Midterm Assessment
Mountains of Central Asia Biodiversity Hotspot

November 2019 – October 2022

CEPF began a five-year investment in the Mountains of Central Asia (MCA) in November 2019. Over the period of June-October 2022, the Regional Implementation Team (RIT) and CEPF Secretariat conducted a series of exercises to prepare the Midterm Assessment that follows here. These exercises included (1) email surveys and telephone and in-person interviews of large and small grant recipients and key stakeholders in each country, (2) reviews of the actual and expected results of all awarded grants, and (3) and expert summaries of changes in the region over the past several years. This information was used as input into a senior advisory meeting in Almaty, Kazakhstan in October 2022. The results of these events allow CEPF to properly assess progress toward portfolio goals and determine priorities for the remainder of the investment period.

1. Introduction

The Mountains of Central Asia Hotspot—covering 860,000 square kilometers centered on the major mountain ranges of the Pamir and the Tien Shan—is remarkable for its relatively large amount of remaining natural habitat, high endemism, and charismatic megafauna, particularly the iconic snow leopard. The region's peaks rise to over 7,000 meters and are covered in thousands of glaciers. These peaks create isolated valleys and often arid environments that are fed by snow melt, leading to diverse ecosystems that support the wild crop relatives of many valuable fruits, nuts, and herbaceous plants, and overall, upwards of 5,000 plant species, of which 1,500 are endemic to the region. The region also includes 144 key biodiversity areas, per the IUCN global standard, covering 149,000 square kilometers.

The hotspot includes parts of seven countries: southeastern Kazakhstan; most of Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan; eastern Uzbekistan; western China; northeastern Afghanistan; and a small montane part of southeastern Turkmenistan. This area of great cultural diversity and dynamic political history is facing dramatic changes that present a threat to its biodiversity. Economic development, driven both from countries to the east and the west, is leading to huge investments in natural resource extraction and infrastructure for energy generation and transportation. At the same time, economic pressure has created the need for more export-oriented agriculture and led to loss of transparency on issues of land management.

The state of civil society in each of the countries is also varied. The level of capacity ranges from relatively high (e.g., in Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan) to relatively low (e.g., in Afghanistan) and the legal environment in which groups work is also varied; for example, in terms of ability to receive foreign funds or in the ability to engage in management of public lands.

Political and global events have absolutely influenced work in the region. First, the global COVID-19 pandemic struck four months after the program began, drastically affecting staff and grantee movement throughout 2020 and 2021. Second, there have been relatively minor, albeit significant, periods of unrest in Kyrgyzstan in 2020 and 2021, and in Kazakhstan in 2022, and there is an ongoing armed dispute between Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan. Third was the change in government in Afghanistan in August 2021 leading to the suspension of almost all foreign donor-funded projects. Further, throughout the life of this program, political issues have prevented engagement in western China. Finally, beginning in March 2022, the conflict between Russia and Ukraine, and the resulting imposition of sanctions on Russian banks, has altered financing mechanisms, and changed the prices of fuel and standard goods, in profound ways. If nothing else, these events have led to a more deliberate pace of work through three years of a program at least initially planned for five years.

2. Niche for CEPF Investment

2.1. Overview

The ecosystem profile for the region was formally approved in August 2017 and the five-year investment period began in November 2019 with the commencement of the RIT grant, led by WWF-Russia in collaboration with ARGO Civil Society Development Association. The total allocation to the region is US$8,000,000.

Over the period of May 2016 through March 2017, Zoï Environment Network of Geneva, Switzerland, led and prepared the ecosystem profile with contributions from over 250 stakeholders from civil society, government and donor institutions to gather and synthesize data on biodiversity, socioeconomic and institutional context, climate change, ecosystem services, and ongoing and planned conservation investments in the hotspot countries. The profile identifies 68 globally threatened species, 144 Key Biodiversity Areas (KBAs) and 26 corridors.

To match the level of funding available from CEPF with a concomitant geographic scope, CEPF and the consulted stakeholders prioritized 33 species, 28 KBAs and five corridors. The terrestrial priority sites represent 3.8 million hectares, or 25 percent of the total hectares of KBA, although this is less than 1 percent of the total hotspot area. Criteria used to prioritize these targets included the number of globally threatened species, the presence of threatened habitat types, resilience to climate change, status of protection, provision of ecosystem services, threats, and opportunities for conservation action. To date, the ecosystem profile for the hotspot has been endorsed by the GEF Operational Focal Points of all the countries except for China.

CEPF's niche in the Mountains of Central Asia Hotspot is to make grants that ensure biodiversity conservation supports local and national economic development agendas, complements public sector managers of protected areas, and builds the capacity of civil society organizations (CSOs) to engage in conservation in the hotspot. This is expressed via six Strategic Directions with an initial expectation of funding as follows:

Table 1. Strategic Directions and Funding Allocation per Ecosystem Profile

No.	Strategic Direction and Investment Priorities	Funding
1	Address threats to priority species	$1,000,000

No.	Strategic Direction and Investment Priorities	Funding
	1.1. Enforcement and incentives 1.2. Regulation of collecting, hunting, and fishing 1.3. Species-specific reserves 1.4. Human-wildlife conflict 1.5. Maintenance of species populations	
2	Improve management of priority sites with and without official protection status 2.1. CSO, community, and PA management collaboration 2.2. Sustainable use of unprotected KBAs 2.3. Identify and recognize KBAs	$2,300,000
3	Support sustainable management and biodiversity conservation within priority corridors 3.1. Ecological restoration and KBA connectivity 3.2. Integrate biodiversity into development planning 3.3. CSO engagement in development planning	$1,500,000
4	Engage communities of interest and economic sectors, including the private sector, in improved management of production landscapes (i.e., priority sites and corridors that are not formally protected) 4.1. Engage hunting, tourism, and mining operations 4.2. Mainstream conservation into livestock and farm management 4.3. Forest certification and non-timber forest product value chains 4.4. Site safeguards in infrastructure development 4.5. Raise awareness on species and KBAs	$1,000,000
5	Enhance civil society capacity for effective conservation action 5.1. Communication between CSOs, communities, and government 5.2. CSO capacity for planning, implementation, fundraising, and communication 5.3. Networks among SCOs 5.4. Strengthen funding sources and access to funding by CSOs 5.5. Environmental education	$1,000,000
6	Provide strategic leadership and effective coordination of conservation investment through a regional implementation team 6.1. CSOs achieve shared conservation goals 6.2. Harmonize investments and direct funding to priority issues and sites	$1,200,000
	Total	**$8,000,000**

2.2. Field-Based Coordination

The RIT consists of WWF-Russia (formally based in Moscow) as the lead organization, working in collaboration with ARGO of Almaty as a sub-grantee. WWF-Russia has a long-running Central Asia program with permanent staff based in Almaty and has deep experience in the five former Soviet Republics. Meanwhile, ARGO's strength is in building the capacity of grassroots NGOs throughout those five countries and Afghanistan.

WWF-Russia holds the $1,200,000 grant to serve as the RIT from November 2019 through October 2024, and like all CEPF RITs, manages a separate Small Grant Mechanism (SGM) with the same end-date. The structure of the team is shown in Table 2.

Table 2. RIT Staffing Structure as of October 2022

Position	Name	Location
Team Leader	Lizza Protas	Almaty
Small-Grants Manager	Tatyana Reznikova	Almaty
Kazakhstan Country Coordinator	Lina Valdshmit	Almaty
Kyrgyz Country Coordinator	Mihail Yakovlev	Bishkek
Tajikistan Country Coordinator	Khirsav Shermatov	Dushanbe
Turkmenistan Country Coordinator	Begench Atamuradov	Ashgabat
Uzbekistan Country Coordinator	Aleksandr Grigoryants	Tashkent
Senior Administrator	Alla Voskoboynik	Moscow
Financial Manager	Dilnara Jalilova	Almaty
Senior Biodiversity Advisor	Olga Pereladova	Moscow
WWF-Russia Regional Advisor	Grigory Mazmaniants	Almaty

In addition to those named here, WWF-Russia provides the support of its Almaty communication and administrative staff. Further, both WWF-Russia and ARGO have multiple ongoing programs that directly complement the goals of CEPF and its grantees, such that staff from these organizations act as extensions of the RIT.

As originally envisioned, technical oversight of the program was to be with WWF-Russia's senior representative in the region, Grigory Mazmaniants, with contractual and financial services, and ultimate accountability for the grant, held in Moscow. However, with ongoing political events in Russia and banking sanctions, the Almaty office is now responsible for the bulk of contractual and financial actions. The operational implications of these changes are still being determined.

3. Implementing the Strategy

3.1. Portfolio Status

CEPF grant-making formally began with the RIT Grant to WWF-Russia for US$1,200,000 in November 2019. This grant was for the full amount of Strategic Direction 6. The RIT mobilized and the CEPF Secretariat provided formal training in December 2019. As noted above, as the RIT was conducting its initial outreach events to "launch" the program in early 2020, the pandemic dramatically slowed the initial pace of work. Nonetheless, the team pushed forward with the release of calls for letters of inquiry per Table 3.

