PROJECT IDENTIFICATION FORM (PIF)
PROJECT TYPE: Full-sized Project
TYPE OF TRUST FUND:GEF Trust Fund

PART I: PROJECT INFORMATION

Project Title:	Conservation of globally important biodiversity and association land and forest resources of Western Tian Shan Forest Mountain ecosystems and support to sustainable livelihoods			
Country:	Kyrgyzstan	GEF Project ID:		6958
GEF Agency:	UNDP	GEF Agency Project ID:		5411
Other Executing Partner(s):	State Agency for Environment Protection and Forestry (SAEPF), Working Secretariat of the Global Snow Leopard and Ecosystem Protection Program (WS GSLEPP)	Submission Date:		August 26, 2014
GEF Focal Area (s):	Multi-focal area	Project Duration (mths):		60
Integrated approach pilot	IAP-Cities ☐ IAP-Commodities ☐ IAP-Food Security ☐	Corporate Program: SGP ☐		
Name of parent program:	Global Snow Leopard and Ecosystem Conservation Program	Agency fee ($)		$378,915

A. INDICATIVE FOCAL AREA STRATEGY FRAMEWORK AND OTHER PROGRAM STRATEGIES:

Objectives/Programs (Focal Areas, Integrated Approach Pilot, Corporate Programs)	Trust Fund	(in $)	
		GEF Project Financing	Co-financing
LD-3 Program 4	GEFTF	1,364,979	5,775,000
SFM-1	GEFTF	480,000	1,860,000
SFM-2	GEFTF	390,000	1,810,000
SFM-3	GEFTF	459,525	1,280,000
BD-1 Program 2	GEFTF	1,104,071	3,900,000
BD-4 Program 9	GEFTF	190,000	1,875,000
Total Project Cost		**3,988,575**	**16,500,000**

B. INDICATIVE PROJECT DESCRIPTION SUMMARY

Project Objective: To promote landscape approach to protection of internationally important biodiversity, land and forest resources in Western Tian Shan in Kyrgyzstan

Project Component	Financing Type	Project Outcomes[1]	Trust Fund	(in $)	
				GEF Project Financing	Co-financing
Component 1. Conservation and sustainable management of Key Biodiversity Areas within landscape	INV	Outcome 1.1 Increased representation of endangered *Snow Leopard* habitat, and that of other vulnerable / threatened species in the PA System and avoided loss of 25,000 ha of *High Conservation Value Forests* through official designation: 1.1.1 Two new National Parks established (*Alatai* 65,705 ha and *Kanattuu* 36,780 ha) in Western Tian Shan region 1.1.2 Upgraded status of *High Conservation Value Forests* (genetically important Wild Walnut and Fruit forests): reserve boundaries demarcated, management plans drawn and under implementation. Community engagement in forest management launched Outcome 1.2 Enhanced capacities of foresters, PA staff, and overall management effectiveness of the PA system and key protected areas in Western Tian Shan in particular: 1.2.1 Strengthened capacities (budget management, financial controls; financial performance management; and financial governance and accountability) of the Protected Area Department of the SAEPF,	GEFTF	1,500,000	5,050,000

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[1] Details of outcomes and outputs are described further in the text. Ecological indicators of incremental values are described in the section on Global Benefits.

		1.2.2 Foresters trained in HCVF regime application; environmental inspectors trained in enforcement,			
		1.2.3 Management and business plans of key existing Protected Areas in Westeran Tian Shan revised,			
		1.2.4 Participatory patrolling, enforcement and surveillance systems of new and existing PAs strengthened through Local PA Management Board (joint with local communities) and joint ranger groups to enforce anti-poaching.			

Component II. Ecosystem resilience and habitat connectivity in Western Tian Shan are enhanced by regulating land and forest use in buffer zones and corridors and support to sustainable livelihoods	INV	Outcome 2.1 Reconciliation of land- and forest-use activities with sustainable land management, SFM and conservation objectives in sensitive buffer areas and corridors ensuring soil, forest and vegetation cover, and protection and safe passage of snow leopard and ungulates at an area of 1,163,100 ha:
		  2.1.1 SFM and SLM management objectives are better aligned with territorial and forest land use plans of Toktogul and Toguztorous districts, with modifications being made to the latter as needed.
		  2.1.2 Buffer zones for *Alatai* and *Kanattuu* and wildlife corridors (50,000 ha) between relevant PAs identified and designated; species management plans drafted and are under implementation; forest and land use regime in them is regulated accordingly.
		
		 Outcome 2.2. Reduced erosion of pastures, minimized threats and disturbance at breeding and foraging sites and migration routes of Snow Leopard, ungulates and threatened birds-of-prey outside PAs:
		  2.2.1 Restoration and maintenance of access roads to raise the mobility of livestock and balance livestock grazing pressure in mountain ecosystems
		  2.2.2 Rehabilitation of degraded rangelands (65,000 ha in *Toktogul* and *Togustorous* districts) through improved local pasture management plans. Based on geo-botanic studies, economic and ecosystem service assessment. Pasture management plans designed and implemented jointly with communities, using GIS technologies mapping feeding grounds and migrating routes (and timing) of Snow Leopard (SL).
		  2.2.3 Forest restoration of 5,000 ha of degraded forests important for SL migration
		
		 Outcome 2.3 Alternative livelihoods program for local communities designed jointly with the local micro-crediting institutions, and launched to support alternative livelihoods (e.g. *native tree nurseries, small scale reforestation, support to natural pasture rejuvenation, organic farming, medicinal plant processing, apiculture, and community-based ecotourism*). Support will be provided through the same model as established in Central Tian Shan under the parallel UNDP-GEF project, in partnership with a local micro-crediting association. Support will be provided to approximately 20% of rural communities in the target area.
			GEFTF	1,708,576	8,550,000

Component III. Promoting regional and global cooperation and, setting the scene for	TA	Outcome 3.1 By 2020 Kyrgyzstan adopts international standards for monitoring, research and law enforcement in SL conservation and is engaged in at least one cross-border SL conservation agreement: 3.1.1 Enhanced enforcement capacities of environmental inspectors, police, border guards and customs officers through trainings on wildlife protection aimed at identification and	GEFTF	590,068	2,500,000

up-scaling		prosecution of wildlife crime [in coordination with global UNDP-GEF project on SL and INTERPOL Programme]. 3.1.2 Capacities created for deployment of the International System for long-term regular monitoring of Snow Leopard (based on Genetic Laboratory of NAN), applying common internationally certified standards (habitat quality, population status, prey species and threats – indicators to be elaborated under global UNDP-GEF project) [in coordination with global UNDP-GEF project on SL]. 3.1.3 Targeted support provided to participation of Kyrgyzstan in the Global Snow Leopard and Ecosystem Conservation Programs aimed at synergies and coordination of national, transboundary and regional level activities. 3.1.4 National coordination mechanism is established and functional under the Working Secretariat. Business plan is developed for WS GSLCP long-term functioning. Which will include budget, roles and responsibilities, taking stock of and learning from the results of the GEF project. Based on a digital map of SL habitat in Kyrgyzstan, with annotated recommendations for land use regimes in key areas of importance for SL. Amended policies on hunting of SL's food base. 3.1.5 Training on assessment of PA management using WWF/USAID methodology for staff from the new and existing PAs, to ensure that they can effectively fulfill management objectives. Curriculum coordinated with the relevant activities of the Global UNDP-GEF project on SL.			
		Subtotal	3,798,644	16,100,000	
		Project management cost	189,931	400,000	
		Total project costs	**3,988,575**	**16,500,000**	

