
 10. The execution of the project at site level will be supported by local extension staff who will act as site coordinators. They will have responsibility for ensuring that there is good communication between sites and the national PMU and that within each site the required links and collaborative arrangements are developed to support e.g. collaboration between farmers, between communities and between communities and local markets.
 11. The PSC's role will include:
 - Advice and guidance to the project at policy level based on evaluation of progress and achievements reported from project partners via the PCU;

- Ensuring synergy between project activities and national, regional and international partner activities to minimize overlap and maximize mutual benefits arising from project and partner activities through coordination of the roles of the organizations they represent; and
 - Ensuring that strategic decision-making therein is made with due consideration of the project's activities and objectives
12. The Project Steering Committee will consist of representatives of the main project partners including:
 - Representatives of the Government;
 - UNEP GEF Programme management officer;
 - Representative of the Executing Agency: UNEP/ROE; and
 - Other members as may be decided by the PSC.
 13. It is expected that other key government ministries and agencies, to be determined by the PSC, will be added to the PSC.
 14. The Task Manager will represent UNEP/GEF, and the Executing Agency member will be appointed by the Executing Agency. PSC Members will be formally appointed at the start of the project by the respective organizations
 15. There will be a Technical Advisory Committee (TAC) comprised of national, regional and international scientists and other technical experts. The Project Manager will select members of the TAC in consultation with the SC Chair (MNRE), and will report on the activities of the TAC to the Project Steering Committee. The Committee will be responsible for providing scientific and technical advice to the project and will also maintain continuous contact with scientific and other technical stakeholders at national, regional, and international levels. The TAC may, at its discretion and consistent with available resources, strike specific sub-committees of experts to peer review ongoing or completed project activities, and may assist, at the request of the Project Manager, in monitoring and evaluation activities. To ensure effective coordination with, and responsiveness to the Project Coordination Unit, the Project Manager shall also be a member of the Technical Advisory Committee. The TAC will appoint a Chairman at its inaugural meeting.
 16. Last, external UNEP partners, including, among others, the IAEA, the Polessky Nature Reserve, Yale University, The U.S. Forest Service (through the U.S. Agriculture Department), the UNEP- WCMC (World Conservation Monitoring Center), the Global Fire Monitoring Network, the UN WILDFIRE Network and the United Nations University that have conducted and/or will conduct significant relevant work in Ukraine with several national and international research institutions, will be involved in in project execution while also being invited to membership on the Technical Advisory Committee.
 17. The project organogram appears below.



4. Project Cost and Financing

GEF Financing

Cost category			Year 1	Year 2	Year 3	Year 4	TOTAL
10	PERSONNEL COMPONENT						
	1100	Project Personnel	150,000	150,000	170,000	170,000	640,000
	1200	Consultants	240,000	240,000	225,000	220,000	925,000
	1300	Administrative Support	40,000	40,000	50,000	50,000	180,000
	1600	Travel on Official Business	48,198	35,000	35,000	45,000	163,198
1999	Component Total		478,198	465,000	480,000	485,000	1,908,198
20	SUB-CONTRACT COMPONENT						
	2200	Sub-contracts (MoU's/LA's for non-profit supporting organizations)	420,000	510,000	510,000	380,000	1,820,000
2299	Component Total		420,000	510,000	510,000	380,000	1,820,000
30	TRAINING COMPONENT						
	3300	Meetings/Conferences	140,000	100,000	100,000	100,000	440,000
3399	Component Total		140,000	100,000	100,000	100,000	440,000
40	EQUIPMENT AND PREMISES COMPONENT						
	4100	Expendable equipment (items above US\$ 1,000 each)	5,000	5,000	5,000	5,000	20,000
	4200	Non-expendable equipment (items above US\$ 1,000 each)	210,000	30,000	25,000	65,000	330,000
	4300	Premises (office rent, maintenance of premises etc)	15,000	15,000	25,000	25,000	80,000
4999	Component Total		230,000	50,000	55,000	95,000	430,000
50	MISCELLANEOUS COMPONENT						
	5200	Reporting costs	17,757	25,000	25,000	30,000	97,757
	5300	Sundry	2,000	2,000	2,000	2,000	8,000
	5500	Evaluation	0	0	60,000	60,000	160,000
5999	Component Total		19,757	27,000	87,000	92,000	265,757
TOTAL COST			1,287,955	1,152,000	1,232,000	1,152,000	4,863,955

Section 2. OBJECTIVE AND SCOPE OF THE REVIEW

5. Key Review Principles

18. Review findings and judgements should be based on **sound evidence and analysis**, clearly documented in the review report. Information will be triangulated (i.e. verified from different sources) as far as possible, and when verification is not possible, the single source will be mentioned (whilst anonymity is still protected). Analysis leading to evaluative judgements should always be clearly spelled out.