Table 3. MCA Calls for Letters of Inquiry

No.	Focus	Release Date	Due Date	LOIs Received	
				Large	Small
1	Kyrgyzstan	16 March 2020	20 April 2020	n/a	22
2	Kazakhstan	20 April 2020	20 May 2020	n/a	27
3	Uzbekistan	20 April 2020	20 May 2020	n/a	6
4	Turkmenistan	22 April 2020	22 May 2020	n/a	3
5	Tajikistan	24 April 2020	25 May 2020	n/a	21
6	Afghanistan, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Uzbekistan	6 May 2020	18 June 2020	47	n/a
7	Uzbekistan	5 Oct 2020	6 Nov 2020	n/a	5
8	Turkmenistan	15 Dec 2020	15 Jan 2021	n/a	4
9	Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Uzbekistan	15 Dec 2020	16 Jan 2021	23	n/a
10	Kazakhstan	1 May 2021	1 June 2021	n/a	10
11	Kyrgyzstan	1 May 2021	1 June 2021	n/a	16

No.	Focus	Release Date	Due Date	LOIs Received	
				Large	Small
12	Tajikistan	1 May 2021	1 June 2021	n/a	12
13	Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Uzbekistan	9 June 2021	1 August 2021	8	n/a
14	Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Uzbekistan	4 October 2021	21 Nov 2021	15	n/a
15	Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Uzbekistan	1 December 2021	15 Jan 2022		25
Sub-totals				**92**	**145**
Total				**237**	

Solicitations were often purposefully limited either by geography and/or technical area. The intent was (a) to provide focused outreach to a set of stakeholders (i.e., applicants) in a given geography, ensuring that local groups – the core constituency of CEPF – understand what CEPF is trying to achieve so that they can submit better LOIs, and (b) to allow a fairer comparison of proposals (i.e., comparing "like with like.")

The CEPF Secretariat sets annual targets for grant awards (Table 4).

Table 4. Commitments by Fiscal Year

Fiscal Year Ending	Grant Award Target	Actual Commitment (to date)
30 June 2020	$1,400,000	$1,400,000
30 June 2021	$2,000,000	$2,001,294
30 June 2022	$2,000,000	$1,987,404
30 June 2023	$1,850,000	$96,776*
30 June 2024	$750,000	
Total	**$8,000,000**	**$5,485,475**

Note: * = as of 30 October 2022

As shown in Table 5, to date, 24 of the 92 large grant LOIs have moved forward to full proposal (26 percent), and 43 of the 145 small grant proposals have moved forward to negotiation (30 percent); an overall "success" rate that reflects the quality of applications and the work-rate of the RIT to develop appropriate projects. This compares favorably with other CEPF portfolios and demonstrates the value of the RIT's region-specific outreach to applicants prior to the release of calls for LOIs.

As part of the Ecosystem profile, the CEPF Donor Council approved allocations of funding to six Strategic Directions. CEPF uses its online grants management system to track awards by a single strategic direction. However, the reality is that most projects contribute to programmatic targets in more than one strategic direction.

Table 5. Awarded Large and Small Grants by Strategic Direction

Strategic Direction	Allocation	Large Grants		Small Grants		Total		Balance
		Count	Amount	Count	Amount	Count	Amount	
1. Species	$1,000,000	6	$958,727	8	$144,271	14	$1,102,998	-$102,998
2. KBAs	$2,300,000	6	$951,963	28	$623,712	34	$1,575,675	$724,325
3. Corridors	$1,500,000	4	$560,636	2	$38,896	6	$599,532	$900,468

Strategic Direction	Allocation	Large Grants		Small Grants		Total		Balance
		Count	Amount	Count	Amount	Count	Amount	
4. Production landscapes	$1,000,000	6	$595,625	2	$39,972	8	$635,597	$364,403
5. Capacity building	$1,000,000	2	$293,096	3	$57,627	5	$350,724	$649,276
6. RIT	$1,200,000	1	$1,200,000	0	$0	1	$1,200,000	$0
Total	**$8,000,000**	**25**	**$4,560,047**	**43**	**$904,478**	**68**	**$5,464,526**	**$2,535,474**

Note the variances between the amount allocated in the ecosystem profile and obligations to date. Reasons for this include:

- For financial reporting purposes, CEPF assigns grants to a single Strategic Direction when, in reality, most grants contribute to more than one SD. For example, a grant could easily address a species (SD 1), a protected site (SD 2), the neighboring community (SD 3 or SD 4), and capacity building (SD 5). Thus, where SD 1 might appear overspent, a simple reassessment of a grant's primary focus might alter the accounting.
- With SD 3 and SD 4, the level of demand anticipated at the time of preparation of the ecosystem profile has not been borne out in the response to the calls for proposals to date. This reflects the difficulty of accurately predicting demand from civil society, especially considering all the changes that have happened in between the profile being prepared and the calls being issued.

Note the discrepancy in Table 4 and Table 5. Table 4 shows a higher amount obligated than Table 5 ($5.485 million compared to $5.464 million), because Table 4 captures the entire Small Grant Mechanism allocation from CEPF to the RIT, whereas Table 5 captures the [currently] slightly smaller value of commitments from the RIT to recipients of small grants.

In the Mountains of Central Asia Hotspot, CEPF funding is not allocated by country, but where work takes place is of critical importance for many reasons. Table 6 shows awards by country, to date.

Table 6. Awarded Large and Small Grants by Country

Country	Large Grants		Small Grants		Total	
	Count	Amount	Count	Amount	Count	Amount
Afghanistan	1	$250,000	0	$0	1	$250,000
China	0	$0	0	$0	0	$0
Kazakhstan	5	$798,746	12	$268,357	17	$1,067,104
Kyrgyz Republic	9	$1,256,402	9	$177,863	18	$1,434,266
Tajikistan	6	$611,802	9	$177,880	15	$789,682
Turkmenistan	1	$150,001	7	$105,000	8	$255,001
Uzbekistan	0	$0	6	$175,378	6	$175,378
Multi-country	2	$293,096	0	$0	2	$293,096
RIT	1	$1,200,000	0	$0	1	$1,200,000
Total	**25**	**$4,560,047**	**43**	**$904,478**	**68**	**$5,464,526**

Table 7 shows the division of funds by "local" recipients, which include organizations with formal headquarters within any of the seven hotspot countries, and "international" recipients from outside those countries, which to date, include organizations from the United States, United Kingdom, Switzerland, and Germany. The majority of grant funds (65 percent) have gone to local groups, reflecting CEPF's theory of change that conservation

results are better effected when local civil society is empowered and engaged. (Note that Table 7 does not include the RIT.)

Table 7. Grants by International vs Local Recipient

Type	Large Grants		Small Grants		Total		Percent of Grant Funds	Unique Recipients
	Count	Amount	Count	Amount	Count	Amount		
International	10	$1,461,883	1	$18,757	11	$1,480,640	35%	8
Local	14	$1,898,164	42	$885,721	56	$2,783,885	65%	45
Total*	24	$3,360,047	43	$904,478	67	$4,264,526		53

* Totals and percentages do not include the RIT

Table 7 also highlights the number of unique recipients of grants, as, in total, 11 organizations have received more than one grant. Regardless, 45 different local organizations have received funding – a great accomplishment. Further, of these, two groups received small grants, performed well, and then received large grants – an indicator of growing capacity. (The information from Tables 5, 6, and 7 is also displayed in figure format in Annex 1.)

Table 8 shows all awarded grants, by country and by date of award, with hyperlinks to CEPF's website, offering project summaries and further details on each. Note the use of the grant identification number. These numbers are used elsewhere in this document to identify which grants are working in which KBAs or on which species.

Table 8. Grants Awarded as of October 2022

(Large grants in **bold**)

Ct.	Grant ID	Organization	Summary Information	SD	Start	End	Amount
Regional Implementation Team							
1	110214	WWF-Russia	Regional Implementation Team	6	Nov-19	Oct-24	$1,200,000
Afghanistan							
2	**110808**	**Wildlife Conservation Society**	**Wakhan National Park**	**2**	**Dec-20**	**Nov-22**	**$250,000**
Kazakhstan							
3	110818	Jabagly-Manas	Environmental education in Zhulay	5	Sep-20	Aug-21	$19,160
4	110820	Wildlife Without Borders	Snow leopard conservation effectiveness evaluation	1	Sep-20	Mar-22	$19,832
5	110819	Biogen	Aksuzhabagli environmental education	5	Oct-20	Sep-22	$19,757
6	**110706**	**Biodiversity Conservation Fund of Kazakhstan**	**Western Tien Shan World Heritage Site**	**2**	**Dec-20**	**Aug-22**	**$149,488**
7	**110779**	**Association for the Conservation of Biodiversity of Kazakhstan**	**Dzungaria salamanders and minks**	**1**	**Feb-21**	**Jan-23**	**$149,254**
8	111970	Socio-Ecological Fund	Ecotourism promotion	2	Apr-21	May-22	$19,970
9	112384	Zhassyl Azyk	Sairam-Ugam State pasture management	2	Jun-21	Dec-22	$19,995