C. Indicative Sources of Co-financing for the Project by Name and Type if Available

Sources of Co-financing	Name of Co-financier	Type of Co-financing	Amount ($)
Recipient Government	State Agency for Environment Protection and Forestry	Grant	13,800,000
		In-kind	500,000
Recipient Government	Republican Nature Protection and Forestry Development Fund	Grant	200,000
GEF Agency	UNDP	Grant	1,500,000
CSO	WWF	Grant	300,000
CSO	NABU	In-kind	200,000
Total Co-financing			**16,500,000**

D. Indicative Trust Fund Resources Requested by Agency (ies), Focal Area(s), Country(ies), and Programming of Funds

GEF Agency	Trust Fund	Country/ Regional/Global	Focal Area	Programming of funds	(in $)		
					GEF Project Financing (a)	Agency Fee (b)	Total (c)=a+b
UNDP	GEF	Kyrgyzstan		SFM	1,329,525	126,305	1,455,830
UNDP	GEF	Kyrgyzstan	Biodiversity		1,294,071	122,937	1,417,008
UNDP	GEF	Kyrgyzstan	Land Degradation		1,364,979	129,673	1,494,652
Total GEF resources					**3,988,575**	**378,915**	**4,367,490**

E. Project Preparation Grant (PPG)
Is Project Preparation Grant requested? Yes ☒

PPG AMOUNT REQUESTED BY AGENCY(IES), TRUST FUND, COUNTRY(IES) AND THE PROGRAMMING OF FUNDS

GEF Agency	Trust Fund	Country/ Regional/Global	Focal Area	Programming of Funds	(in $)		
					PPG (a)	Agency Fee (b)	Total (c) = a + b
UNDP	GEFTF	Kyrgyzstan		SFM	40,338	3,832	44,170
UNDP	GEFTF	Kyrgyzstan	Biodiversity		39,262	3,730	42,992
UNDP	GEFTF	Kyrgyzstan	Land Degradation		41,413	3,934	45,347
Total PPG Amount					**121,013**	**11,496**	**132,509**

F. PROJECT'S TARGET CONTRIBUTIONS TO GLOBAL ENVIRONMENTAL BENEFITS

Corporate Results	Replenishment Targets	Project Targets
1. Maintain globally significant biodiversity and the ecosystem goods and services that it provides to society	Improved management of landscapes and seascapes covering 300 million hectares	*280,000 mln ha**
2. Sustainable land management in production systems (agriculture, rangelands, and forest landscapes)	120 million hectares under sustainable land management	*1,160,000 ha***
3. Promotion of collective management of transboundary water systems and implementation of the full range of policy, legal, and institutional reforms and investments contributing to sustainable use and maintenance of ecosystem services	Water-food-ecosystems security and conjunctive management of surface and groundwater in at least 10 freshwater basins;	*(Enter number of freshwater basins)*
	20% of globally over-exploited fisheries (by volume) moved to more sustainable levels	*(Enter percent of fisheries, by volume)*
4. Support to transformational shifts towards a low-emission and resilient development path	750,000,000 tons of CO_{2e} mitigated (include both direct and indirect)	2,100,000 t CO2-eq/10y (total: sequestered+avoided in soil and above ground biomass)
5. Increase in phase-out, disposal and reduction of releases of POPs, ODS, mercury and other chemicals of global concern	Disposal of 80,000 tons of POPs (PCB, obsolete pesticides)	*(Enter number of tons)*
	Reduction of 1000 tons of Mercury	*(Enter number of tons)*
	Phase-out of 303.44 tons of ODP (HCFC)	*(Enter number of tons)*
6. Enhance capacity of countries to implement MEAs (multilateral environmental agreements) and mainstream into national and sub-national policy, planning financial and legal frameworks	Development and sectoral planning frameworks integrate measurable targets drawn from the MEAs in at least 10 countries	*(Enter number of countries)*
	Functional environmental information systems are established to support decision-making in at least 10 countries	*(Enter number of countries)*

* The project creates new and strengthens PAs at a total area of 226,621 ha (which includes 25,000 of High Conservation Value Forests) and creates wildlife corridors and buffer zones at a total area of 50,000 ha. The direct effect thus is 0.28 mln ha.

** Through Component II the project will ensure adoption of SLM and SFM practices in tettitorial and forest use plans of 2 districts with a total area of 1.16 mln ha.

PART II: PROJECT JUSTIFICATION
PROJECT OVERVIEW

A.1. PROJECT DESCRIPTION

A.1.1 Global environmental problems, root causes and barriers that need to be addressed

The mountain system of the Tian Shan accounts for approximately 90% of Kyrgyzstan's area.[2]. The Tian Shan and Alay ranges act as a bridge connecting fauna and flora of the Himalayas and Hindu Kush across Pamir with biota of Siberia, and across Dzungar Ala-Tau and Altay with biota of Mongolia. Western Tian Shan is one of the World's 200 Ecoregions. The forests of Western Tian Shan have Juniper, Spruce, Maple, Nut, Fruit, and Tugai forest communities, including wild relatives of fruit and nut species including IUCN-listed Knorring Hawthorn (*Crataegus knorringiana*, CR), Sievers and Niedzwetzky Apples. The watersheds of the Western Tian Shan forests supply water for 1/3 of the country and for millions of hectares in the neighboring states.

The region is home of the endemic IUCN-VU marmot species *Marmota menzbieri* which occurs only in Western Tian, as well as Dhole (*Cuon alpinus* EN). The *Ovis ammon nigrimontana* subspecies of Argali is found here. Altogether 25 IUCN Red List Species have their home in Western Tian Shan. Further to those mentioned above, these include *Armeniaca vulgaris* EN, *Betula talassica* EN, *Lonicera karataviensis* CR, *Spiraeanthus schrenkianus* EN; *Parnassius apollo, V*U and 11 nesting and stop-over species sucha s *Aquila heliaca* VU, *Otis tard*a VU, *Columba eversmann*i, VU, *Falco cherrug* EN, *Falco naumanni* VU, Neophron *percnopteru*s EN. The impressive total species diversity of Tian Shan, together with abundance of endemics and high altitudinal variations define high rate of species turnover across habitats (high β-diversity).

The Tian Shan Mountains provide ideal habitat for the endangered Snow Leopard. Snow leopards are usually found between 3,000 and 5,400 meters above sea level where the environment is harsh and forbidding, the climate is cold and dry, and the mountain slopes sparsely vegetated with grasses and small shrubs, providing good cover and clear views to help them sneak up on their prey. These biotopes are located closely to grassland and pasture ecosystems used by local communities, which in turn are important elements defining the overall health of the ecosystems and level of disturbance for the Snow Leopard. In the Toktogul and Toguztorouz districts alone (most ecosystem-rich districts, the key focus of this project), there are over 0.6 mln hectares of pastures. In Kyrgyzstan on the whole, mountainous pastures cover 40% of the territory, providing livelihoods for 65% of people.