19. As this Review is being undertaken at the mid-point of project implementation, particular attention should be given to identifying implementation challenges and risks to achieving the expected project objectives and sustainability, which will support potential course correction. This means that the consultants need to go beyond the assessment of "what" the project performance was and make a serious effort to provide a deeper understanding of "why" the performance was as it was. This should provide the basis for the

lessons that can be drawn from the project and the recommendations that are derived from the review process

20. The reviewers should consider the difference between *what has happened with, and what would have happened without, the project*. This implies that there should be consideration of the baseline conditions, trends and counterfactuals in relation to the intended project outcomes and potential impacts. It also means that there should be plausible evidence to attribute such outcomes and impacts to the actions of the project. Sometimes, adequate information on baseline conditions, trends or counterfactuals is lacking. In such cases this should be clearly highlighted by the reviewers, along with any simplifying assumptions that were taken to enable the reviewer to make informed judgements about project performance.

21. A key aim of the review is to encourage reflection and learning by UN Environment staff and key project stakeholders. The consultant should consider how reflection and learning can be promoted, both through the review process and in the communication of review findings and key lessons. Clear and concise writing is required on all review deliverables. There may be several intended audiences, each with different interests and needs regarding the report. The Task Manager will plan with the consultant(s) which audiences to target and the easiest and clearest way to communicate the key review findings and lessons to them. This may include some or all of the following; a webinar, conference calls with relevant stakeholders, the preparation of a review brief or interactive presentation. Draft and final versions of the Main Review Report will be shared with key stakeholders by the Task Manager and a copy of the final version will be submitted to the UN Environment Evaluation Office, who will provide an assessment of the quality of the Review Report.

6. Objective of the Review

22. In line with the UN Environment Evaluation Policy¹⁴ and the UN Environment Programme Manual¹⁵, the Mid-Term Review (MTR) is undertaken approximately half way through project implementation to analyze whether the project is on-track, what problems or challenges the project is encountering, and what corrective actions are required. The MTR will assess project performance to date (in terms of relevance, effectiveness and efficiency), and determine the likelihood of the project achieving its intended outcomes, including their sustainability.

7. Key Strategic Questions

23. In addition to the evaluation criteria outlined in Section 10 below, the review will address the **strategic questions** listed below. These are questions of interest to UN Environment and to which the project is believed to be able to make a substantive contribution:

Conserving, Enhancing and Managing Carbon Stocks and Biodiversity in the Chernobyl Exclusion Zone

- (a) What evidence is available that the project activities regard to conserving, enhancing and managing of carbon stocks? To what extent are biodiversity benefits being demonstrated in Chernobyl?
- (b) What evidence is present to suggest that the project's establishment of a research and environmental protection centre are likely to improve monitoring and research of the ChEZ are?
- (c) What evidence is available that the project activities are helping the central and local government to better manage natural resources and carbon stocks within and around the ChEZ?
- (d) To what extent and in what ways is the project considered an important initiative for the management and the protection of the Chernobyl Exclusion Zone (ChEZ), by the targeted communities, the Government partners, and the financial institutions?
- (e) What evidence is available of the implementation of a Monitoring and Evaluation system that effectively measures progress?

8. Evaluation Criteria

24. All evaluation criteria will be rated on a six-point scale. Sections A-I below, outline the scope of the criteria and a link to a table for recording the ratings is provided in Annex 1. A weightings table will be provided in excel format (link provided in Annex 1) to support the determination of an overall project rating.

¹⁴ <http://www.unep.org/eou/StandardsPolicyandPractices/UNEPEvaluationPolicy/tabid/3050/language/en-US/Default.aspx>

¹⁵ http://www.unep.org/QAS/Documents/UNEP_Programme_Manual_May_2013.pdf . This manual is under revision.