Ct.	Grant ID	Organization	Summary Information	SD	Start	End	Amount
10	112385	Ugam	Western Tien Shan ecotourism	2	Jun-21	Jul-22	$19,849
11	112383	Wildlife Without Borders	Snow leopard population connectivity	2	Jan-22	Dec-22	$20,000
12	**112609**	**Tabigat Assn of Hunting Communities and Farms**	**Dzungaria corridor sustainable tourism**	**4**	**Apr-22**	**Mar-24**	**$150,006**
13	113058	ECO Atameken	Kentau environmental education	2	Apr-22	Mar-23	$19,924
14	**112628**	**Earth Island Institute**	**Endangered raptor conservation**	**1**	**May-22**	**Aug-24**	**$249,998**
15	113054	Shk Khantagy	Karatau Nature Reserve management	4	May-22	Sep-23	$19,992
16	113057	Society of Soldiers-Internationalists and Invalids of Tyulkubas Region	Kaiyrshakty pasture restoration	4	May-22	Apr-23	$19,980
17	113056	Ugam	Western Tien Shan community engagement	2	May-22	Apr-24	$49,901
18	113055	Jabagly-Manas"	Public Awareness campaign	2	Jul-22	Jun-23	$19,998
19	**113043**	**Biodiversity Conservation Fund of Kazakhstan**	**Western Tien Shan World Heritage Site, Phase II**	**2**	**Aug-22**	**Sep-23**	**$100,000**
Kyrgyzstan							
20	110815	Global and Local Information Partnership	Kulun-Ata and Karatal-Zhapyryk management effectiveness	2	Aug-20	Nov-21	$19,990
21	110816	LEADER	Saruuy Aiyl Okmoto women and youth	5	Aug-20	Nov-21	$18,710
22	110817	Orchun	Kara-Kulzhinsky CBNRM	2	Aug-20	Dec-21	$20,000
23	**110756**	**Fauna & Flora International**	**Besh Aral management and megafauna**	**1**	**Nov-20**	**Dec-22**	**$148,578**
24	**110812**	**Panthera**	**Rural livelihoods and livestock**	**1**	**Dec-20**	**Apr-23**	**$150,000**
25	**110679**	**University of Central Asia**	**Wild fruit species conservation**	**1**	**Jan-21**	**Dec-22**	**$110,911**
26	**111815**	**Wildlife Conservation Society**	**Introducing SMART in the Khan-Tengri Corridor**	**3**	**Jun-21**	**May-23**	**$156,723**
27	112374	Issyk-Kul clean	Issyk-Kul Lake fish net removal	2	Jun-21	Sep-22	$19,523
28	112375	Union of Pasture Users of Ak-Dobe Village	Ak-Dobo Village pasure management	3	Jun-21	Dec-22	$19,938
29	112386	Kyrgyz Wildlife Conservation Society	Western Issyk-Kul vulture conservation	2	Oct-21	Dec-22	$19,900
30	**112481**	**Rural Development Fund**	**Chychkan Gorge management**	**2**	**Feb-22**	**Jan-24**	**$151,924**
31	113053	Muztor	Sary-Chelek sustainable agriculture	2	Apr-22	Mar-23	$19,859
32	113050	Lesik-Yug	Kyzyl-Unkur restoration	2	Apr-22	Sep-23	$19,943
33	**112606**	**American University of Central Asia**	**Chychkan, Toktogul and Suusamyr pasture management**	**3**	**May-22**	**Jun-24**	**$149,913**
34	**112672**	**Kyrgyz Association of Forest and Land Users**	**Isfayram-Shakhimardan apricot and almond conservation**	**2**	**May-22**	**Feb-24**	**$150,550**
35	113079	Bugu-Enye	Raptor conservation	2	May-22	Apr-23	$20,000

Ct.	Grant ID	Organization	Summary Information	SD	Start	End	Amount
36	**112650**	**Union of Photojournalists**	**Promotion of KBAs and tourism**	**4**	**Jun-22**	**May-24**	**$133,803**
37	**113035**	**Global and Local Information Partnership**	**Protected area management effectiveness**	**3**	**Sep-22**	**Aug-24**	**$104,000**
Tajikistan							
38	110846	NOOSFERA	Sarihosor Jamot endemic plants	1	Oct-20	Dec-21	$19,872
39	110847	Youth Group on Protection of Environment	Kairakkum Reservoir conservation	3	Oct-20	Dec-21	$18,958
40	**110796**	**Associationn of Nature Conservation Organizations of Tajikistan (ANCOT)**	**Baljuvan KBA management**	**4**	**Dec-20**	**Oct-22**	**$123,550**
41	**110870**	**Wildlife Conservation Society**	**Baljuvan KBA management and ANCOT capacity building**	**4**	**Dec-20**	**Nov-22**	**$33,487**
42	110848	Nature Protection Team	Baljuvan community engagement	2	Feb-21	May-22	$19,900
43	112389	Kuhhoi Pomir	Tajikistan wild pear conservation	1	Jul-21	Jul-22	$19,588
44	112387	Ganji Tabiat	Tajikistan wild fruit tree nursery support	1	Sep-21	Jun-22	$19,999
45	112388	Youth Ecological Center	Khojamumin KBA threat reudction	2	Oct-21	Oct-22	$19,918
46	**112465**	**Aga Khan Agency for Habitat**	**Zorkul Natural Reserve corridor management**	**3**	**Feb-22**	**Jul-23**	**$150,000**
47	**112588**	**Youth Group on Protection of Environment**	**Kairakkum Reservoir conservation, Phase II**	**1**	**Apr-22**	**Mar-24**	**$149,986**
48	113080	Iktidor	Darvaz Hawthorn and Bukhara Almond conservation	2	May-22	Apr-23	$19,752
49	113061	Olima	Tigrovaya Balka reserve management	2	May-22	Apr-23	$20,000
50	113081	Dunyoi Mukhabbat	Khojamumin KBA genetic resource conservation	2	Jul-22	Jun-23	$19,894
51	**113014**	**ANCOT**	**Baljuvan KBA management, Phase II**	**4**	**Oct-22**	**Nov-24**	**$124,779**
52	**113020**	**Wildlife Conservation Society**	**Baljuvan KBA management and ANCOT capacity building, Phase II**	**4**	**Nov-22**	**Apr-24**	**$30,000**
Turkmenistan							
53	110827	Ynanch-Vepa	Koitendag community outreach	2	Aug-20	Dec-21	$20,000
54	110828	Agzybir Hereket	Tallymergen-Kelif-Zeit flyway management	1	Jan-21	Dec-22	$20,000
55	111482	Agzybir Hereket	Tallymergen-Kelif-Zeit flyway management (bird monitoring equipment)	1	Jan-21	Apr-21	$5,000
56	**111692**	**Center for Large Landscape Conservation**	**Koitendag reserve connectivity**	**2**	**May-21**	**Feb-23**	**$150,001**
57	112132	Obadeskahyzmat	Koitendag sustainable agriculture	2	Jun-21	May-22	$0

Ct.	Grant ID	Organization	Summary Information	SD	Start	End	Amount
58	112131	Nature Preserving Society of Turkmenistan	Bukhara deer assessment	1	Jun-21	Jun-22	$20,000
59	112683	Obadeskahyzmat	Koitendag sustainable agriculture	2	Nov-21	Oct-22	$20,000
60	113051	Agzybir Hereket	Sustainable hunting in Kelif	2	Apr-22	Mar-23	$20,000
Uzbekistan							
61	110825	Society for the Protection of Birds of Uzbekistan	Talimarzhan Reservoir Sociable Lapwing monitoring	1	Sep-20	Jun-22	$19,981
62	110826	EKOMAKTAB	Karakum community awareness	2	Oct-20	Nov-21	$19,997
63	111971	Michael Succow Foundation	Fergana Valley species monitoring	2	Jan-21	Dec-22	$18,757
64	112089	Jonli Tabiat	Nuratau Range species conservation	2	Apr-21	Jul-22	$19,700
65	113060	Ecological Movement of Uzbekistan	Nuratau Ridge sustainable land management	2	Apr-22	Mar-24	$47,227
66	113059	Jonli Tabiat	Gissar Reserve buffer zone management	2	Apr-22	Mar-24	$49,717
Multi-Country							
67	**110755**	**Zoï Environment Network**	**CSO engagement in environmental safeguards**	**5**	**Jan-21**	**Jun-22**	**$142,496**
68	**112419**	**Global Forest Coalition**	**Tri-country CSO strengthening and KBA management**	**5**	**Jan-22**	**Dec-23**	**$150,600**

The following records are of note.

- The grants in Baljuvan to ANCOT and WCS are paired. As originally proposed WCS was to serve as a sub-grantee to ANCOT. However, it would be very difficult for a Tajik organization to receive money from CEPF, abroad, and then send it to WCS, also abroad. Thus, WCS has separate grants to work on the same project as ANCOT. For record-keeping, these are separate grants, although in reality, they are for the same project.

- The RIT awarded small grant 112132 to a Turkmen group, Obadeskahyzmat. However, before work began, events required a wholesale change in the scope of work. Rather than modifying 112132, the RIT ended the grant with an amount of $0, then made a new award, 112683 with a revised scope. For record-keeping, these are two separate grants, although in reality, they are for the same project.

- The small grants to Agzybir Hereket, 110828 and 111482, are for the same project. The former is for staff, travel, and special events, paid via bank transfer like the vast majority of all CEPF grants, whereas the latter is solely for equipment, purchased abroad and delivered to the grantee.

3.2. Collaborating with CEPF Donors and Other Funders

The CEPF Secretariat and WWF-Russia have collaborated directly and indirectly with donors and host country government agencies at multiple levels. WWF-Russia maintains regular engagement with:

- Relevant national government agencies in the five Central Asian republics, particularly for protected areas, forestry, and wildlife.
- The leadership of international conservation organizations, including WCS, FFI, IUCN, and Panthera, as well as the Convention on the Conservation of Migratory Species of Wild Animals (CMS).
- The multiple partners of the Global Sow Leopard and Ecosystem Protection Program (GSLEP).
- The various implementing agents for European Union-funded projects in the Kazakhstan Planet & Partnerships Cluster.
- The partners funded by the German International Climate Initiative (IKI).
- Donors supporting climate change mitigation efforts, particularly with young people, in Kazakhstan.

4. Performance of CEPF's Investment

4.1. Portfolio-Level Performance

In terms of the biophysical and socioeconomic indicators in the logical framework, after three years of operations, under the shadow of the pandemic and its restrictions from roughly March 2020 through March 2022, it is more appropriate to speak of progress toward those goals than achievement, *per se*. Performance can be assessed by several managerial and qualitative measures.

- **Perseverance and progress in 2020.** Despite the pandemic, in the first full year of operations, the team awarded 22 large and small grants.

- **Engagement of local and national civil society.** As noted above, 45 unique organizations have received grants that account for 65 percent of all awarded funds, not counting the RIT. This reflects a commitment to working with such groups, even if they are of lower capacity, require more managerial support, and conceivably deliver conservation results more slowly than large, international organizations.

- **Geographic breadth of awards.** Awards have been made in every eligible country in the hotspot except China, including Afghanistan, Turkmenistan, and Uzbekistan, which have unique political situations that make working there difficult. This is a reflection of the RIT's good political connections, maintaining ties with host country government partners to ensure space for grantees operate.

- **Working in the context of tumultuous political events.** As noted above, in addition to the pandemic, there has been no shortage of turmoil directly or indirectly affecting grantees and CEPF operations. The RIT and grantees have had to be creative and flexible in the structuring of grants in Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan, and with banking arrangements in the face of sanctions on Russian banks. Despite the challenges, the grantees and RIT continue to maintain open lines of communication, achieve results where they can, and in some cases, excel.