Typical for the whole Tian Shan area in Kyrgyzstan is the shrinking area of relict spruce, Juniper and wild nut and fruit forests. These forests suffer from weak protection and unjustifiably high volumes of sanitary and wood fuel cuts, as well as infringement of cattle. Harvesting of over-mature trees, which is legally permitted in unprotected areas, removes ecologically important trees, destroys surrounding vegetation as a result of extensive construction of drive-up roads, reduces biological diversity impairs its resilience to anthropogenic and natural stress. The rate of natural regeneration and reforestation is unable to keep pace with the rate of forest degradation. The area of wild fruit forests such as those of IUCN Red List Knorring Hawthorn, Sievers and Niedzwiedzky Apples, currently covering 630,900 ha in the region shrinks by 3% annually as a result of unsustainable logging. Unregulated livestock grazing presents a pressure on Juniper forests which are important for Snow Leopard migration.

The grassland areas of Snow leopard (*Uncia uncia*) foraging in Western Tian Shan are subject to extensive, uncontrolled agro-pastoral land use. The progressively growing livestock number leads to extensive unregulated use of mountainous grasslands for livestock grazing and causes high disturbance to wild ungulates such as argali and ibex. Competition with livestock for forage is one of the most widespread causes of ungulate decline. Reduced populations of ungulates, in turn, result in a decline in populations of snow leopards and birds-of-prey. The health of the grassland and pasture ecosystems is critical for Snow Leopard and its prey, as well as for soil and vegetation qualities. The rangelands of Western Tian Shan are susceptible to overgrazing, droughts, inadequate natural regeneration in the face of these pressures, and widespread aerial transportation of sand and salt. Today, over 60% of pastures in Western Tian are eroded and the quality of pastures has declined by 4 times compared to the 1980s levels. Over the past 20 years, the stocking rate of livestock (primarily sheep) has increased to twice the carrying capacity of pastures. The pressure on pastures is intensified by the decline in the practice of moving livestock between summer and winter pastures, and increased livestock density. Despite their low productivity, vast horizontal pasturelands are being used increasingly for sheep grazing, leading to soil erosion and mudslides. The combined impact generates erosion, depleted soil carbon stocks, and disturbance to biodiversity, ultimately leading to conflict between communities and wildlife.

Barrier 1: Weak protection of Key Biodiversity Areas

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[2] Kyrgyz Republic Biodiversity Strategy and Action Plan, Ministry of Environmental Protection, Bishkek, November 1998

The system of Specially Protected Nature Areas (SPNA) consists of 86 PAs covering 6.06% of the country[3]. This includes three categories of PAs (strict reserves, national parks and sanctuaries), all of which are under the direct or indirect responsibility of the State Agency for Environment Protection and Forestry. Of these three categories, the most important for nature conservation are the first two, which have administrative offices within or near the PAs, as well as rangers ('inspectors') patrolling within the PAs. The system does not provide adequate coverage for the spatial range of threatened species, most notably the snow leopard and argali. In Central Tian Shan the Government is currently supported with a US$ 1 mln UNDP-GEF project which is aiming to increase protection of the biodiversity in that part of the Tian Shan. In Western Tian Shan, the Kyrgyz Government established 10 protected areas. However, the coverage of the Snow Leopard range in Western Tian Shan remains less than 50%. Less than 20% of the endemic Shrenk's spruce forest in Western Tian Shan is currently protected and much less of wild fruit and nut forest. The protected area system suffers from underfunding, and suboptimal management. Most PAs have no legally backed buffer zones and no corridors that are needed for effective protection of such species as Snow Leopard. The protection of high conservation value forests (such as wild apple trees) suffers from lack of local capacity, no enforcement, and constant abuse of these forests by local communities (uncontrolled logging, grazing).

Barrier 2: Unsustainable management of land and forest in wider landscape

Current forest and land-use plans do not take into account the ecological requirements of flagship species such as Snow Leopard. Corridors providing for wildlife passage to key habitats outside the protected area are lacking, Juniper forest in many of these areas had degraded beyond natural regeneration rates, and buffer zones are not effectively managed to restrict biodiversity-incompatible uses. The status of locally migrating mammals depends on a landscape-level approach to conservation, combining strict conservation in the breeding/ nesting areas with sustainable use in the wildlife passage/ forage areas. The snow leopard requires a large range as it migrates locally with the changing seasons, movements of argali and ibex, and during the propagation season. In a highly fragmented landscape such as current Western Tian Shan, conservation of snow leopard and associated threatened migrating ungulates (argali) will be ineffective, both from PA cost-effectiveness perspective, as well as from the perspective of ungulate population sustainability.

Many small scattered Juniper and wild fruit and nut forest patches of up to 200 ha each continue to be used with no control over livestock entry, sanitary felling, wood fuel collection and harvest of over-mature trees. Most of the wild apple forests have not been classified as protected forest. Their area of over 600,000 ha is shrinking every year. Forestry methods applied here are the same forestry management techniques applicable to any economic forest in the country, which does not take into account their high ecological value. Land and natural resource use in such small forest parcels located in the buffer areas need to be restricted and degraded pastures and forests rehabilitated.

Barrier 3: Slow uptake of best international policies for SL conservation and management of its habitat.

The need for transboundary cooperation in conservation of Snow Leopard and its habitat, has long been clear. The international community, summoned by the leadership of the President of Kyrgyz Republic, through the signing of the Snow Leopard Agreement in Bishkek, has committed to preserve this species and implement concrete activities in this respect. A Working Secretariat of the Global Snow Leopard and Ecosystem Conservation Program was set up in Bishkek. It is important that capacities of countries to participate in this program are duly established, and in particular with respect to: poaching, addressing the issue of killing the SL by farmers, better control over border movement to stop illegal wildlife trafficking; transboundary knowledge sharing about biodiversity resources and exchange of skills and experience, including cooperative research and information management; unified Snow Leopard monitoring system. Recently the GEF approved a global Medium-Size project for conservation of Snow Leopard. The proposed project will complement this global SL coordination support mechanism through enabling full participation of country stakeholders in these important activities. Kyrgyzstan needs support in the dialog with neighboring countries on potential transboundary PAs, as well as in vocation training of its forestry and PA professionals. The Snow Leopard mapping, research and monitoring programs require common internaitonal protocols and national staff capable of their application.

A.1.2 Baseline scenario and associated baseline projects

Baseline programs: The main baseline element of this project is the four-year *National Strategy and Action Plan for the Conservation of Snow Leopard, 2013 – 2023* (current budget app US$ 1.0 mln). The main goal is to prevent the decline of the Snow Leopard population in Kyrgyzstan. The plan defines the following critical areas for intervention: (1)

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[3] State Agency on Environment Protection and Forestry

Protected Area expansion, (2) conservation of SL range in productive landscapes outside PAs, (3) international cooperation. While the priorities have been clearly defined, the funding for the Strategy had remained short and the Government of Kyrgyzstan appeals to the international community for the support in its implementation, which this project responds to.

The *Global Snow Leopard and Ecosystem Conservation Program* (GSLECP) is an important international baseline program which this project directly builds upon. Although this is not a financing project, rather a conventional framework, it unites Governments, UN Agencies, NGOs and Researchers of the SL range in the effort to conserve this species, as postulated by the International Agreement on SL signed in Bishkek in 2013. The budget of the Working Secretariat of the GSLECP is based in Bishkek, and currently requires support in human and technical capacities.

The *National Forest Program 2011-2015* (app. US$ 10 million) allocates baseline financing for afforestation, enforcement, legislative improvements, technological innovations, supporting use of non-timber forest resources. The programming directions and financing of this program, however, is limited to support High Conservation Value Forest designation and wild-fruit forest reserves, which is where the current GEF project is planning to extend support.