A. Strategic Relevance

25. The review will assess, in line with the OECD/DAC definition of relevance, 'the extent to which the activity is suited to the priorities and policies of the target group, recipient and donor'. The review will include an assessment of the project's relevance in relation to UN Environment's mandate and its alignment with UN Environment's policies and strategies at the time of project approval. Under strategic relevance an assessment of the complementarity of the project with other interventions addressing the needs of the same target groups will be made. This criterion comprises four elements:

i. *Alignment to the UN Environment Medium Term Strategy¹⁶ (MTS) and Programme of Work (POW) and the GEF Strategic Priorities*

The review should assess the project's alignment with the MTS and POW under which the project was approved and include reflections on the scale and scope of any contributions made to the planned results reflected in the relevant MTS and POW. GEF priorities are specified in published programming priorities and focal area strategies.

ii. *Relevance to National Environmental Priorities*

The review will assess the extent to which the intervention is suited, or responding to, the stated environmental concerns and needs of the countries where it is being implemented. Examples may include: national or sub-national development plans, poverty reduction strategies or Nationally Appropriate Mitigation Action (NAMA) plans or regional agreements etc.

B. Effectiveness

26. The review will assess effectiveness across three dimensions: delivery of outputs, achievement of direct outcomes and, where appropriate and feasible, likelihood of impact. At the mid-point more emphasis is placed on performance at the output and outcome levels, but observations about likelihood of impact may be helpful for course correction or adjusting the emphasis of the project's efforts.

i. *Achievement of Outputs*

The review will assess the project's success in producing the programmed outputs (products and services delivered by the project itself) and achieving targets and milestones as per the project design document (ProDoc). Any *formal* modifications/revisions made during project implementation will be considered part of the project design. Where the project outputs are inappropriately or inaccurately stated in the ProDoc, a table should be provided showing the original formulation and the amended version for transparency. The achievement of outputs will be assessed in terms of both quantity and quality, and the assessment will consider their usefulness and the timeliness of their delivery. The review will briefly explain the reasons behind the success or shortcomings of the project in delivering its programmed outputs and meeting expected quality standards.

ii. *Achievement of Direct Outcomes*

The achievement of direct outcomes is assessed as performance against the direct outcomes defined in the Project Framework. These are the first-level outcomes expected to be achieved as an immediate result of project outputs, by the end of the project and with the total funds secured for the project's implementation. A table can be used where substantive amendments to the formulation of direct outcomes is necessary to make them consistent with OECD/DAC guidelines. Where possible, the review should report evidence of attribution between UN Environment's intervention and the direct outcomes.

iii. *Likelihood of Impact*

Based on the articulation of longer term effects as defined in project objective or stated intentions, the review will, where possible, assess the likelihood of the intended, positive impacts becoming a reality.

The review will also consider the likelihood that the intervention may lead, or contribute, to unintended negative effects. Some of these potential negative effects may have been identified in the project design as risks or as part of the analysis of Environmental, Social and Economic Safeguards.¹⁷ The review will consider the extent to which the project is playing a catalytic role or is promoting longer-term scaling up and/or replication¹⁸.

¹⁶ UN Environment's Medium Term Strategy (MTS) is a document that guides UN Environment's programme planning over a four-year period. It identifies UN Environment's thematic priorities, known as Sub-programmes (SP), and sets out the desired outcomes, known as Expected Accomplishments (EAs), of the Sub-programmes.

¹⁷ Further information on Environmental, Social and Economic Safeguards (ESES) can be found at <http://www.unep.org/about/eses/>

¹⁸ *Scaling up* refers to approaches being adopted on a much larger scale, but in a very similar context. *Scaling up* is often the longer term objective of pilot initiatives. *Replication* refers to approaches being repeated or lessons being explicitly

C. Financial Management

27. Under financial management the Mid-Term Review will assess: a) whether the rate of spend is consistent with the project's length of implementation to-date, the agreed workplan and the delivery of outputs and b) whether financial reporting and/or auditing requirements are being met consistently and to adequate standards by all parties. Any financial management issues that are affecting the timely delivery of the project or the quality of its performance will be highlighted.

D. Efficiency

28. In keeping with the OECD/DAC definition of efficiency, the review will assess the cost-effectiveness and timeliness of project execution. Focusing on the translation of inputs into outputs, cost-effectiveness is the extent to which an intervention has achieved, or is expected to achieve, its results at the lowest possible cost. Timeliness refers to whether planned activities were delivered according to expected timeframes as well as whether events were sequenced efficiently. The review will describe any cost or time-saving measures put in place to maximise results within the secured budget and agreed project timeframe and consider whether the project was implemented in the most efficient way compared to alternative interventions or approaches. The review will also assess ways in which potential project extensions can be avoided through stronger project management.