More specifically, the ecosystem profile identified 68 globally threatened species in the hotspot. Of these, the profile prioritized 33 for action. The table below shows grants – using the CEPF grant identification number from Table 8 – that are addressing each of these.

Table 9. Grants Addressing Priority Species

Ct.	Type	Scientific Name	Common Name	Grants
1	Amphibian	*Ranodon sibiricus*	Semirechensk (Xingjian) Salamander	110779
2	Bird	*Aquila heliaca*	Eastern Imperial Eagle	111482,112628
3	Bird	*Neophron percnopterus*	Egyptian Vulture	112628,111482,110827
4	Bird	*Anser erythropus*	Lesser White-fronted Goose	111482,110825
5	Bird	*Vanellus gregarius*	Sociable Lapwing	110825,111482
6	Bird	*Aquila nipalensis*	Steppe Eagle	111482,110825,112628
7	Bird	*Columba eversmanni*	Yellow-eyed Dove	112588
8	Fish	*Pseudoscaphirhynchus kaufmanni*	Amudarya Shovelnose Sturgeon	No grants to date
9	Fish	*Aspiolucius esocinus*	Pike Asp	No grants to date
10	Mammal	*Cervus hanglu*	Bukhara Deer	112131,110846
11	Mammal	*Ochotona iliensis*	Ili Pika	No grants to date
12	Mammal	*Marmota menzbieri*	Menzbier's Marmot	110756,113056
13	Mammal	*Panthera uncia*	Snow Leopard	111815,110812,11260 110820,112383,113035
14	Mammal	*Ovis orientalis*	Urial	110796,111692,110826
15	Plant	*Betula talassica*	birch species	No grants to date
16	Plant	*Betula tianschanica*	birch species	112606,113050
17	Plant	*Ribes malvifolium*	currant species	113060
18	Plant	*Swida darvasica*	dogwood species	No grants to date
19	Plant	*Crataegus darvasica*	hawthorn species	113050
20	Plant	*Crataegus knorringiana*	hawthorn species	113050,113080,112481
21	Plant	*Crataegus necopinata*	hawthorn species	113050
22	Plant	*Populus berkarensis*	poplar species	110818
23	Plant	*Sibiraea tianschanica*	rose species	110816
24	Plant	*Calligonum calcareum*	smartweed species	No grants to date
25	Plant	*Polygonum toktogulicum*	smartweed species	No grants to date
26	Plant	*Amygdalus bucharica*	Wild Almond	112387,112672,11308 113060,110826,112388
27	Plant	*Malus niedzwetzkyana*	wild apple species	110818,113050,11306 110679
28	Plant	*Malus sieversii*	wild apple species	112387,110679,11305 110818,110846
29	Plant	*Armeniaca vulgaris*	Wild Apricot	110816,112672,113060
30	Plant	*Pyrus cajon*	wild pear species	112389
31	Plant	*Pyrus korshinskyi*	wild pear species	113060,113050
32	Plant	*Pyrus tadshikistanica*	wild pear species	112387
33	Reptile	*Phrynocephalus strauchi*	Strauch's Toad Agama	111917

Of 33 priority species, grantees are addressing 26, which is considered excellent progress in the timeframe. The only species not being addressed are the two fish – which, because of their ecology, are beyond the technical and geographic capacity of many grantees – four plant species – which few grantees can identify – and one mammal, a pika, found in China and currently outside CEPF reach.

The ecosystem profile further identified 144 KBAs in the seven countries, prioritizing five each in China, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, and Uzbekistan, two in Turkmenistan, and one in Afghanistan, for a total of 28. Of course, grants work throughout the hotspot's KBAs, not only the "priorities," as Strategic Directions 1, 3, and 5, and immediate opportunities, take grantees to other "non-priority" KBAs. Thus, for accountability in relation to the ecosystem profile, the table below shows the KBA location of all grants that work in a

unique KBA. (The KBA code in the table corresponds to the listing in the ecosystem profile and the Conservation Outcomes wall map.)

Table 10. Grants Working in KBAs

(Priority KBAs in **bold**)

Ct.	KBA Code	KBA Name	Hectares	Grants
Afghanistan				
1	**AFG 1**	**Wakhan National Park**	**1,000,000**	**100808**
China				
2	CHI 1	Pamir Plateau Nature Reserve	670,000	
3	**CHI 2**	**Tuomuer Nature Reserve**	**570,000**	
4	CHI 3	Bayanbuluke and Kaidu River Valleys	240,000	
5	CHI 4	Kunes Forest	90,000	
6	**CHI 5**	**Nalati Prairie Nature Reserve**	**280,000**	
7	**CHI 6**	**Tangbula Forest**	**200,000**	
8	**CHI 7**	**Gongliu Wild Fruit Forest Reserve**	**220,000**	
9	CHI 8	Ili River Basin	25,000	
10	CHI 9	Yining Xiaoyebaila Nature Reserve	14,000	
11	CHI 10	Xitianshan Nature Reserve	215,000	
12	CHI 11	Wenquan Nature Reserve and River Basin	80,000	
13	CHI 12	Xiaerxili Nature Reserve	28,000	
14	**CHI 13**	**Tianshan Tien Chi Lake Reserve**	**150,000**	
15	CHI 14	Jiangbulake Forest	60,000	
Kazakhstan				
16	KAZ 1	Karatau	39,000	113043,110706,113055 113058,113054,112628
17	KAZ 2	Kyzylkol	4,000	
18	KAZ 3	Arystandy	16,000	
19	KAZ 4	Turkestan	58,000	
20	KAZ 5	Ugam	11,000	113043,110706,112384 113056
21	KAZ 6	Tolebi	17,000	112385,113056
22	KAZ 7	Boraldai	8,000	113057,112628
23	**KAZ 8**	**Aksu-Zhabagly**	**70,000**	**113043,110706,110818 111970,110819**
24	KAZ 9	Chakpak Pass/Ters-Ashchibulak Reservoir	13,000	113055
25	KAZ 10	Berikkara	16,000	113055
26	KAZ 11	Merke	65,000	113055
27	**KAZ 12**	**Aksay**	**100,000**	**111970,110820**
28	**KAZ 13**	**Almaty Nature Reserve**	**65,000**	**110820**
29	KAZ 14	Issyk	85,000	110820
30	KAZ 15	Assy Plateau	37,000	112383
31	**KAZ 16**	**Kolsai**	**130,000**	**112383,111970**
32	KAZ 17	Toraigyr	150,000	112383
33	**KAZ 18**	**Narynkol**	**100,000**	**112419**
34	KAZ 19	Tuzkol	3,000	
35	KAZ 20	Charyn Park	85,000	111970,112383
36	KAZ 21	Altyn-Emel	480,000	111970,112383,110779
37	KAZ 22	Koksu	240,000	110779
38	KAZ 23	Zhongar-Alatau	350,000	110779,112609
Kyrgyzstan				
39	KYR 1	Besh-Aral	90,000	110756
40	KYR 2	Chandalash	14,000	
41	KYR 3	Sumsar	2,000	
42	**KYR 4**	**Kassan-Sai**	**75,000**	**112419,112650**
43	**KYR 5**	**Aflatun-Padyshata**	**60,000**	**112650,110679**
44	KYR 6	Sary-Chalek	20,000	113053,110679

Ct.	KBA Code	KBA Name	Hectares	Grants
45	KYR 7	Besh-Tash	50,000	
46	KYR 8	Talas River	2,000	
47	KYR 9	Nyldy	15,000	
48	**KYR 10**	**Chychkan**	**30,000**	**112481,112606**
49	KYR 11	Torkent-Kara-Jygach	16,000	
50	KYR 12	Sargata	4,000	
51	KYR 13	Karasu	1,000	113053
52	KYR 14	Kurp-Sai	4,500	
53	KYR 15	Bekechal	12,000	
54	KYR 16	Dashman	42,000	
55	KYR 17	Kyzyl-Unur	48,000	113050
56	KYR 18	Bazar-Korgon	24,000	110679
57	KYR 19	Leilek	66,000	110812
58	**KYR 20**	**Isfairam-Shakhimardan**	**220,000**	**110812,112672**
59	KYR 21	Tuz	55,000	
60	KYR 22	Alai Valley	270,000	
61	**KYR 23**	**Alai-Kuu**	**165,000**	**110815,110817**
62	KYR 24	Ak-Sai	90,000	
63	KYR 25	Chatyr-Kul Lake	22,000	110815
64	KYR 26	Kavak-Too and Moldo-Too	12,000	
65	KYR 27	Son-Kul Lake	32,000	110815
66	KYR 28	Kumtor and Sarychat-Ertash	134,000	111815,113035
67	KYR 29	Karkyra	67,000	110816
68	KYR 30	Sary-Djaz	300,000	111815,110816,113035
69	KYR 31	Eastern Issyk-Kul Lakeshore	68,000	112374,110816,112375
70	KYR 32	Western Issyk-Kul Lakeshore	50,000	112374,112386
Tajikistan				
71	TJK 1	Aktash	12,000	
72	TJK 2	Asht	50,000	
73	TJK 3	Kayrakkum	100,000	110847,112588
74	TJK 4	Turkestan Mountains Southern Slope	50,000	
75	TJK 5	Upper Zeravshan	33,000	
76	TJK 6	Yagnob	2,000	
77	TJK 7	Upper Gissar	30,000	
78	TJK 8	Ramit	66,000	
79	TJK 9	Sarikhadang	18,000	
80	TJK 10	Kondara	1,000	
81	TJK 11	Shirkent	8,000	
82	TJK 12	Karnay	8,000	
83	TJK 13	Tajik Babatag	85,000	
84	TJK 14	Gazimalik	70,000	
85	TJK 15	Sarsaryak	20,000	
86	TJK 16	Ayvaj	22,000	
87	TJK 17	Tigrovaya Balka	62,000	113061
88	TJK 18	Tajik Karatau	60,000	
89	TJK 19	Khojamumin	3,000	112388,113081
90	TJK 20	Kushvoristan	83,000	
91	**TJK 21**	**Baljuvan**	**94,000**	**110870,113020,110846 110848,110796,113014**
92	TJK 22	Muminabad	46,000	112387
93	**TJK 23**	**Dashtijum**	**40,000**	**112419,112387**
94	**TJK 24**	**Darvaz**	**93,000**	**113080**
95	TJK 25	Kamarou	20,000	
96	TJK 26	Tavildara	300,000	
97	TJK 27	Vanj	7,000	
98	TJK 28	Rushan	5,000	
99	**TJK 29**	**Shakhdara**	**3,000**	**112389**