The baseline program related to *Protected Areas* has been estimated at over USD 6,000,000 over the four-year duration of the proposed project, which represents the national investment in the PA system as a whole. This financing for PAs comes from the state budget, special Republican Fund for Nature Protection (RFNP), and Local Funds for Nature Protection (LFNP). Over 80% of the funding is allocated to support protected area staff (including forest guard and patrolling); the remainder supports basic PA infrastructure, and limited research activities. The baseline funding for protected areas in Western Tian Shan amounts to approximately USD 1.2 million over the four-year duration of the project, which covers salaries, basic infrastructure, as well as limited nature tourism. Financing of the awareness raising and public relations at PAs in Western Tian Shan will amount to approximately USD 0.6 million over the project duration.

In terms of socio-economic development programs, *The Regional Development Fund* jointly with the National Project on *Agricultural Financing* have set aside about US$78,4 mln in the next 2 years for credit (10% annual interest rate) to farmers for crop improvement, husbandry, food processing. Micro-crediting institutions plan an important role in rural development of Kyrgyzstan. Many of these companies and banks have experience in collaboration with UNDP for new products, including those oriented to environmental issues and sustainable development. There are over 110 branches of microcredit institutions in the country, which creates an important foundation for the sustainable livelihoods component of this project.

The *Soil Conservation Program 2012-2015* is one of the key programs in the area of sustainable land management. It focuses on arable land soil fertility improvements; legislative improvements in agriculture and enforcement of the national legislation in the sphere of sustainable natural resource use. While important in terms of linkages to the legislative process in the agricultural sector, its primary focus is on arable land. The proposed project complements this baseline program with initiatives focusing on sustainable use of rangelands.

These initiatives in the baseline scenario are significant insofar as they provide basic support to Western Tian Shan and a framework for socio-economic development for local communities. However, the territorial coverage of protected areas and buffer zones remains inadequate from a conservation perspective and local communities continue to pursue biodiversity-incompatible livelihoods that undermine conservation efforts. The summary of the scenarios with and without the GEF investment is provided in a table in the section on Incremental Cost Reasoning.

A.1.3 Proposed alternative scenario, with description of expected outcomes and components of the project

The alternative scenario builds on a landscape approach, understanding that not only Key Biodiversity Areas, but also buffer zones, corridors and sustainable forest and pasture management in wider landscape are key to the survival of SL, and its prey species, as well as to sustainable local community development. The three components proposed by this project address the corresponding three barriers.

Component I is focused on key biodiversity areas – establishing new formal PAs for underrepresented globally significant species and strengthening the key existing PAs, with special focus on Western Tian. The project will build capacities of the SAEPF Department of Protected Areas. The coverage and effectiveness of the PA system in Western Tian Shan – this being one of the KBAs and globally important ecoregions – will be specifically increased, so that better protection can be provided to Snow Leopard and other threatened species, as well as relict spruce and wild fruit

forests. Two new National Parks have been proposed, *Alatai* 65,705 ha and *Kanattuu* 36,780 ha[4]. Both sites are known to be important for the SL. Technical assistance and financial support will be provided for designing the PA (including assessment of conservation priorities e.g. identification of threatened areas, zoning, wildlife movement patterns), management planning (e.g., development of threat-reduction activities), and development and implementation of a biological system of monitoring and reporting. High Conservation Value forests within the PAs will be defined (expected 25,000 ha, primarily wild fruit and nut forests) and appropriate use regimes will be developed and enforced: logging practices and frequencies will be revised; volume, timing and mode of forest resource collection by local communities will be harmonized with SL migration; assisted regeneration programs will be developed where required; forest monitoring systems strengthened; forest patrolling and protection systems developed, drawing where appropriate on collaboration with local communities. Once the PAs are established, management plans will be prepared based on baseline monitoring of the PA territory. The project will provide support to the administration of PA for developing the Management Plan. The Management Plans will be approved by SAEPF.

In the 4 existing PAs (Sary Chelek 23,863 ha; Padysch Ata 30,556 ha; Kara Buura 56,067 ha; and Besh Tash 13,650 ha)[5], which are most important for the SL, greater emphasis will be placed on local community involvement by providing a forum for stakeholder participation through a local PA board. Procedures and modalities will be put in place promoting mutual benefits in terms of protection and sustainable use of resources, enhancing community participation in PA management under this component, and in management of buffer zones and corridors under component 2. The project will also support revision of management plans and research on Snow Leopard.

The surveillance and enforcement systems at the existing PAs will be strengthened by establishing and equipping patrolling groups with means for surveillance, interception, and prosecution to ensure adequate enforcement to prevent illegal activities. This will be achieved through local PA board whose main role will be to make decisions on further development of the PA as well as improve cooperation with local self-governance bodies on sustainable development and the formation of joint ranger groups to enforce anti-poaching, fire prevention, resource use regulations, monitoring of species, and monitoring of habitat management activities.

Component II will ensure continuity and congruence between KBAs and use of land and forest resources in wider productive landscapes.

There are two administrative districts adjoining to the PAs in question: Toktogul and Togustorous. The project will assist in: (i) identification of functional zones in aimaks considering natural ecosystem types based on collection and processing of primary data on natural characteristics (ecosystems, vegetation, distribution of key species), natural and anthropogenic processes (erosion, degradation, etc.), socio-economic data (population, settlements, current land use practices, etc.)[6]; (ii) identification and spatial assignment of appropriate land and forest use types using participatory planning methods that consider the needs of stakeholders, local knowledge and development priorities of target aimaks; (iii) identification of existing and potential conflicts among different land-users, and between land-users and ecosystems, and development of measures to mitigate or eliminate such potential or existing conflicts, with proposed measures being agreed with stakeholders; (iv) development of a GIS-based land use concept[7] and its dissemination to relevant government bodies; the planning document will contain recommendations (including GIS-based maps) for different types of land use given development priorities of rayons and ecosystems' potential[8]; (v) land- and forest use planning results will be communicated to relevant oblast and rayon administrations and integrated into the management plans of the PAs in target areas; this activity will be linked and coordinated with activities under Component 1 related to development of PA management plans; (vi) environmental and social impacts will be assessed, and lessons learned summarized to inform the next cycle of territorial planning.

For the two new protected areas buffer zones and corridors will be established. Activities will include: (i) defining the conservation objectives of the buffer zone and corridor; (ii) identifying criteria that the buffer zone and corridor must satisfy; (iii) assessing various options for linking priority areas for conservation with key landscape-scale ecological

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[4] Exact boundaries and location will be confirmed at the PPG stage.

[5] The selection of the existing PAs will be confirmed at the PPG stage, with corresponding feasibility studies and more detailed activity plans.

[6] This data will be used for GIS modeling.

[7] The GIS-based land use concept will include landscape (natural & cultural), soil, wildlife, biome maps. Each map will include categories of importance (high-, medium- and low-value) along with sensitivity analysis. The land use concept will balance development priorities (economic & social) with conservation objectives in the area given the current status of ecosystems (habitat & species status, degree of degradation and sensitivity, available ecosystem services).