E. Monitoring and Reporting

29. The review will assess monitoring and reporting across two sub-categories: monitoring design and implementation, and project reporting.

i. Monitoring Design and Implementation

Each project should be supported by a sound monitoring plan that is designed to track progress against SMART¹⁹ indicators towards the achievement of the projects outputs and direct outcomes. The review will assess the quality of the design of the monitoring plan. The review will assess whether the monitoring system was operational and facilitated the timely tracking of results and progress towards projects objectives throughout the project implementation period. The review should confirm that funds allocated for monitoring were used to support this activity.

ii. Project Reporting

Projects funded by GEF have requirements with regard to verifying documentation and reporting (i.e. the Project Implementation Reviews, Tracking Tool and CEO Endorsement template²⁰), which will be made available by the Task Manager. The review will assess the extent to which both UN Environment and GEF reporting commitments have been fulfilled. Where corrective action is indicated in the annual Project Implementation Review reports (e.g. as an identified risk), the Reviewer will record whether this action has been taken.

F. Sustainability

30. Sustainability is understood as the probability of the project's direct outcomes being maintained and developed after the close of the intervention. The review will identify and assess the key conditions or factors that are likely to undermine or contribute to the persistence of achieved direct outcomes. Some factors of sustainability may be embedded in the project design and implementation approaches while others may be contextual circumstances or conditions that evolve over the life of the intervention. Where applicable an assessment of bio-physical factors that may affect the sustainability of direct outcomes may also be included.

31. The review will ascertain that the project has put in place an appropriate exit strategy and measures to mitigate risks to sustainability. The review will consider: a) the level of ownership, interest and commitment among government and other stakeholders to take the project achievements forwards, b) the extent to which project outcomes are dependent on future funding for the benefits they bring to be sustained and c) the extent to which the sustainability of project outcomes is dependent on issues relating to institutional frameworks and governance. It will consider whether institutional achievements such as governance

applied in new/different contexts e.g. other geographic areas, different target group etc. Effective replication typically requires some form of revision or adaptation to the new context. It is possible to replicate at either the same or a different scale.

¹⁹ SMART refers to indicators that are specific, measurable, assignable, realistic and time-specific.

²⁰ The Consultant(s) should verify that the annual Project Implementation Reviews have been submitted, that the Tracking Tool is being kept up-to-date and that in the CEO Endorsement template Table A and Section E have been completed.

structures and processes, policies, sub-regional agreements, legal and accountability frameworks etc. are robust enough to continue delivering the benefits associated with the project outcomes after project closure.

I. Factors and Processes Affecting Project Performance

32. These factors are rated in the ratings table, but are discussed as cross-cutting themes as appropriate under the other evaluation criteria, above.

i. Preparation and Readiness

This criterion focuses on the inception or mobilisation stage of the project. The review will assess whether appropriate measures were taken to either address weaknesses in the project design or respond to changes that took place between project approval, the securing of funds and project mobilisation. In particular the review will consider the nature and quality of engagement with stakeholder groups by the project team, the confirmation of partner capacity and development of partnership agreements as well as initial staffing and financing arrangements.

ii. Quality of Project Implementation and Execution

Specifically for GEF funded projects, this factor refers separately to the performance of the executing agency and the technical backstopping and supervision provided by UN Environment, as the implementing agency.

The review will assess the effectiveness of project management with regard to: providing leadership towards achieving the planned outcomes; managing team structures; maintaining productive partner relationships (including Steering Groups etc.); communication and collaboration with UN Environment colleagues; risk management; use of problem-solving; project adaptation and overall project execution. Evidence of adaptive project management should be highlighted.

iii. Stakeholder Participation and Cooperation

Here the term 'stakeholder' should be considered in a broad sense, encompassing all project partners, duty bearers with a role in delivering project outputs and target users of project outputs and any other collaborating agents external to UN Environment. The assessment will consider the quality and effectiveness of all forms of communication and consultation with stakeholders throughout the project life and the support given to maximise collaboration and coherence between various stakeholders, including sharing plans, pooling resources and exchanging learning and expertise. The inclusion and participation of all differentiated groups, including gender groups, should be considered.

iv. Responsiveness to Human Rights and Gender Equity

The review will ascertain to what extent the project has applied the UN Common Understanding on the human rights based approach (HRBA) and the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous People. Within this human rights context the review will assess to what extent the intervention adheres to UN Environment's Policy and Strategy for Gender Equality and the Environment.