Ct.	KBA Code	KBA Name	Hectares	Grants
100	TJK 30	Kudara	30,000	
101	**TJK 31**	**Ishkashim**	**3,500**	
102	TJK 32	Alichur Valley	6,500	
103	TJK 33	Zorkul Mountains	100,000	112465
104	TJK 34	Shorkul Lake	65,000	
105	TJK 35	Tajik National Park	2,300,000	112465
Turkmenistan				
106	**TKM 1**	**Koytendag**	**68,000**	**110827,112683,112131 111692**
107	**TKM 2**	**Tallymerjen**	**150,000**	**111481,110828**
108	TKM 3	Zeyid Reservoir and Kelif Lakes	78,000	113051
Uzbekistan				
109	UZB 1	Pskem River Basin	255,000	
110	UZB 2	Karzhantau Ridge	15,000	
111	UZB 3	Chimgan	20,000	
112	**UZB 4**	**Akbulak River Basin**	**65,000**	
113	**UZB 5**	**Bashkyzylsay River Basin**	**16,000**	
114	**UZB 6**	**Karabau and Dukentsay River Basins**	**32,000**	
115	UZB 7	Angren Plateau	70,000	
116	UZB 8	Northern Slope of the Kuramin Ridge	68,000	
117	UZB 9	Upper Chadak and Chorkesar Rivers	53,000	
118	UZB 10	Pap Foothills	24,000	
119	UZB 11	Karatag	4,000	
120	UZB 12	Ungor Tepa	2,000	
121	UZB 13	Chartak Foothills	3,000	
122	UZB 14	Akkum Sands	11,000	111971
123	UZB 15	Syr Darya Upstream	4,000	
124	UZB 16	Teshiktash Foothills	27,000	
125	UZB 17	Chilustun and Kyrtashtau Mountains	6,000	
126	UZB 18	Shakhimardan	4,000	
127	UZB 19	Sokh	20,000	
128	UZB 20	Northern Slope of the Turkestan Mountains	135,000	
129	UZB 21	Northern Aydarkul	140,000	
130	UZB 22	Tuzkan Lake	93,000	
131	UZB 23	Northern Piedmont Plain of Nuratau Ridge	270,000	112089
132	**UZB 24**	**Nuratau Ridge**	**96,000**	**112089,110826,113060**
133	UZB 25	Koytash Ridge	18,000	
134	UZB 26	Aktau Ridge	36,000	
135	UZB 27	Kattakurgan Reservoir	13,000	
136	UZB 28	Western Zeravshan	115,000	
137	UZB 29	Chimkurgan Reservoir	4,000	
138	**UZB 30**	**Talimarjan Reservoir**	**78,000**	**110825**
139	UZB 31	Western Hissar	500,000	113059
140	UZB 32	Tarkapchigay River Basin	70,000	
141	UZB 33	Kugitang and Baysuntay Ridges	180,000	
142	UZB 34	Kelif-Sherabad Range	95,000	
143	UZB 35	Khaudaktau	44,000	
144	UZB 36	Uzbek Babatag	98,000	

Breaking this down, grantees are working in 19 of 28 priority KBAs and in 56 out of 144 KBAs overall. However, this is better understood by country, particularly given that none of the 14 KBAs in China are eligible for investment. In that sense, grantees are working in 19 of 23 *eligible* priority KBAs. Further:

- In Afghanistan, grants are working in the one and only identified KBA.
- In Kazakhstan, grants are working in all five priority KBAs, and in 19 of 23, overall.

- In Kyrgyzstan, grants are in all five priority KBAs, and in 18 of 32, overall.
- In Tajikistan, grants are in four of five priority KBAs, and in 10 of 35, overall.
- In Turkmenistan, grants are in all three KBAs; the two priorities and one non-priority.
- In Uzbekistan, grants are in two of five priority KBAs, and in 5 of 36, overall.

Reviewing these numbers, Afghanistan and Turkmenistan, with only a few KBAs, are unique and being addressed, and Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan have broad coverage. Tajikistan, as well, can be understood to have satisfactory coverage. The one priority KBA not covered (TJK 31, Ishkashim) is only 3,500 hectares and, perhaps due to its remote location, has evinced little interest during calls for letters of inquiry. In Tajikistan, as well, indeed there are many non-priority KBAs with no investment, but this is somewhat expected given the country's relatively low level of CSO capacity.

The one surprising country is Uzbekistan, which, dating back to the ecosystem profile workshops, was noted as a place of opportunity, even more with the change of political leadership in 2016 leading to a loosening of controls on civil society. Over the past three years, the RIT and Secretariat have made several concerted efforts to engage partners there. Certainly, the pandemic made this more difficult, but still, the lack of coverage is disappointing. The reasons behind this, and what, if anything, can be done, are discussed in Section 5.

Separately, the ecosystem profile identified 25 corridors, listing five as priorities: Turkestan and Alai Mountains, Western Tien Shan, Pamir-Alai and Wakhan Mountains, Khan-Tengri and Tomur Mountains, and Dzungaria. Given that the KBAs fall within the corridors, there are investments happening in all five of these, plus an additional 12 non-priority corridors.

The caveat for all of the above – grants working in a KBA, in a corridor, or in relation to a species – is that this does not equate with a conservation outcome, only with investment. By example, Table 9 lists the area of the KBA. Looking at the last grant on the list, to a group called Jonli Tabiat, working in the Western Hissar KBA, presuming the project is successful does not mean the entire 500,000-hectare area is under improved management. This logic is even more germane to corridors, which are typically much larger, and often beyond the scope of a single grant to meaningfully affect.

Lastly, the ecosystem profile includes a logical framework that relates the strategic directions and subordinate investment priorities to numeric targets. Specifically, it includes targets/indicators for seven "objectives" and 27 "intermediate outcomes." Progress toward each of these is shown in Annex 2 and the challenges that this framework presents are discussed in Section 5. In general, progress is good across most objectives and outcomes; that is, grants are headed in the right direction. However, progress is rarely linear. By example, that same grant to Jonli Tabiat might be focused on improving the management of 5,000 hectares. Achievement does not happen with some number of hectares being better managed each month. Rather, at the end of the grant, there will be one final tally based on various documentation and events. The RIT's supervision of each grant assures us that progress is as expected, but does not guarantee achievement. Across all the indicators, clearly the biggest challenge is 600,000 hectares of KBA under improved management, discussed below regarding definitions of "improved management," and the creation of 60,000 hectares of protected areas, at least within the timeframe of this program.

4.2. Preliminary Assessment of Contributions to Global Indicators

CEPF has four "pillars" which provide a set of global indicators to which all grants contribute to a greater or lesser extent.

Biodiversity conservation. Global indicators address species benefiting from conservation action, hectares of KBAs with improved management, hectares of protected areas created or expanded, number of protected areas with improved management, and hectares of production landscapes with improved management. These five measures overlap directly with the portfolio logical framework, and to the extent that progress is being made on those (per Annex 2 and Section 5), the MCA grants are contributing to the global indicators.

Civil society. CEPF provides all local/national grantees with two self-assessment tools at the beginning and end of each grant, the Civil Society Tracking Tool (CSTT) and the Gender Tracking Tool (GTT). These tools are being used and form part of Strategic Direction 5, which further allows for training, such as that provided by Zoï on environmental impact assessment, and the Global Forest Coalition to its several subordinate members in the region. Beyond this, RIT member ARGO maintains expertise in core capacity building (e.g., on topics such as financial management, project design, communications, and fundraising) and an online university in multiple local languages. Further, this measurement overlaps directly with the portfolio logical framework, meaning the portfolio works directly toward it. With 45 unique local organizations receiving grants, to date, progress in this area is expected to be significant.

Human well-being. CEPF tracks all grants for the number of direct beneficiaries: people receiving cash benefits, non-cash benefits, and training. CEPF also tracks grants for indirect beneficiaries: the gross numbers of people in specific communities benefiting from services such as access to clean water or with improved resilience to climate change due to project activities. These indicators do not directly overlap with the portfolio logical framework, so contributions could be modest. By example, the portfolio does not have a great emphasis on job creation, so that measure will be small, and populations are small in mountain areas – like the number of herders benefiting from predator-protection efforts – so that measure may also be small in the final analysis.

Enabling conditions. At a global level, CEPF tracks grants that affect laws, regulations, and policies. The stakeholders who contributed to the ecosystem profile did not consider such work likely to succeed given the political dynamics in the target countries. Certainly, a handful of grants are working on these matters, and there may be more work, per Section 5, but contributions will still be modest. CEPF also tracks how grantees contribute to the creation or performance of existing sustainable financing mechanisms. This measure is not relevant in this portfolio. Finally, as both a portfolio and global indicator, CEPF tracks the number of locally major or significant private companies adopting biodiversity-friendly practices. As Annex 2 shows, there are perhaps three or four such companies, a meaningful number relative to other hotspots.