[8] The land use concept will provide the framework for determining sustainable natural resources use practices that are relevant for the designated regime of each functional zone and these will be demonstrated in target rayons.

processes against these criteria; (iv) defining the buffer zone and corridor; (v) drafting and adopting a normative legal act for the buffer zone and corridor; and (vi) developing a financial sustainability assessment and strategy for landscape-level management efforts, including the potential for community-based eco-tourism, etc. The information needs for this output (maps, gap analysis, monitoring of target species for protection) will be met by the ecological monitoring system that is to be established under Component 1 in respective PAs. At the conclusion of this process, a buffer zone and formal wildlife corridor will be ready for operation. The corridor will be approved by SAEPF and managed by Khan Tengri Natural Park Administration. Since the proposed buffer zones and wildlife corridor can overlap with territories being used by other land user such as shepherds, trophy hunting companies, tourism companies, and mining companies, the project will undertake extensive consultations with these land users. Based on these consultations, agreements will be reached with land users on modified resource use in the buffer zones and corridor focused on sustainable economic activities, such as managed hunting areas, regulated grazing, and ecotourism. Only activities that do not have a negative impact on biodiversity will be allowed in the buffer zone and migration corridor. All such activities will be regulated to cause no disturbance to wildlife during the migration and reproductive seasons.

The project will further support work on improvement and sustainable use of pastures. The total area of pastures in the region exceeds 0.6 mln ha; the project aims to restore at least 65,000 ha of degraded pastures in Toktogul and Togustorous districts. The fact is that pastures are not being used fully due to the remoteness of the region and the lack of regular road transport. Only in the last 3 to 4 years have some shepherds started to move to these remote pastures for the grazing season. The project will conduct studies and draft balanced ecological and economic pasture use plans and pasture use regimes for this area. Regulation of grazing activity will include restoration and maintenance of access roads to raise the mobility of livestock and balance livestock grazing pressure in mountain ecosystems, and rehabilitation of degraded rangelands over 65,000 ha through improved local pasture management plans. An inventory of cattle and pasture use will be conducted in the project area. Based on the condition of pastures and their carrying capacity, a pasture management plan will be developed. The plan will outline the condition of pasture resources and necessary rehabilitation actions such as appropriate stocking rates, time period when grazing is permitted and actions to rehabilitate pasture biodiversity. The plan will be harmonized with regulations to be put in place for buffer zones and the wildlife corridor.

Targeted forest restoration for Juniper forest will be undertaken (in total app. 5,000 ha). Agreements with communities will be signed for forest use and replanting. Regimes (places and timing) of harvesting of timber and non-timber products will be reconciled with the timing and routes of SL migration. Cattle migration across the forests will be excluded (in agreement with communities). Environmental inspectors and foresters will be trained in the management of the adjusted forest use regimes. In addition, targeted riparian and wild fruit forest restoration and habitat improvement will be undertaken in HCVF, as appropriate.

Implementation of alternative livelihoods activities will be based on the experience of the Central Tian Shan project, and will partner with a local micro-crediting organization. Approximately 20% of communities in and around the target PAs will be supported with sustainable, alternative livelihoods. UNDP has reports of feasibility of similar small-business support programs under its poverty reduction programs in other parts of the country. The feasibility of increasing the incomes of local communities from biodiversity-compatible activities by approximately 10-15% is realistic; this assessment is based on reports of households collected by similar initiatives, measured before and after UNDP interventions. WWF/USAID cofinancing will complement GEF resources to realize these alternative income generation activities among local communities as well as support trainings to PA staff on PA management effectiveness assessment.

Component III will build capacities of Kyrgyzstan stakeholders with respect to international cooperation in the implementation of GSLECP. However it should be noted that the Global project is of MSP nature with limited resources and it will be able to design standards and protocols, hence it will still rely on national projects such as this one to actually implement those on the ground. Thus this national project will only implement national level activities and play a catalytic role without developing any parallel standards for monitoring, mapping and trainings.

This component will enable participation in the elaboration and deployment of the unified international SL monitoring program and standards. It will also support application of international standards in wildlife trafficking enforcement, and provide opportunities for appropriate trainings and exchange with other countries in the range. By applying a landscape approach, a regional dialog will be established with Tajikistan and Uzbekistan on scientific research, cross border monitoring, and establishment of potential cross-border protected areas. Targeted support will be provided for the transboundary cooperation with Uzbekistan and Tajikistan (support to a joint working group and joint conservation planning and monitoring). The opportunities for cooperation with Uzbekistan and Tajikistan will be further considered

during the PPG. Limited support will be provided to the Working Secretariat during the first few years of operation at the national level. Under this support a national level coordination mechanism will be established thereby putting in place rules for coordinating the national level activities with the ones of the regional and global level and improve transboundary landscape management that concerns to SL beyond the national boundary. For ensuring sustainability of the coordination mechanism under the Working Secretariat an exit strategy will be designed and a business plan for existence beyond GEF support.

The biological system of monitoring and reporting will be put in place in Western Tian Shan, to identify and track the main indicators and flagship species, their habitat in the PA, and migration patterns. This is be done in conjunction with a deployment of a similar system in Central Tian Shan using standards developed under the Global GEF-UNDP project on Snow Leopard, and be developed based on the baseline monitoring which will start immediately after establishment of the PA, and will help with identification of the number of target indicator species, their habitat, and possibly identification of other new species that have not yet been recorded. The monitoring system will focus on two main areas: (i) monitoring of plant life (productivity of landscapes, diversity, dissemination, possible new species, and assessment of impact of natural and anthropogenic processes); and (ii) monitoring of animals and birds (identification of main habitats of animals and birds in the territory of the Natural Park, their migration, density, conditions, disease, and threats).

Vocational training for the foresters and PA staff will be developed so that they can effectively fulfill management objectives. Building on the experience of the Central Tian Shan and global GEF-UNDP project on Snow Leopard, a training program for PA staff will be designed covering all aspects of PA operations specific to mountain ecosystems, ensuring rangers and other field staff have necessary competencies for planning, administration, conflict resolution, and enforcement. For example, training on enforcement is likely to include the following topics: monitoring, control and surveillance; basic methods of monitoring snow leopard and their food base; basic duties and obligations of rangers; sharing of monitoring, control and surveillance requirements with buffer zones communities. 80 border guard, customs, and police officers will thus be trained in identification and prosecution of wildlife crime under a national program linked to a sub-regional program supported by the global Snow Leopard UNDP-GEF project and INTERPOL Programme.

A.1.4&5 Incremental cost reasoning and global environmental benefits

State of ecosystems under baseline	Summary of GEF scenario	Increment
Biodiversity		
With current funding priorities under the baseline Governmental Program and Action Plan on Transition to Sustainable Development for 2013-2017, funding will be sufficient to cover only basic support to existing PAs, but insufficient to expand protection to under-represented species and ecosystems. There will be no integration of PAs in the wider landscape in Western Tian Shan. There will be no financial support for communities living near the PAs in Western Tian Shan to establish biodiversity-friendly businesses. About 17% of the currently unprotected alpine steppe ecosystems and 25% of the relict spruce forest ecosystems and walnut and fruit forests in Western Tian Shan are predicted to degrade in the next	PA system in Western Tian Shan offers improved threatened species representation notably by improving habitat coverage of snow leopard and other endangered species. At least 102,485 ha habitat of under-represented globally threatened species put under protection by 2018, with PA management units fully capacitated for effective management. Compliance of economic resource-users with biodiversity standards is monitored and enforced in and around the newly established and existing PAs. Species and habitat integrity within PAs is protected from negative surrounding influence through buffer zones and corridors, where economic activities are adjusted. Under-represented biodiversity is studied and monitored on a systematic basis. Communities are engaged in ecologically compatible activities around PAs. Micro credits are offered to establish alternative livelihoods, serving as a lasting financial support mechanism for funding alternative livelihoods and could benefit	Increase in the PA system of Kyrgyzstan: by 2016 an additional 102,485 ha added to it. There is increased PA coverage of the range of endangered Snow Leopards in Western Tian Shan. Management effectiveness of the existing (124,136 ha) and newly established PAs in Central Tian Shan is increased by 25% over the baseline (measured by METT). Migration corridor and buffer zone at 30,000 ha. Biodiversity conservation principles integrated in terrotorial plans of 2 administrative districts (1,163,100 ha) Removal of threats (15% reduction in illicit Wild Fruit and Nut and Juniper forest cuts; 17% reduction in poaching), and better protection of globally threatened species listed in IUCN Red Data List - Snow leopard (*Uncia uncia*), Argali (*Ovis ammon*), and wild apple and hawthorn forest stands.

