

Reporting Agency: United Nations Development Programme for Global Environmental Facility  
Country: Armenia

### STANDARD PROGRESS REPORT

No. and title: Developing the Protected Area System of Armenia  
UNDP/GEF/00057439/00060500

Reporting period: January – December 2011

## I. PURPOSE

The project's goal is to conserve globally significant biodiversity in Armenia. The project's objective is to catalyze the expansion of the nature reserves to provide better representation of ecosystems within Armenia's current protected area system and enable active conservation of biodiversity. The project's two components will focus upon: (1) rationalization of the protected areas system through improving the regulatory and institutional framework relevant to Sanctuary establishment and operation; and (2) institutional capacity building by piloting a suite of Sanctuary management tools largely absent from Armenian's current protected area management regime.

The main outcomes of the project are:

1. National operational guidelines and norms to guide the process of establishment, management and business planning of sanctuaries. The guidelines will stipulate: (i) the multiple-use purpose of sanctuaries; (ii) content, purpose and design process for Charters of sanctuaries; (iii) financing of sanctuaries; (iv) establishment of management units, community participation in sanctuary management; (v) model for management and business plans and protocols for their development; (vi) biodiversity conservation models.

2. A by-law will be finalized on the institutional roles and responsibilities in sanctuary management.

3. Three new sanctuaries: Gnishik in Vayots Dzor Marz and Khustup and Zangezour in Syunik Marz with total surface about 48,000 ha.

4. The policy paper on two particular models (full community management and co-management) tested in the three project demonstration areas respectively.

5. National vocational training courses, by focusing on IUCN Category IV protected areas, sanctuaries. At the local level, the project will invest in establishment of three information and education centers at the demonstration sanctuaries.

6. Combined sanctuary management-and-business plans based upon best international experience and provide realistic guidance for small business entrepreneurs. The plans will be used as a basis for sustainable resource use, including as appropriate tourism, sustainable grazing, regulated sport hunting and collection of marketable flora.

7. Launching of key management and income-generation activities: (i) tools for anti-poaching with community member support and participation; (ii) habitat monitoring programs; (iii) comprehensive livestock-grazing program; (iv) sustainable tourism development.

8. A critical mass of demonstration effect to reverse the failure of sanctuaries to effectively conserve biodiversity.

These project's efforts will result in a national protected area system better equipped to include and conserve currently under-represented ecosystems and associated species. Project investment will be in community areas to improve management of productive landscapes while helping to promote connectivity and alleviate poverty. The project will enhance the financial sustainability of Armenia's protected area system.

The Project contributes to UNDAF Outcome 4 and CP Outcome 7, CPAP Output 7.4.

The Implementing Partners for the Project are the Ministry of Nature Protection of RA (MNP) and its "Environmental Projects Implementation Unit" State Agency (EPIU SA); former "Center for Environmental Projects" State Non-commercial Organization /CEP SNCO/. The Non-governmental

Organization (NGO) Implementing Partner for the Project is World Wide Fund for Nature Armenian Branch (WWF Armenia).

## II. RESOURCES

The resources to the project come in full from GEF allocations: US\$950,000. The total budget of the project, including co-financing and GEF resources is US\$2,950,000. Co-financing is equal to US\$2,000,000 (US\$1,500,000 from the MNP, and US\$500,000 from the WWF).

The budget allocated from the GEF for the current 2011 year is US\$281,848; of which US\$154,848 for NEX subproject 00057439 (Rationalization of the Protected Areas System) and US\$127,000 for NGO subproject 00060500 (Institutional Capacity Building of the Protected Areas).

## III. RESULTS

During the reporting period the following tasks were conducted and results achieved:

1. **Project Programming.** The Project is organized according to AWP Budget revision approved in 2011.

2. **Component 1 Rationalization of the PA system.**

Tasks were conducted by EPIU SA and the following results were achieved:

- The interagency working group established under the Order of Minister of Nature Protection (Order N340-A of 10 December 2010) consisting of representatives of different ministries, NGOs came to mutual agreement on the 25 articles of the draft RA Law on Amendments and Changes to the RA Law on SPNAs. The discussions are still in the process.
- Technical Report "Analyzing community awareness level on state sanctuaries" revealed the dependence and attitude of local inhabitants to sanctuaries. It has been observed that communities around sanctuaries see no added-value of these sanctuaries in terms of social and economic improvements. On the contrary, communities around planned sanctuaries believe that creation of sanctuaries will have tangible results leading socio-economic improvements.
- Technical reports on existing data on Flora and Fauna in Gnishik, Khustup and Zangezur areas along with lists of already recorded species analyses the status of biodiversity in project areas. Additional fieldwork required for finalizing data on their present distributions. The report serves as a basis for delineation of borders and development of PA management plans.
- The Technical Report "Design of institutional links of management of state sanctuaries" analyses current management status of various state sanctuaries, interrelationships between different management agencies both on horizontal and vertical levels and argues the importance of development of institutional links between stakeholders to ensure effective management of sanctuaries.