4.3. Investment Highlights by Strategic Direction

Strategic Direction 1 is designed to address threats to priority species, including through improved enforcement and incentives for nature users, improved regulation on hunting and collecting, support for species-specific reserves, reduction of poisoning and trapping, and maintenance of populations of priority species. The relatively high "subscription rate" in this strategic direction – of the five SDs, this has the second highest number of grants (14) and second highest value of awards ($1.1 million) – reflects the relevance of the topic and how it resonates with organizations in the region. As shown in Table 9, there are several grants focused on endemic apples, pears, and nuts (reflecting a national emphasis on this) and,

unsurprisingly, several grants focused on charismatic and wide-ranging megafauna: snow leopard and ungulates like urial and Bukhara deer. A highlight of this strategic direction is the grant to the Kyrgyz Association of Forest Land Users (KAFLU), working in the Isfayram-Shakhimardan region, on the border of Uzbekistan. KAFLU is helping to improve the management of a forestry estate, particularly for the benefit of endemic apricot and almond species.

Strategic Direction 2 is designed to improve the management of priority sites, including by facilitating collaboration between stakeholders, developing management plans for KBAs outside protected areas, and building capacity for management of KBAs. As with many CEPF portfolios, this is the primary focus of the work, and investment reflects that: the highest number of grants (34) and the highest value of awards ($1.5 million). As shown in Table 10, grants are working in every eligible priority KBA other than one in Tajikistan and three in Uzbekistan. Notable are Kazakhstan's Aksu-Zhabagly, Sary-Djaz in Kyrgyzstan, Baluvan in Tajikistan, and the Koytendag region of Turkmenistan, with each seeing several complementary grants. These include the grant to the Center for Large Landscape Conservation, which is working with Turkmen government counterparts to better survey and monitor Koytendag Reserve, particularly for urial, while also working with neighboring communities to reduce conflicts with livestock owners.

Strategic Direction 3 is designed to support improved management of corridors, including via protocols for connectivity of KBAs, improved development planning, and engagement of civil society in review of development plans. As noted above, the challenge with this strategic direction is that working at a corridor level is the beyond the scope of many grantees. Nonetheless, there are six grants for almost $600,000 with a highlight being the exciting work taking place in the Pamir-Alai corridor, where the Aga Khan Foundation is promoting connectivity between Tajikistan National Park and the Zorkul Nature Reserve, and in the Western Tien Shan, where the American University of Central Asia is promoting improved pasture management in the Suusamyr Valley that connects several KBAs.

Strategic Direction 4 is designed to improve the management of production landscapes by working with the private sector on improved management, including hunting, tourism, mining, livestock, farms, and forestry operations. Eight grants for $635,000 have been awarded. A highlight is the grant to Tabigat, working in Kazakhstan's Dzungaria region, which is working to convert hunters and poachers into tour guides. The goal is to enable these people to make a living off the unprotected land lying between Zhongar-Alatau National Park, Lepsinsky State Nature Reserve, and Tokta State Nature Reserve.

Strategic Direction 5 is designed to build the capacity of local civil society, enabling groups to better engage with each other, the private sector, and government, and enhancing their capacity to implement projects. Only five grants for $350,000 have been awarded, but this Strategic Direction is interesting, because virtually every grant has capacity building as an element. Saying that only five grants focus on this topic under-represents what is truly happening. Still, there are grants like that to the Global Forest Coalition, which explicitly trains its national partners in Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, and Tajikistan in best practice in conservation, captured in SD 5.

5. Priorities through Conclusion of the Investment

At a simple level, the midterm assessment exercise compares progress in relation to the strategy and targets of the ecosystem profile. Given the obvious challenges of the global pandemic and many tumultuous political events, a review shows progress is satisfactory. However, such a simple analysis ignores several facts.

- The ecosystem profile was drafted largely in 2016, six years ago. It would be foolish to think that nothing has changed in that time: threats reduced in some KBAs and increased in others; planned investments by other donors cancelled in some KBAs (e.g., raising need) and new investments started in others (e.g., reducing need; or conversely, creating opportunities for leverage). In other words, "priorities" can change.

- The ecosystem profile presents a strategy for grant-making as described by stakeholders based on their understanding of the context at the time of the consultation process. It does not necessarily correspond with the current interests or capacity of potential applicants.

Sections 5.1 and 5.2 discuss each of these, with Section 5.3 providing the guidance for the remainder of the investment period. This discussion incorporates the feedback of various grantees, input from regional government and expert stakeholders, and the reflections of the RIT and Grant Director implementing the strategy. Individual respondents are purposefully not quoted, and certainly, while some proposed ideas were provocative, are not included here because they do not fit within CEPF's operational constraints.

5.1. Context Changes Since 2016

There are several major changes to consider.

Grantmaking in China is not possible. Absent approval from the GEF Operational Focal Point, and considering political conditions in Xinjiang, there is no possibility of investment in any of the KBAs in the country, let alone the five priority sites, or for Ili Pika, exclusively found in China. While no money was ever reserved for China – or any other country – this still means more is available for other places. By this logic, there are five fewer priority KBAs and one fewer priority species.

Enabling conditions for civil society in Uzbekistan. Uzbekistan has a vibrant economy and a large and educated population. Further, with the change in government in 2016, there was hope – even an assumption – on the part of CEPF that there would be a rapid movement of new entrants into the conservation space. However, over the intervening period, the registration process for CSOs remained difficult. While conditions briefly liberalized early in the CEPF investment period, they have now become more difficult with the passing of a decree requiring CSOs to report foreign funding to the Ministries of Justice and of Foreign Affairs, and further requiring CSO engagement of employees of state agencies for planning, implementation, and monitoring. Under current conditions, any work in Uzbekistan will need to be considered and deliberate.

Government change in Afghanistan. While the hotspot has only one KBA in Afghanistan, the Wakhan Valley, and while CEPF only ever anticipated making one or a handful of grants, the takeover by the Taliban in August 2021 has certainly changed expectations. In fact, in December 2020, CEPF awarded a grant to WCS that would promote the government-CSO co-management of the entire region as an inhabited protected area, with significant capacity building for three local NGOs, one of which focused on female empowerment. Even as WCS is still able to work in Afghanistan, international donors now forbid any form of collaboration with the Taliban government (forestalling the idea of "co-management") and the Talibs, not surprisingly, will not allow project approaches that place women in certain roles. As of this writing, WCS is redesigning its grant.

Better understanding of KBA methodology and KBA definition, particularly in Kyrgyzstan. When the ecosystem profile was written, the team applied a KBA methodology that itself had been newly revised by IUCN, and that in any format, was new to the region in 2016. The profiling team was practically training stakeholders in the methodology before then identifying and prioritizing KBAs. In the intervening period, local CSOs have a more complete understanding of the several nuanced criteria to identify KBAs (i.e., presence of threatened species, presence of threatened ecosystem, presence of geographically restricted biodiversity, ecological integrity, exceptional biological processes, irreplaceability). This is particularly relevant in Kyrgyzstan, as compelling arguments have been made to identify more KBAs – particularly areas linking other KBAs into corridors – and reprioritize existing ones given their vulnerability.

Delays in investment, delays in speed of implementation, and increases in costs. The global pandemic delayed investment in every CEPF hotspot, and its interruption to the supply chain is well known. However, as that crisis abates, the war in Ukraine and sanctions on Russian banks have caused new challenges. Grantees are facing increases in costs for fuel and commodities (due to the global market), dramatic local price hikes with the flood of Russian immigrants into the region's cities, and limited availability of electronics (e.g., computers, cameras) typically sourced from Russia. Further, sanctions on Russian banks have affected transfers of money from CEPF to the RIT and large grantees, transfers of money from the RIT small grant mechanism to small grantees, and transfers of money from grantees to their staff and vendors. These are not just administrative hassles – when a grantee does not receive a bank transfer, work can stop. In response, the Secretariat and RIT are planning for a six-month no-cost extension of the RIT to April 2025, with related extensions of work by large and small grant recipients.

5.2. Under-Subscribed Geographies, Species, and Investment Priorities

Relatively few high-quality applications from Tajikistan and Uzbekistan. Despite the number of KBAs in these two countries and the RIT's concerted outreach to CSOs there, CEPF can only make awards in response to satisfactory applications that fit within the framework of the ecosystem profile and clear operational constraints. Compared to Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan, applications from Tajikistan and Uzbekistan have been from groups that do not have the capacity to implement large grants or that would require inordinate support from the RIT for a small grant. Applications have been for topics or geographies that CEPF does not support, and with management methods and cost items that CEPF does not allow. The RIT will renew its efforts in these countries, but expectations of achievement may change, particularly in Uzbekistan, toward capacity building objectives as opposed to biophysical results.

Lack of interest in particular "priority' species and sites. CEPF and the RIT promote the ecosystem profile and educate potential applicants on the grant opportunities, highlighting the priority species and sites. That does not guarantee good – or any – applications for these. This applies to the four priority plant species with no investments: a birch, a dogwood, and two smartweed species. It is not surprising when conservation of a plant species does not resonate with applicants. Similarly, there have been no applications to work in Ishkashim in Tajikistan (priority KBA TJK 31). This is a very small KBA (3,500 hectares) in a village of less than 8,000 people, hours from any major population center that would be home to CSO capable of receiving a large or small grant. In other words, it may not make sense to prioritize a species or site if these are not "priorities" for people in the region.

Lack of interest in particular Investment Priorities. Again, the ecosystem profile sets out strategic directions, and subordinate investment priorities (IP), in response to one set of stakeholders at one point in time (i.e., the people who participated in the ecosystem profile process in 2016). Conditions change over time, changing the interests of potential applicants. Similarly, groups might be interested in the work, but not at the scale that CEPF offers: the average value of large grants in this hotspot is $140,000 with a duration of two years or less. This amount and duration are often too small to attract applicants to problems that require much more to resolve. Thus, there has been little uptake of IP 3.1 (ecological restoration at a corridor scale), IP 4.3 (forest certification), IP 4.4 (private sector engagement and safeguards on infrastructure projects), and IP 5.4 (sustainable financing mechanisms). At the same time, this is not a problem, *per se*, when there is progress toward targets at the level of the strategic direction. Specifically, if the goal of SD 4 is to work with the private sector in production landscapes, then the five investment priorities become prescriptive. If IP 4.1 (hunting, tourism, mining), 4.2 (livestock and farming), and 4.5 (media engagement) are all working well, then there is no reason to push 4.3 or 4.4.