10 years caused by uncontrolled arable farming, excessive grazing, poaching and unregulated logging. Populations of threatened mammals present in the Tian Shan landscape, Snow leopard (*Uncia uncia*), Sievers Apple forest (*Malus sieversii*, IUCN VU), Niedzvedzky Apple Forest (*Malus niedzwetzkyana*, EN), Knorring Hawthorn stands (*Crataegus knorringiana*, CR) as well as Argali (*Ovis ammon*), Tian Shan Maral (*Cervus elaphus*), as well as birds such as Barbary Falcon (*Falco pelegrioides*) and Corncrake *(Crex crex)*, are likely to fall.	over 1,000 recipients in the 7-10 years immediately after the project.	The project results contribute to CBD PoWPA (expansion of PAs, integration of PAs in wider landscapes, and community engagement schemes) and Aichi targets. *Exact baselines and targets to be determined during PPG phase.*
Sustainable Land Management		
- Overgrazed pastures: exceeding carrying capacity by 3 times resulting in increased erosion. - Absence of advanced practices on pasture logging/watering; - Increase in less palatable species, - Poor agricultural land management near protected areas	- Ecosystem services valued and incorporated in territorial planning based on multi-stakeholders engagement - Incentives for reducing pressures on pastures stimulated through micro-credit - Degraded rangeland rehabilitated - Sustainable pasture management practices implemented: rotational grazing to maintain soil upper layer; stimulate grasses for vigorous growth and healthy root systems through pasture watering and digging additional water wells; increased investments in repair and maintenance of key pasture infrastructure (wells) allows greater flock mobility; using the grazing process to feed livestock through maintaining soil cover and managing plant species composition to maintain feed quality; hay farming in support of intensive pastures established on appropriate lands to remove loads on natural meadows and fodders during the winter period; regeneration of the natural pasture covers using natural pasture seeds. SLM best practices are applied across sectors and integrated management approaches are applied across different land use sectors in wider Tian Shan as result of replication.	Competitive pressures between land uses in mountain steppe/pasture and forest landscapes reduced in productive lands of 2 administrative districts (1,163,100 ha), : - Decrease in grazing pressure and improved condition of mountain steppe ecosystems at 65,000 ha, - Improved vegetation cover, fodder productivity and pasture regeneration throughout the whole area of the two districts - Improved pastoral livestock breeding system (baseline to be determined at preparation stage) - Well-functioning ecosystem services (such as forage productivity at steppe pastures), - Increased incidence of SLM approaches applied by small-scale holders leading to soil and vegetation quality improvements - Innovative financing for SLM and biodiversity increased by 20 percent in targeted districts - Increased organic carbon content in agricultural soil by 470,250 tCO2-eq/10y (based on FAO Exact model)
Sustainable Forest Management		
Continued degradation of relict spruce and genetically important walnut-fruit forests in Western Tian Shan resulting from: - Illegal logging in forests in valuable ecosystems, - Grazing in forests - Unsustainable cuttings - Forest lands grabbing for agriculture, settlements and	- Forest exclusion zones and set aside of 25,000 ha of genetically important wild walnut-fruit forests designated as *High Conservation Value Forests*, replacement of productive logging by conservation forestry with engagement of communities - Adjustment of volume, timing and mode of harvesting of timber and non-timber resources in Juniper and wild nut forests, in line with ecosystem carrying capacity	- 25,000 ha of HCVF designated and put under good management insuring stability of their ecosystem functions, such as genetic reserves, habitat of biodiversity and avoided GHG emissions of 77,969 tCO2-eq/y. - 5,000 ha of degraded forests restored, ensuring sequestration of 84,843 tCO2-eq/y (*based on Tier-1 FAO Exact model*).

- mining - Frequent forest pest outbursts - Unsustainable harvesting of non-timber forest products	principles and SL migration; - Reforestation of degraded forests; - Adjusting agroforestry for avoiding livestock grazing in SL important forests - Training of foresters and communities in forest management planning and enforcement of the HCVF standards	

A.1.6 Innovativeness, sustainability and potential for scaling up

Innovativeness: While the Snow Leopard is a flagship species, as Protected Areas are at the core of the strategy to conserve the species, yet focusing on PAs alone might not necessarily turn out to be an effective strategy to afford protection to the endangered snow leopard over its range. PA efforts alone could be jeopardized by adverse land use practices in the vicinity of PAs. Therefore, to improve the impact and cost-effectiveness of PAs the project will also invest efforts in defining buffer zones, connecting corridors, and promoting sustainable land use in these areas. This comprehensive approach will ensure that PAs can be more effective in conserving target species thus making financial investments in PAs more beneficial, but at the same time this produces important benefits for land resilience, improvement of soil qualities and vegetation cover. The other element of innovation for Kyrgyzstan will be cooperation with the Aiyl Bank and local administrations for the operation of the micro-credit facility in Western Tian Shan.

Sustainability: The operational and financial sustainability of the PAs in Western Tian Shan upon withdrawal of GEF investment will be ensured by commitment of Government to allocate core financing for PAs needed for their optimal management after the project ends. Furthermore, the integration of resource use restrictions into land-use plans will put permanence to biodiversity compatible resource use patterns in the buffer zones and corridors in Western Tian Shan.

Replication and dissemination of the project results will be ensured in cooperation with the Working Secretariat of GSLECP. The project will support development of an exit strategy, which will cover all aspects handled by the project, but will be implemented solely by WS and Government of Kyrgyzstan upon GEF withdrawal. The experience will be presented and disseminated to other range countries through the supported two global GSLECP events to be chaired by the WS.