The report should present the extent to which the intervention, following an adequate gender analysis at design stage, has implemented the identified actions and/or applied adaptive management to ensure that Gender Equity and Human Rights are adequately taken into account. In particular, the review will consider to what extent project design (section B), the implementation that underpins effectiveness (section D), and monitoring (section G) have taken into consideration: (i) possible gender inequalities in access to and the control over natural resources; (ii) specific vulnerabilities of women and children to environmental degradation or disasters; (iii) the role of women in mitigating or adapting to environmental changes and engaging in environmental protection and rehabilitation.

v. Country Ownership and Driven-ness

The review will assess the quality and degree of engagement of government / public sector agencies in the project. The review will consider the involvement not only of those directly involved in project execution and those participating in technical or leadership groups, but also those official representatives whose cooperation is needed for change to be embedded in their respective institutions and offices. This factor is concerned with the level of ownership generated by the project over outputs and outcomes and that is necessary for long term impact to be realised. This ownership should adequately represent the needs and interests of all gender and marginalised groups.

vi. Communication and Public Awareness

The review will assess the effectiveness of: a) communication of learning and experience sharing between project partners and interested groups arising from the project during its life and b) public awareness activities that were undertaken during the implementation of the project to influence attitudes or shape

behaviour among wider communities and civil society at large. The review should consider whether existing communication channels and networks were used effectively, including meeting the differentiated needs of gender or marginalised groups, and whether any feedback channels were established. Where knowledge sharing platforms have been established under a project the review will comment on the sustainability of the communication channel under either socio-political, institutional or financial sustainability, as appropriate.

Section 3. REVIEW APPROACH, METHODS AND DELIVERABLES

33. The Mid-Term Review will use a participatory approach whereby key stakeholders are kept informed and consulted throughout the review process. Both quantitative and qualitative evaluation methods will be used as appropriate to determine project achievements against the expected outputs, outcomes and impacts. It is highly recommended that the consultant(s) maintains close communication with the project team and promotes information exchange throughout the review implementation phase in order to increase their (and other stakeholder) ownership of the review findings.

34. Where applicable, the consultant(s) should provide a geo-referenced map that demarcates the area covered by the project and, where possible, provide geo-reference photographs of key intervention sites (e.g. sites of habitat rehabilitation and protection, pollution treatment infrastructure, etc.)

35. The findings of the review will be based on the following:

- (a) **A desk review of:**
 - Relevant background documentation, inter alia
 - Project Document and Appendices
 - Project design documents (including minutes of the project design review meeting at approval); Annual Work Plans and Budgets or equivalent, revisions to the project (Project Document Supplement), the logical framework and its budget;
 - Project reports such as six-monthly progress and financial reports, progress reports from collaborating partners, meeting minutes, relevant correspondence and including the Project Implementation Reviews and Tracking Tool etc.;
 - Evaluations/Reviews of similar projects.
- (b) **Interviews** (individual or in group) with:
 - UN Environment Task Manager (TM);
 - Project management team;
 - UN Environment Fund Management Officer (FMO);
 - Project partners, including
 - Government of Ukraine
 - Local stakeholders
- (c) **Field visits: Minimum 2 visits (1 to the pilot country Ukraine and 1 to the Geneva, where part of the project management team is located)**
- (d) **Other data collection tools:** If needed, to be decided at the inception phase

9. Review Deliverables and Review Procedures

36. The review team will prepare:

- **Inception Report:** (see Annex 1 for links to all templates, tables and guidance notes) containing confirmation of the results framework and theory of change of the project, project stakeholder analysis, review framework and a tentative review schedule.
- **Preliminary Findings Note:** typically, in the form of a powerpoint presentation, the sharing of preliminary findings is intended to support the participation of the project team, act as a means to ensure all information sources have been accessed and provide an opportunity to verify emerging findings.
- **Draft and Final Review Reports:** (see links in Annex 1) containing an executive summary that can act as a stand-alone document; detailed analysis of the review findings organised by review criteria and supported with evidence; lessons learned and recommendations and an annotated ratings table.

37. **Review of the draft review report.** The review team will submit a draft report to the Task Manager and revise the draft in response to their comments and suggestions. Once a draft of adequate quality has been peer-reviewed and accepted, the Task Manager will share the cleared draft report with key project stakeholders for their review and comments. Stakeholders may provide feedback on any errors of fact and

may highlight the significance of such errors in any conclusions as well as providing feedback on the proposed recommendations and lessons. Any comments or responses to draft reports will be sent to the Task Manager for consolidation. The Task Manager will provide all comments to the review team for consideration in preparing the final report, along with guidance on areas of contradiction or issues requiring an institutional response.