Mapping task was conducted by WWF Armenia and as a result digital map layers for planned Khustup, Gnishik and operating Zangezur sanctuaries that would maintain the records of distinct/revised borders of communal and state lands, as well as communities, state, agricultural and other land types were prepared.

The main constraint under the **Component 1** is that in spite of some progress in the development of draft RA Law on SPNAs, existing version does not reflect all expectations, in particular, approaches to community management of PAs. To eliminate risks alternative options for creation and further maintenance of community managed PAs are in progress in parallel with development of draft RA Law on SPNAs and other legislative acts, if required.

Absence of timely approved policy paper on new governance models for sanctuaries may cause delays in preparation of management and business plans under the **Component 2**. Measures are undertaken to accelerate development of abovementioned policy paper.

Another constraint is lack of up-to-date data on distribution of biodiversity in project areas which may reflect negatively on delineation of envisaged PA borders. Additional fieldwork in 2012 will finalize data on current distribution of endangered, endemic and arboreal plant species and estimation of major usable plants resources.

3. **Component 2 Institutional capacity building of the PAs.**

Tasks were conducted by WWF Armenia and the following results were achieved:

- The SWOT analysis of socio-economic conditions of communities surrounding acting "Zangezur" and envisaged "Khustup" and "Gnishik" sanctuaries revealed **Strengths** (Decisions and commitments of the RA Government and international organizations on the

- establishment of new and expansion of acting SPNAs; Successful experience of entities involved in development of SPNAs; Availability of qualified human resources; Experience in production of high-value agricultural products), **Weaknesses** (Weak agricultural and social infrastructures), **Opportunities** (Unique landscape and clean air; Availability of a number of natural, historical, cultural and other monuments; Opportunities to develop and offer different types of tourism and recreational services) and **Threats** (Negative attitude of local population towards the SPNAs; Poverty; Aging tendency and youth migration; Borders to Azerbaijan).
- Technical reports on stakeholders analysis of acting "Zangezur" and envisaged "Khustup" and "Gnishik" protected areas conducted in Syunig and Vayots Dzor marzes and in Yerevan defined main actors among Community-level groups, State corporations, Non-state actors and Private sector and their concerns and aims.
- Technical reports on tourism potential assessment of acting "Zangezur" and envisaged "Khustup" and "Gnishik" protected areas lists main tourist attractions of adjacent communities, as well as provide information on self-governance administrations, tourism services (meals, overnights, events) and infrastructures (social, roads, transportation, signs, communications). In general, infrastructures are very weak and tourism services in are almost absent (with exception of Areni). The primary obstacle for development of ecotourism in Syunik Marz is the growing mining industry and inadequate management of wastes and tailings that damage environment and threaten development of ecotourism industry.
- Visitor Center to be established in proposed Gnishik sanctuary was purchased, equipped with computer and furnished. A wide array of Gnishik information was made available along with tools such as information posters. Certain information services offered by the Visitor Center were developed: (a) on historic and cultural monuments; (b) on landscapes and natural conditions; (c) on flora and fauna thereof. Activities are undertaken to speed up negotiations with the RA Ministry of Culture for the approval of the location and status of the Visitor Center.
- 4 road blocks are installed in the area of the planned "Gnishik" protected area.

The constraints that may cause delays in preparation of management and business plans under the Component **Institutional capacity building of the PAs** are: lack of up-to-date data on distribution of biodiversity for all project areas, and yet unidentified category of land, absence of policy paper on new governance models for sanctuaries - for envisaged community managed Gnishik. To mitigate the risk appropriate measures will be undertaken in 2012 under the **Component 1**.

Training tasks were conducted by EPIU SA and the following results were achieved:

- Based on assessment of knowledge of potential participants in project PAs and in adjacent communities curricula, time schedule and thematic structure of 7 thematic training courses adapted to needs of participants were developed.

Trainings will be organized as soon as the policy paper on full community management and co-management models of sanctuaries will be approved and envisaged sanctuaries will be established under **Component 1**.

**4. Public awareness and cooperation.** During 2011 awareness raising and partnership building activities were conducted in Syunik (Qajaran, Kapan, Meghri and Shikahogh) and Vayots Dzor (Yeghegnadzor, Agarakadzor, Areni, Gnishik and Khachik) marzes with participation of representatives of regional administrative and local self-governance authorities, communities, NGOs, the staff of protected areas and mass media. One of the issues discussed was concern of local inhabitants on restriction of traditional activities and incomes by establishing protected areas.

In Vayots Dzor Marz strongly suggested to incorporate the program of establishment of Gnishik new protected area in the region as part of socio-economic development programs.

Main outcome in Syunig is that although regional and local administrative authorities consider development of mining industry vital for socio-economic development, they understand and support protected areas system through expansion of already acting and creation of new sanctuaries.