A.2. STAKEHOLDERS. WILL PROJECT DESIGN INCLUDE THE PARTICIPATION OF RELEVANT STAKEHOLDERS FROM CIVIL SOCIETY AND/OR INDIGENOUS PEOPLE? YES

Stakeholder	Role
Government agencies	
State Agency on Environment Protection and Forestry (SAEPF) and WS GSLECP	Main implementation partner hosting the Department on Protected Areas, the key stakeholder for the elaboration of the National PA planning framework, WS GSLECP, ensuring organization of new PA; as well as managerial and financial sustainability of the national PA system.
Ministry of Agriculture	Key partner in the development and implementation of the pasture management plans at target areas.
State Registration Service of the Kyrgyz Republic (SRS)	SRS will coordinate and control the registration of land property rights in the vicinity of the project sites. Within its mandate, it is responsible for the following: 1) regulating of land relations (state registration deed, land cadastre) in the new PA , corridors and buffer zone (Output 2.2); and 2) topography survey and mapping of the PA to prepare state registration deed for land users (ibid)
State Agency on Regional Development, Investments, and Construction	Integration of SLM and biodiversity conservation and sustainable land management issues into local development plans and their further implementation (Component 2)
Province and District administrations	Support to the establishment of the new PAs and integration of biodiversity conservation into corresponding development strategies and plans
Local communities	
Local Self Governance Bodies	These bodies are responsible for the elaboration and implementation of local communities' development strategies including local environment issues. They will be among the main project implementing partners at the local level in integrated land use planning, buffer zones and corridors (Outputs 2.1.1 and 2.1.3)
Associations of Pasture and Water Users	They are the users of ecosystem services regulating access of local communities to natural resources and sustainable use of biodiversity and they will provide inputs to the development of the landscape level management plan for Tian Shan that

Stakeholder	Role
	defines buffer zones and conservation-friendly uses in sensitive areas, as well as play a role in the development and implementation of alternative sustainable livelihoods
Communities of the PA buffer zones	Active users of ecosystem services and to be involved in PA management and sustainable use practices to be promoted by the project.
Non-government organizations	
Snow Leopard Trust	Foundation implementing Snow Leopard conservation project in Central Tian Shan aimed at habitat range monitoring, promoting anti-poaching and livelihoods for local communities, will be a partner in the project for relevant activities
Research and expertise	
Two institutes of the National Science Academy of the Kyrgyz Republic: Biology and Soils Institute; Forest Research Institute	Based on their experience and expertise, these institutes will play a role in elaboration of the scientific grounds for biodiversity monitoring, improving participation in biodiversity inventory, development of biodiversity sustainable use norms, identification of the areas under strong pressure, PA management effectiveness assessment.
Private sector	
Kyrgyz community based tourism association (KCBTA)	To be involved in training of local communities to develop ecological tourism facilities and infrastructure as well as marketing of such community-based tours (Output 2.5).
Ayil Bank and micro-credit companies	The bank has experience in supporting agriculture and rural development and is considered one of the key potential partners of the implementation of the Micro Credit Alternative Livelihoods Facility.

A.3. GENDER CONSIDERATIONS. ARE GENDER CONSIDERATIONS TAKEN INTO ACCOUNT? YES

The project covers the geographic region with estimated population of nearly 89,000 people, where women constitute 49.6%. Women are expected to benefit from the new financial scheme resulting in increased income of rural households. The GEF project will support ecological tourism services development (accommodation, catering, and souvenirs trade). The promotion of community-based, ecological tourism services will have spin-off benefits for women who process wool into traditional Kyrgyz carpets and felt products; process milk into Kyrgyz cream, butter, cheese and kymyz (smoked horse milk); produce honey; prepare national cuisine, and such. All these income-generating activities are still the forte of rural women who will directly benefit from the support the project will provide to such activities. About 70% of people servicing tourists are women, who are therefore more dependent on the development of ecotourism. It is expected that the number of women involved in the development of ecotourism in the target area will increase on average by about 40-60 households. The project will use participatory approaches in planning income-generating activities for communities, and as part of this, the project will clarify gender roles and vulnerabilities associated with a gender-differentiated approach. The project will promote the participation of women in the decision-making process by ensuring the participation of women in the local PA Board. Due to the better integration of women into the new social organizations, their opinions will be better reflected in the short and long-term decision-making for the sustainable management of protected areas. Finally, to ensure equal opportunity for employment, UNDP will encourage qualified women applicants for positions under the project as per UNDP rules and regulations.

A.4. RISKS

Risk	Level	Mitigation
Difficulties in starting up alternative livelihoods program based on micro-credit	M	The project relies on the strategy of extending the experience of the UNDP-GEF MSP in Central Tian Shan. Similar to that project, it will cooperate with Ayil Bank and other microcrediting companies and local investment funds managed by district administrations. The operational difficulties would not bar the activity, since it will be based on the existing institutional, financial and operational mechanisms of Aiyl Bank and local administrations. The early experience of the UNDP-GEF Central Tian Shan project and WWF research indicate that the demand for alternative resource uses, such as those proposed in this project, is present, and specifically in landscapes which lend themselves well to tourism, and Tian Shan is the leading landscape in this regard. The capitalization issue is considered to be low-risk, since the baseline funds in question are allocated by district level authorities as part of routine budget planning.
Disease or climate change have an	L	According to current scenarios, changes in the species compositions in most

Risk	Level	Mitigation
adverse impact on population of Snow Leopard		ecosystems of Kyrgyzstan will not be catastrophic. In the mountains, the rise in temperature is expected to be mitigated by elevated humidity and relief conditions. Mammals with a large home range, endemic vegetation (including the relict spruce forest) are most vulnerable to predicted aridization of climate and shift in ecological zones, but will be able to adapt if they have space for movement. This is one of the key reasons that the project has chosen to emphasize landscape-level actions together with protected area expansion. The project will enable the emergence of a supportive matrix of land uses, including the ecological corridors to connect protected areas. In addition, this approach will limit climate change risk by providing pathways along macro-climatic and upland-lowland gradients to enable species movement in a context of potentially shifting ecological zones.
Resistance from communities to the opportunity to collaborate on management of PAs through local management boards	M	The resistance of local communities might appear based on experience of previous projects, however, the current UNDP GEF MSP is investing in community training and buy in Central Tian Shan and this practice will now be expanded onto Western Tian Shan, whereby the project is going to provide extensive support to local communities and training to local stakeholders authorities to develop their capacity to participate in collaborative protected area management as well as other project activities which target community engagement.

A.5. COORDINATION

This GEF project complements the ongoing UNDP-GEF MSP which focuses on the protection of Central Tian Shan ecosystems. The focus on the new project is on Western Tian Shan. The two projects complement each other geographically ensuring maximum protection to the targeted biodiversity and synergetic improvement in ecosystem resilience of Tian Shan as broad ecoregion. Some of the elements for which funding was not fully available at the MSP stage (e.g. the sustainable livelihoods support, pasture management and ecosystem restoration) are taken more vigorously in the new project. The new project also supports the Global Snow Leopard Working Secretariat, thus spreading its positive effect for Snow Leopard conservation beyond the boundaries of Kyrgyzstan. UNDP, jointly with the WS of the GSLECP will ensure full coordination of the new project with the current MSP as well as with other activities of the WS. The project will support the Working Secretariat with the establishment of a coordination mechanism, in parallel benefiting from both national and regional level coordination. This coordination mechanism will embrace all activities and initiatives on the ground of those National and donor funded projects.

The project does not overlap either geographically or thematically with the GEF-FAO project Sustainable management of mountainous forest and land resources under climate change conditions. The named project focuses on *Issyk-Kul, Talas, Djalal-Abad* and *Naryn* oblasts, which are outside the scope of the UNDP-GEF project activities. The FAO project focuses on policy development in the forest and agricultural land management, LULUCF and REDD+ planning, carbon stock enhancement, arable land improvement practices, and agricultural land rehabilitation. None of these are in the scope of the UNDP-GEF project which is focusing on Western Tian Shan ecosystem resilience and biodiversity. The types of forests addressed by each project are also different. At the same time, UNDP and FAO, will, through UN Resident Coordinator Office and Government, exchange information regularly on project progress and share lessons.

In October 2012, WWF began a four-year project to conserve snow leopard habitat, promote water security, and help communities prepare for climate change impacts in Central Asia.

The USAID-funded, $4.7-million Conservation and Adaptation in Asia's High Mountain Landscapes and Communities project will conduct field activities in and build alliances among six of the snow leopard's 12 range countries: Bhutan, India, Nepal, Mongolia, Kyrgyzstan, and Pakistan. The project will run through September 30, 2016.