5.3. Opportunities and Priorities

1. Based on the rate of spending, CEPF expects to extend the RIT agreement until 30 April 2025, allowing for more time for existing and forthcoming small and large grants. Specifically, this allows for 30 months from the time of the Midterm Assessment.

2. Gaps in investment in the priority species and sites named in the ecosystem profile – one species and five KBAs in China, one KBA in Tajikistan, three KBAs in Uzbekistan – are not considered a problem and will not directly influence future grants.

3. Conditions in Uzbekistan suggest that emphasis be placed on capacity building of CSOs in lieu of biophysical results. There might be no large grants to Uzbek CSOs. One possible approach will be to pair Uzbek groups with high-capacity partners from Kazakhstan.

4. As the logical framework shows, only one target, 4.3 on hectares of certified forest, has no progress and no planned progress (Annex 2). Input at the Midterm Assessment suggests, in the name of adaptive management, that this no longer be pursued.

5. The logical framework shows progress toward most of the targets. The challenge for all is the "consolidation" of these results. For example, it is one thing for a group to start a nursery for wild apple trees in a KBA; it is another thing for the group to plant the trees in the KBA, ensure their survival, and determine the number of hectares, if any, that are under improved management because of their intervention. Upcoming grants will be to existing recipients, or to other groups with appropriate expertise, to ensure that where projects have started, results are achieved.

6. There is significant investment toward the target of 600,000 hectares of KBA, whether protected or not protected, with improved management. For this indicator, the challenge in the remaining period is defining "improved management" in different contexts and ensuring grantees meet those measures. For example, with protected areas, the measurement might be the simple application of a METT. However, for grazing areas, presumably "improved management" means institution of a grazing plan and then monitoring of that plan. The plan might have very different forms from one country to the next, suggesting a grant that brings together each of these projects within each country with a standardized approach. Similarly, improved management could be defined in terms of biological monitoring (e.g., riparian water quality and grass diversity

in areas with grazing plans), suggesting a grant that has a uniform system that maintains and shares this data.

7. The target for creating 60,000 hectares of new or expanded protected areas is overly ambitious given the time frame. The purpose is still valid, but the likelihood is that there will be a maximum of one grant in the coming years that focuses on this, given the need for coincident interests of the government, private sector users, and community users.

8. There are several sites and corridors with two or more grantees (Table 10). There is the possibility of further funding to build on these geographic clusters.

9. There are several projects addressing similar issues (e.g., grazing plans, nurseries for iconic plant species, snow leopards, soaring birds; Tables 8 and 9). There is the possibility of further funding to create technical clusters among these groups, to form networks and share experience.

10. The ecosystem profile prioritized 33 of 68 globally threatened species. Some might merit prioritization now, such as the Great Bustard (*Otis tarda tarda*) and the Goitered gazelle, given a better understanding of their presence and the threats they face. There are other species, particularly various tulips, that we know help define KBAs, that could benefit from better Red List assessments.

11. Certain KBAs present immediate interest and opportunity, including:

    - Tajik Babatag (TJK13) and its cross-border neighbor, Uzbek Babatag (UZB36).
    - Tajik KBAs on the border with Afghanistan, given the challenge of working in the latter country, such as Ayvaj (TJK16), Tgovaya Balka (TJK17), and Tajik Karatau (TJK18), in addition to those already named.
    - Other KBAs in Tajikistan if they elicit the interest of CSOs with high enough capacity, including the Turkestan Mountains (TJK4), Gazimalik (TK14), Sarsaryak (TJK15), and Tavildara (TJK26).
    - Sary-Djaz (KGZ30), on the Kyrgz border of China, which has had two small grants and now one large grant providing training to protected area management authorities, but is of particular significance given its size and the lack of investment in neighboring KBAs in China.
    - Kyrgyzstan's Naryn State Reserve, Salkyn Tor National Park, and Karatal-Japyryk Nature Reserve, which are part of the Central Tien Shan corridor and meet various KBA criteria.

12. Within Strategic Direction 5 on capacity building, clearly support is needed in Uzbekistan, and to a lesser extent in Tajikistan, to develop the ability of partners to conceptualize projects per international standards, as well as addressing basic issues such as registration and permits to receive foreign funds.

13. Within Strategic Direction 5, organizations in Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan need to develop skills on conservation planning and methodologies (e.g., KBAs).

14. In Turkmenistan, the goal is to demonstrate to government the value of CSO engagement by building CSO competence. Thus, the technical topic – studies of unique biomes like caves, animal tracking, tourism, sustainable grazing – can be less important than the capacity building, itself. Grants might take this approach.

15. There are several networks that merit possible support, including those directly related to CEPF species and KBAs (e.g., on snow leopard, on tulips), those that work on parallel issues (e.g., EIAs, solid waste, toxic waste), and human rights and citizens groups that organize around sustainable land use.

16. There are multiple opportunities for raising public awareness and putting conservation issues into the public sphere, including in Uzbekistan about the fundamental reasons for conservation, and in all the hotspot countries that speak to socio-economic needs (e.g., how water security and disaster mitigation relate to improved KBA management).

17. There may be consideration of expansion of the hotspot boundaries; that is, for identification and mapping of KBAs and corridors that are outside current hotspot boundaries, provided they form biological meaningful additions to the hotspot.

6. Conclusion

The investment in the Mountains of Central Asia is different than many of its predecessors, less focused on iconic species or specific public protected areas, and more focused on the engagement of CSOs, often of relatively low capacity, working in sites – KBAs – with a biological, as opposed to administrative, delineation. This has meant a learning curve for CEPF's constituency, made more challenging by the pandemic and a series of serious political events. Still, the RIT has created a solid foundation of grants with potential to deliver conservation outcomes. The remaining period will focus on ensuring those results.

Annex 1. Summary Figures

Figure 1. Obligation by Strategic Direction

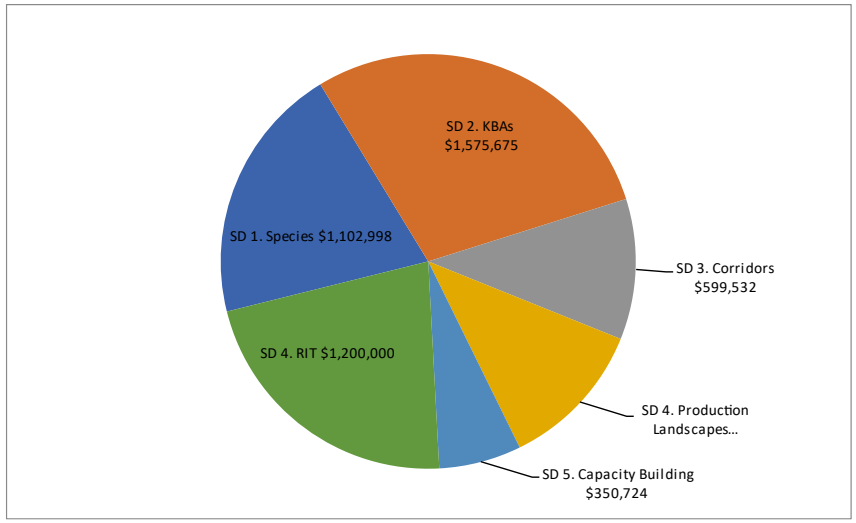
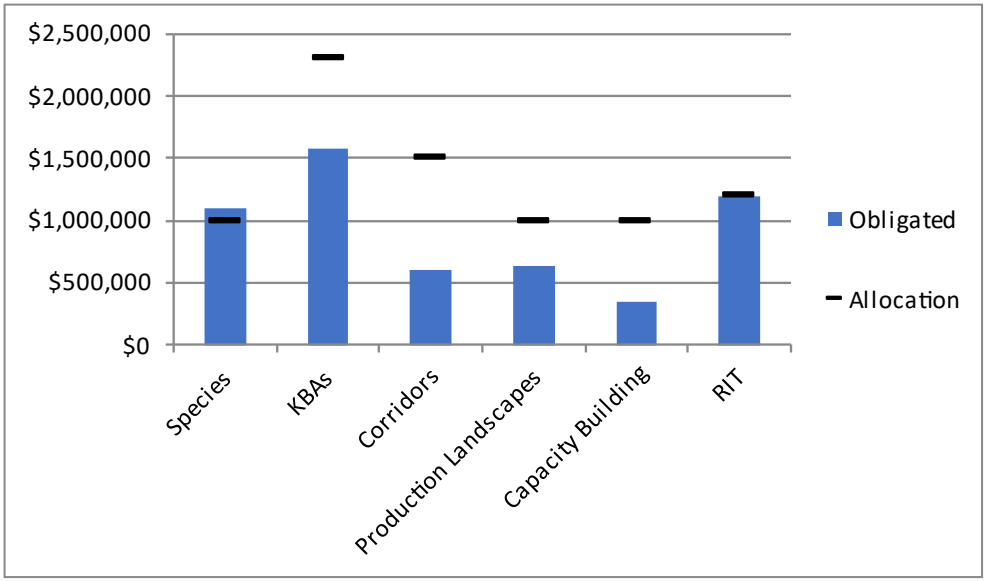