In addition, on 10-11 and 24-25 November 2011 in Yeghegnadzor (Vayots Dzor marz) public awareness seminars were implemented for self-governance administration staff and council members and local inhabitants of Khachik, Gnishik, Agarakadzor and Areni communities, employees of Vayots Dzor Marz administration and NGO representatives. On the whole 50 people participated in seminars.

The main constraint under **Public awareness and cooperation** is lack of cooperation between Implementing Partner organizations, especially in the field. To avoid misunderstandings and possible controversies, it is highly desirable joint participation of representatives of both Implementing Partners and PO in all public awareness events. However, in any cases event's agenda should be reconciled

between the partners and approved by the Project Manager.

5. **Learning exchange abroad.** In response to visit of Armenian group in Austria and Slovenia in 2010, Austrian and Slovenian group consisting from representatives from federal government of Carinthia, Nockberge and Triglav (Slovenia) national parks, Environmental Consulting Klagenfurt, freiland Environmental Consulting Civil Engineers, REVITAL Civil Engineers (total 9 persons) visited Armenia on 23-28 May 2011. The group was received by the First Deputy Minister of Nature Protection, Governors of Vayots Dzor and Syuniqu marzes, Mayor of Qajaran.

During discussions the following fields were identified as most realistic for cooperation between Armenian and Austrian-Slovenian counterparts: Environmental education and public awareness raising; Farmer's and pupil's environmental and biodiversity monitoring; Exchange study tours for protected area managers and adjacent community managers; Restoration of ecological values of Khor Virap Marsh; Advise on protected areas full and participatory management: sustainable tourism and infrastructure in PAs; Sustainable pasture and hay harvesting; Wine industry; Growing of oil pumpkin sorts and pumpkin oil production; Eatable and medicinal plants collection and preprocessing; Defining and initiating negotiations for Qajaran sister city in Austria and in Slovenia.

6. **Monitoring and Reporting.** The monitoring and reporting documentation is developing in accordance with the UNDP Project Monitoring and Evaluation Plan. Quarterly progress reports for 1<sup>st</sup>, 2<sup>nd</sup>, 3<sup>rd</sup> quarters of 2011 were prepared and submitted to GEF and MNP.

#### IV. FUTURE WORK PLAN

The following tasks are planned for the 2012:

##### **Component 1: Rationalization of the protected areas system**

###### **Output 1.1 Set of by-laws developed to operationalize the 2006 Protected Area Law**

- Finalization of [draft] RA Law on SPNAs and others legislative acts and submission to the MNP.

###### **Output 1.2. Institutional links re-configured to clarify roles and responsibilities for governance and management of sanctuaries.**

- Development of the by-laws on the institutional roles and responsibilities in sanctuary management clarifying mechanisms for the participation of communities in sanctuary management, decision-making, and financing responsibilities

###### **Output 1.3. Three new sanctuaries established at underrepresented habitats.**

- Finalization of biodiversity inventories in the field
- Finalization of mapping works (zonation of the proposed areas and proposing boundaries)
- Discussions with the communities on establishment of "Gnishik" and "Khustup" and enlargement of "Zangezur" sanctuaries
- Submission to the MNP of [draft] Government Decrees on formal establishment of "Khustup" State Sanctuary, "Gnishik" PA and enlargement of "Zangezur" State Sanctuary

###### **Output 1.4.**

- Development of the policy paper on new PA management models (full community management and participatory co-management), discussions with stakeholders and submission to the MNP.

##### **Component 2: Institutional capacity building for the protected areas management**

###### **Output 2.1. National and local training programs for sanctuary managers and local communities.**

- Implementation of public awareness seminars in the communities adjacent to existing "Zangezur" and envisaged "Khustup" sanctuary

###### **Output 2.2. Management and business plans at three sanctuaries developed.**

- Development of management and business plans of envisaged Khustup and Gnishik PAs and existing Zangezur State Sanctuary, discussions with stakeholders and submission to the MNP.

###### **Output 2.3 Management and business plan implementation supported on the ground**

- Design of headquarter building for "Gnishik" PA.

###### **Output 2.4 Lessons learned documented and experience set to replication.**

#### V. FINANCIAL IMPLEMENTATION

Total budget approved for 2011 is US\$281,848, actual expenditure for 2011 as of today [09DEC11] totals to USD 137,593.50 (delivery rate: 48.8%), of which UNDP/GEF/00057439 - US\$ 94,775.30

(delivery rate: 61.2%), and subproject UNDP/GEF/00060500 - US\$ 42,818.30 (delivery rate: 33.7%). Substantive budget revision is processed to subproject UNDP/GEF/00057439 enabling procurement of vehicle in 2011 instead of 2013, and to introduce different reallocations between the activities and budget lines. Substantive budget revision is processed also to subproject UNDP/GEF/00060500 to introduce different reallocations between the budget lines and years. Up to the end of 2011 it is envisaged to have total delivery 98.5% of the allocated amount, of which subproject UNDP/GEF/00057439 - 99.5%, and subproject UNDP/GEF/00060500 94.9%.

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