In the face of a changing climate, this project aims to improve high mountain landscape management, both technical and policy-focused. It will help communities address vulnerabilities to climate change, conserve snow leopards as the flagship species of Asia's high mountain landscapes, and advance a vision for water security and sustainable mountain development across the snow leopard range states.

The project will coordinate relevant activities with the national WWF Project, which is in the different geographical location - Central Tian Shan Mountains, Sarychat Eertash PA. It has a tested and proved methodology for PA

management effectiveness assessment and alternative livelihood programme. The project will benefit from the alternative livelihood programme and jointly organized trainings to PA staff using that methodology.

DESCRIPTION OF THE CONSISTENCY OF THE PROJECT WITH:

B.1 IS THE PROJECT CONSISTENT WITH THE NATIONAL STRATEGIES AND PLANS OR REPORTS AND ASSESSEMENTS UNDER RELEVANT CONVENTIONS? YES.

The project speaks to one of the key postulates of the *2013-2017 Kyrgyzstan National Sustainable Development Strategy and Action Plan* which stipulates that restoration and conservation of natural resources must become one of the priorities of the country, as natural resources guarantee the future of next generations. Support of the Sustainable Forest Management activities under this project contribute to the implementation of yet another Sustainable Development Goal, which aims at reaching 5.62% forest cover of the country by 2017.

The project is an extension of the *Recommendations on Preservation of Snow Leopards and Their High Mountain Ecosystems* that were adopted at the international meeting on conservation of snow leopards held in Bishkek on December 3, 2012. Overall, the project proposal is consistent with the recommendations of the Global Snow Leopard Survival Strategy and has been a direct response to the request of the Government of Kyrgyzstan for assistance in the implementation of this Strategy. The entire set of recommendations has been reflected in the project document, and they all have been adapted to the situation in Kyrgyzstan. It is obvious that, by implementing these activities it is possible to create conditions for preservation and increase of Snow Leopard population in Western Tian Shan. The project is closely linked to the Action Plan on implementation of the "National Strategy for Preservation of the Snow Leopard in the Kyrgyz Republic for 2013-2023", specifically on the following items under the National Strategy: II) Improving the institutional base; III) Study of snow leopards, its habitat and the food bases; IV) Training employees of public bodies and PAs; and V) Environmental education and increasing of awareness among local population.

The project focuses on the highland areas of the Western Tian Shan, and thus conforms to the *National Environmental Report* (approved by the Government Resolution effective as of 07.08.2012), which confirms that the high mountains are islands of biological wealth amid relatively poor plains and that protected areas play a key role in maintaining biodiversity. It is in line with Kyrgyzstan's National Mid-Term Development Plan that emphasizes the importance of protected areas, especially in mountain regions.

Recently, the Kyrgyz Republic has adopted the NBSAP (entitled *Priorities on Biodiversity Conservation in the Kyrgyz Republic*) for 2014-2023. Creation of PAs in Snow Leopard habitat is one of the key activities envisioned by the process. Furthermore, the experts who participated in elaboration of this project document were also involved in NBSAP development. Thus, this GEF project will contribute at the policy level to formulation of PA policies and standards that would be subsequently shared with the team working on the NBSAP so that these can be duly incorporated into national legislation.

The project will assist Kyrgyzstan in implementing relevant aspects of the CBD Program of Work on Protected Areas. The need for conservation of the biodiversity of Tian Shan is prominent in the country's report under most goals of the CBD Program of Work on Protected Areas. It also demonstrates an integrated approach to the creation of new PAs for under-represented ecosystems, covering a number of topics, ranging from technical aspects (capacity building of existing and new protected areas, harmonization of PA, management planning, development and implementation of a comprehensive monitoring system for biodiversity and ecosystems) to socio-economic dimensions (support for alternative income-generating activities for local communities such as ecotourism, and yak breeding) to integration of PAs with biodiversity conservation and sustainable land use in adjacent areas. All these actions meet strategic objectives A, B, C, and D, and related targets for conservation and sustainable use of biodiversity that were accepted at Aichi, Japan in 2011.

The project is in line with the UNCCD's *National Programming Framework on Land Management.* Mountain landscape degradation through unregulated grazing, poor work to improve the quality of soil, and unsustainable forest felling are mentioned there as key threats. Integration of ecosystem values into land use planning, improvement of pasture and forest management is listed among key priorities in this program, where Kyrgyzstan is seeking international support.

The project is consistent with the National *Forestry Sector Development Concept (2004 – 2025)*, which classifies mountainous forests (including wild fruit and relict coniferous forets) as highly valuable and requires approprate maagenent, conservation, and rehabilitation. The *National Forest Program 2005 - 2015* further stipulates activities with respect to appropriate monitorign and improvement of high value forests. The *National Programme on Walnu-*

Fruit Plantations till 2020 which is currently in the endorsement process in the Governmen, envisages wide engagement of local communities forest management units in the walnut and fruit forest management.

The project directly supports the achievement of Aichi Target 12: By 2020 the extinction of known threatened species has been prevented and their conservation status, particularly of those most in decline, has been improved and sustained, and, through the landscape approach, it substantially contributes to the following Targets:

• Target 5: By 2020, the rate of loss of all natural habitats, including forests, is at least halved and where feasible brought close to zero, and degradation and fragmentation is significantly reduced.
• Target 11: By 2020, at least 17 per cent of terrestrial and inland water, and 10 per cent of coastal and marine areas, especially areas of particular importance for biodiversity and ecosystem services, are conserved through effectively and equitably managed, ecologically representative and well connected systems of protected areas and other effective area-based conservation measures, and integrated into the wider landscapes and seascapes.
• Target 15: By 2020, ecosystem resilience and the contribution of biodiversity to carbon stocks has been enhanced, through conservation and restoration, including restoration of at least 15 per cent of degraded ecosystems, thereby contributing to climate change mitigation and adaptation and to combating desertification.

PART III: APPROVAL/ENDORSEMENT BY GEF OPERATIONAL FOCAL POINT(S) AND GEF AGENCY(IES)

A. RECORD OF ENDORSEMENT OF GEF OPERATIONAL FOCAL POINT (S) ON BEHALF OF THE GOVERNMENT(S):
(Please attach the Operational Focal Point endorsement letter(s) with this template).

NAME	POSITION	MINISTRY	DATE *(MM/DD/YYYY)*
Sabir S Afadzhanov	Director, GEF OFP, Kyrgyz Republic	The State Agency on Environmental Protection and Forestry of the Kyrgyz Republic	August 11, 2014

B. GEF AGENCY(IES) CERTIFICATION

This request has been prepared in accordance with GEF policies and procedures and meets the GEF criteria for project identification and preparation under GEF-6.					
Agency Coordinator, Agency name	**Signature**	**Date** *(MM/DD/YYYY)*	**Project Contact Person**	**Telephone**	**Email Address**
Adriana Dinu UNDP-GEF Executive Coordinator		August 26, 2014	Maxim Vergeichik Regional Technical Advisor	+ 421 259 337 152	maxim.vergeichik@undp.org

C. Additional GEF Project Agency Certification (*Applicable Only to newly accredited GEF Project Agencies)*
For newly accretdited GEF Project Agencies, please download and fill up the required **GEF Project Agency Certification of Ceiling Information Template** to be attached as an aanex to the PIF.