Figure 2. Pipeline and Obligation by Strategic Direction



Annex 2. Update on Progress Toward Targets in the Portfolio Logical Framework

Objective	Targets	Results
Engage civil society in the conservation of globally threatened biodiversity through targeted investments with maximum impact on the highest conservation priorities	15 Key Biodiversity Areas (KBAs), covering 600,000 hectares, have improved management	**Actual to date:** 0 **Additional expected from existing grants:** Work is taking place in 56 KBAs, 19 of which are priority sites; of these, at least 15 will meet definitions of improved management
	60,000 hectares of protected areas are created or expanded	**Actual to date:** 11,000 (Grant 110847/YGPE, Tajikistan at Kairakkum reservoir) **Additional expected from existing grants:** Perhaps less than 5,000 from various small reserves, unless a specific grant is awarded, per discussion in Section 5
	2 initiatives launched with private sector stakeholders resulting in adoption or maintenance of biodiversity-friendly practices	**Actual to date:** 0 **Additional expected from existing grants:** 5 from Oxus hunting (113014/ANCOT, Tajikistan), Uch-Korgon forestry (112672/KAFLU, Kyrgyz), Besh-Aral mining operations (110756/FFI, Kyrgyz), LLC Nomad and LLC Sun Planet agricultural products (110679/UCA, Kyrgyz), Karatau electric utility (112628/EII, Kazakhstan)
	10 land-use plans, or land-use management practices, incorporate provisions for biodiversity conservation	**Actual to date:** 0 **Additional expected from existing grants:** 20+ across multiple grants addressing grazing plans, endemic fruit tree replanting, sustainable agriculture, and buffer zone management
	5 partnerships and networks formed or strengthened among civil society, and with government and communities, to leverage complementary capacities and maximize impact in support of the ecosystem profile	**Actual to date:** 1 (110755/Zoï, regional EIA network) **Additional expected from existing grants:** At least 3 from 113043/BCKF (Western Tian Shan transboundary), 112650/Photojournalists (Kyrgyz ecotourism), 112419/GFC (KBAs)
	At least 20 local organizations receiving CEPF grants demonstrate improved organizational capacity	**Actual to date:** 0 **Additional expected from existing grants:** 30+ from existing grants (Table 8)
	Number of women receiving direct socio-economic benefits through increased income, food security, resource rights, or other measures of human wellbeing from CEPF grants is no less than 40% the number of men	**Actual to date:** 40% **Additional expected from existing grants:** Ratio not expected to change; project designs incorporate equitable division of benefits

Intermediate Outcomes	Intermediate Indicators	Results
Outcome 1: Address threats to priority species $1,000,000	Main threats to at least 4 globally threatened species are reduced	**Actual to date:** 0 **Additional expected from existing grants:** Table 9 shows 26 out of 33 priority species being addressed; of these, at least 10 will see reduced threats locally
	4 globally threatened species benefit from strengthened regulation of extractive uses	**Actual to date:** 0 **Additional expected from existing grants:** At least 4 species will benefit, with groups working on marmots (110756/FFI), wild apples and other fruit and nut trees, (112672/KAFLU and 110679/UCA), soaring bird species (112628/EII, Kazakhstan), and snow leopard (multiple grants)
	7 informal species-specific reserves are created	**Actual to date:** 4 micro-reserves from 110816/LEADER and 113080/Iktidor **Additional expected from existing grants:** 4 micro-reserves from 110815/GLIP, 110817/Orchun
Outcome 2: Improve management of Key Biodiversity Areas with and without official protection status $2,300,000	600,000 hectares of KBA have improved management	**Actual to date:** 0 **Additional expected from existing grants:** See Objective 1 and discussion in Section 5; work in 56 KBAs, with addition of both productive landscapes and protected areas, expected to exceed 600,000 hectares
	5 KBAs with official protection status have improved management	**Actual to date:** 1 (110847/YGPE, Tajikistan Kairakkum reservoir) **Additional expected from existing grants:** 5+ from multiple grants working in multiple PAs, including Wakhan, Besh Aral, Chychkan, Aksu Zabagly, Karatau, Ugam, Sairam-Ugam, Surmatash, Sary-Chelek, Padysah-Ata, Kara Ana, Koytendag, Kuna Ata, Karatal
	10 KBAs without official protection status have improved management	**Actual to date:** 0 **Additional expected from existing grants:** work is taking place in 56 KBAs, 19 of which are priority sites; of these, at least 10 KBAs without official protection status will meet definitions of improved management
Outcome 3: Support sustainable management and biodiversity	Ecological restoration techniques that improve the functioning of forest ecosystems demonstrated in at least two priority corridors	**Actual to date:** 0 **Additional expected from existing grants:** Challenge of scale; grants working in Dzungaria, Western Tien Shan, Pamir Alai with restoration goals on a local – but not corridor – scale

Intermediate Outcomes	Intermediate Indicators	Results
conservation within priority corridors $1,500,000	5 local level land use plans incorporate biodiversity conservation as a management objective.	**Actual to date:** 0 **Additional expected from existing grants:** 20+ across multiple grants addressing grazing plans, endemic fruit tree replanting, sustainable agriculture, and buffer zone management
	1 major development project, sub-national plan, or national plan incorporates biodiversity conservation as a management objective	**Actual to date:** 0 **Additional expected from existing grants:** 2 (Besh-Aral mining operations (110756/FFI, Kyrgyz), Karatau electric utility (112628/EII, Kazakhstan))
Outcome 4: Engage communities of interest and economic sectors – including the private sector – in improved management of production landscapes; that is, priority KBAs and corridors that are not formally protected $1,000,000	3 private companies adopt biodiversity-friendly practices	**Actual to date:** 0 **Additional expected from existing grants:** 5 from Oxus hunting (113014/ANCOT, Tajikistan), Uch-Korgon forestry (112672/KAFLU, Kyrgyz), Besh-Aral mining operations (110756/FFI, Kyrgyz), LLC Nomad and LLC Sun Planet agricultural products (110679/UCA, Kyrgyz), Karatau electric utility (112628/EII, Kazakhstan)
	Farming or grazing areas, covering at least 50,000 hectares, incorporate biodiversity conservation into operations	**Actual to date:** 0 **Additional expected from existing grants:** 50,000 hectares (112606/AUCA Suusamyr Valley); (111692/CLLC Koytendag buffer zone), (112375/Ak-Dobe); (113057/Society of Soldiers)
	10,000 hectares of forest fall under certification schemes, eco-labeling programs, or other market-based management methods	**Actual to date:** 0 **Additional expected from existing grants:** 0 per discussion in Section 5
	Site safeguard requirements are incorporated into development projects in or around five KBAs or landscapes	**Actual to date:** 0 **Additional expected from existing grants:** 2-4, including Besh-Aral mining operations (110756/FFI, Kyrgyz), Karatau electric utility (112628/EII, Kazakhstan), and possibly roads in Kyrgyz Alai Valley and infrastructure in Zeravshan Reserve (UZB28)
	At least five conservation issues of concern to civil society are the subject of public debate	**Actual to date:** 5+ (110755/Zoi in multiple contexts with partners on EIA issues) **Additional expected from existing grants:** 5 including snow leopard conservation outside Almaty (112383/WWB), Chychkan Gorge development in Kyrgyz (112481/RDF), power generation in Kazakhstan (112628/EII, Kazakhstan), and grazing in multiple locations

Intermediate Outcomes	Intermediate Indicators	Results
Outcome 5: Enhance civil society capacity for effective conservation action $1,000,000	At least 10 local organizations demonstrate increased knowledge of international and regional conservation agreements and take steps to engage in action at the local level	**Actual to date:** 10+ from 110755/Zoï **Additional expected from existing grants:** 3+ from 113043/BCFK
	At least 5 regional thematic experience sharing events allow for informal and formal networking in the hotspot	**Actual to date:** 4 from 110755/Zoï and 110706/BCFK **Additional expected from existing grants:** 3 from 112628/EII, 112419/GFC, and 112650/Photojournalists
	5 new networks or partnerships for conservation are created and/or strengthened	**Actual to date:** 1 (110755/Zoi, regional EIA network) **Additional expected from existing grants:** At least 3 from 113043/BCKF (Western Tian Shan transboundary), 112650/Photojournalists (Kyrgyz ecotourism), 112419/GFC (KBAs)
	Information on at least 5 funding opportunities for civil society disseminated to relevant organizations, resulting in at least 5 successful funding proposals for continuation or extension of CEPF-funded work	**Actual to date:** 0; multiple opportunities disseminated, but no successful proposals **Additional expected from existing grants:** Difficult to tabulate; multiple projects have already successfully leveraged funds, but to say that money is directly for a continuation is difficult; expectation of 2 proposals might meet this definition
	Programs delivered to primary/secondary learners in at least 3 priority KBAs	**Actual to date:** TAJ21 **Additional expected from existing grants:** Programs ongoing in at least 8 KBAs (KAZ8, KAZ12, KAZ13, KAZ16, KAZ18, KYR10, UZB 24, UZB30)
	10 advanced degree students receive structured training in applied biodiversity science and/or support for research that leads directly to Intermediate Outcomes 1, 2 or 3	**Actual to date:** 0 **Additional expected from existing grants:** 10 from 112588/YGPE, 111971/Succow Foundation, 110779/ACBK
Outcome 6: Provide strategic leadership and effective coordination of CEPF investment through a regional implementation team $1,200,000	At least 25 local organizations actively participate in conservation actions guided by the ecosystem profile	**Actual to date:** 45 per Table 7 **Additional expected from existing grants:** 10
	At least 20 local civil society organizations receiving grants demonstrate improved organizational capacity	**Actual to date:** 0 **Additional expected from existing grants:** 30+ from existing grants (Table 8)
	At least 10 local civil society organizations receiving grants demonstrate improved understanding of and commitment to gender issues	**Actual to date:** 0 **Additional expected from existing grants:** 10+ from existing grants (Table 8)

Intermediate Outcomes	Intermediate Indicators	Results
	At least 2 participatory assessments undertaken, documenting lessons learned and best practices from the hotspot	**Actual to date:** 0 **Additional expected from existing grants:** 2 from RIT work plan
	Performance of the RIT assessed as satisfactory during the midterm and final assessments	**Actual to date:** Satisfactory **Additional expected from existing grants:** Satisfactory