38. At the end of the review process, the Task Manager will either circulate **Lessons Learned** or prepare a **Recommendations Implementation Plan** in the format of a table, to be completed and updated at regular intervals.

10. The Consultants' Team

39. For this review, the review team will consist of a Consultant who will work under the overall responsibility of the Task Manager Ersin Esen, in consultation with the Head of Branch/Unit Johan Robinson, Fund Management Officer, Pooja Bhimjani. The consultant will liaise with the Task Manager on any procedural and methodological matters related to the review. It is, however, the consultants' individual responsibility to arrange for their travel, visa, obtain documentary evidence, plan meetings with stakeholders, organize online surveys, and any other logistical matters related to the assignment. The Task Manager and project team will, where possible, provide logistical support (introductions, meetings etc.) allowing the consultants to conduct the review as efficiently and independently as possible.

40. The consultant will be hired for 36 days over a spread of 4-month period (Mid July – Mid November 2019). He / She should have: an advanced university degree in environmental sciences, international development or other relevant political or social sciences area; a minimum of 10 years of technical / evaluation experience, including of evaluating large, global programmes, including overseeing project teams, managing complex budgets, interacting with oversight personnel or committees, and demonstrating adaptive management when necessary. Knowledge of the UN system, specifically of the work of UN Environment, is desirable. Experience in the project country Ukraine is an asset. Fluency in written and oral English with strong writing and editing skills is required. Language skills in Ukrainian or Russian is desirable.

41. The consultant will be responsible, in close consultation with the Task Manager, for overall management of the review and timely delivery of its outputs, described above. The consultant will ensure that all evaluation criteria and questions are adequately covered.

11. Schedule of the Review

42. The table below presents the tentative schedule for the review.

Table 3. Tentative schedule for the review

Milestone	Indicative Timeframe
Inception Report	30 July 2019
Review Mission	10-30 August 2019
Telephone interviews, surveys etc.	10-30 August 2019
Powerpoint/presentation on preliminary findings and recommendations	10 September 2019
Draft report to Task Manager	24 September 2019
Draft Report shared with the wider group of stakeholders	1 October 2019
Final Main Review Report	15 October 2019
Final Main Review Report shared with all respondents	30 September 2019

12. Contractual Arrangements

43. Review Consultants will be selected and recruited by the Task Manager under an individual Special Service Agreement (SSA) on a "fees only" basis (see below). By signing the service contract with UN Environment/UNON, the consultant(s) certify that they have not been associated with the design and implementation of the project in any way which may jeopardize their independence and impartiality towards project achievements and project partner performance. In addition, they will not have any future interests (within six months after completion of the contract) with the project's executing or implementing units. All consultants are required to sign the Code of Conduct Agreement Form.

44. Fees will be paid on an instalment basis, paid on acceptance by the Task Manager of expected key deliverables. The schedule of payment is as follows:

45. Schedule of Payment for the Consultant:

Deliverable	Percentage Payment
Approved Inception Report (<i>as per annex document 7</i>)	30%
Approved Draft Main Evaluation Report (<i>as per annex document 13</i>)	30%
Approved Final Main Evaluation Report	40%

46. Fees only contracts: Air tickets will be purchased by UN Environment and 75% of the Daily Subsistence Allowance for each authorised travel mission will be paid up front. Local in-country travel will only be reimbursed where agreed in advance with the Task Manager and on the production of acceptable receipts. Terminal expenses and residual DSA entitlements (25%) will be paid after mission completion.

47. The consultants may be provided with access to UN Environment's Programme Information Management System (PIMS) and if such access is granted, the consultants agree not to disclose information from that system to third parties beyond information required for, and included in, the review report.

48. In case the consultants are not able to provide the deliverables in accordance with these guidelines, and in line with the expected quality standards by the Task Manager, payment may be withheld at the discretion of the Head of Branch/Unit until the consultants have improved the deliverables to meet UN Environment's quality standards.

49. If the consultant(s) fail to submit a satisfactory final product to the Task Manager in a timely manner, i.e. before the end date of their contract, UN Environment reserves the right to employ additional human resources to finalize the report, and to reduce the consultants' fees by an amount equal to the additional costs borne by UN Environment to bring the report up to standard.

ANNEX 9. Quality Assessment of the Review Report (will be added by the UN Environment Evaluation Office as the final annex)