PROJECT PROGRESS REPORT (ANNUAL) TEMPLATE

January - December 2025

Project Summary Information	
Project Title	Implementing Ecosystem-based Management in Ecologically Critical Areas in Bangladesh
Quantum Project ID	00107598
Project Duration	60 months
Gender Marker	GEN 2
Total Budget	USD 13,546,347
Donors (funding sources)	GEF
Budget (annual budget)	USD 1,143,494
Expenditure recorded for the reporting period	USD 89,095
Expenditure recorded for the total project	USD 89,095
Project Manager's Name	Sayeed Mahmud Riadh

1. **Executive Summary** (1000 characters maximum)

During the reporting period, the project formally entered its implementation phase following endorsement of the ProDoc and approval of the TAPP. The Inception Workshop was successfully held on 14 May 2025 at the Department of Environment (DoE), marking the official launch of the project. Governance structures including the Project Steering Committee (PSC) and Project Implementation Committee (PIC) were constituted.

Initial progress focused on institutional setup, stakeholder consultation, baseline validation planning, and finalization of the 2025 Annual Work Plan. The project contributed to UNDP CPD Output 2.2 by strengthening institutional capacity for ecosystem-based planning and wetland governance.

However, procurement delays due to transition to Bangladesh Public Procurement Rules (PPR) 2025 and late TAPP approval slowed operationalization of field activities. Baseline updates for Halda River and Morjat Baor ECA are underway.

2. **Progress Review**

   a) **Key results achieved** (2000 characters maximum)

During the reporting period, the project was officially launched through an Inception Workshop attended by more than 128 participants from government agencies, academia, NGOs, the private sector, and development partners. This event ensured broad stakeholder engagement and set a strong foundation for coordinated implementation.

The Project Steering Committee (PSC) and Project Implementation Committee (PIC) were constituted through formal office orders, establishing the required governance and oversight mechanisms for effective project implementation. In line with the approved Project Document, the Draft Annual Work Plan and Budget for 2025 were prepared and submitted for review and approval to facilitate timely operationalization of activities.

Initial stakeholder consultations were conducted in the Halda River and Morjat Baor Ecologically Critical Area (ECA) sites to validate priorities, identify local challenges, and promote ownership among key actors. A comprehensive procurement plan was also prepared in compliance with the updated Public Procurement Rules (PPR) 2025 to ensure alignment with national regulatory requirements.

Gender considerations were systematically integrated into planning documents, including a commitment to ensure at least 30 percent female participation in Village Conservation Groups (VCGs) and livelihood interventions. Furthermore, baseline data gaps were identified, particularly concerning water quality parameters and income indicators of target communities, which will be addressed through detailed baseline validation surveys during the first year of implementation.

During the reporting period, several implementation challenges were encountered. The delay in approval of the TAPP resulted in a shift in the planned timeline. In addition, the transition to the Public Procurement Rules (PPR) 2025 required the reconstitution of procurement committees, which slowed down the procurement of consulting firms for conducting studies as well as the recruitment of project personnel.

Furthermore, due to the time gap between project design and formal approval, certain baseline figures no longer accurately reflect the current situation and therefore require updating and validation.

To address these challenges, pragmatic procurement planning measures have been adopted, alongside early and proactive engagement with the Planning Commission and the relevant ministry to expedite necessary approvals. Baseline surveys have been prioritized for early 2026 to ensure that implementation is guided by updated and reliable data.

b) Output progress

Output statement	Baselines Value type	Indicators	Annual Targets	End of the project target	Progress	Means of verifications and comments to substantiate the selected response
Output 1.3: Legal and policy reforms, necessary to enforce compliance with achieving and maintaining favorable	Gender based policies and practices not adequately addressed due to lack of awarenes	Indicator 3: (Ref: UNDP's IRRF indicator 2.5.1) Gender-responsive measures in place for conservation, sustainable use and equitable	1 policy drafted	(a) At least 3 policy/ planning frameworks namely: (i) Guidelines for ecosystem-based framewor	Firms have been hired to develop the management plan and the guidelines. The guideline for the proposed	Progress reports Policy documents Notification of regulations Staffing reports

ecological condition of ECAs, identified and submitted to government to adopt.	s, capacity and commitment 94km of Halda River declared as Bangabandhu Biodiversity Heritage Halda	access to and benefit sharing of natural resources, biodiversity and ecosystems Indicator 1: Area of new wetland to be declared as Biodiversity Heritage under Bangladesh Biological Diversity Act 2017	**TBD**	k for ECAs and biodiversity heritage; (ii)Guidelines for ECA and biodiversity heritage committees at district, upazil and union levels; and (iii) Guidelines for ECA and biodiversity heritage management/ operational planning (b) at least 2 regulatory framework on – (i) Rules for ecology management fund; (ii) Rules for applying Polluter Pay Principle. (c) institutions with trained	Halda River Biodiversity Heritage has been drafted and shared with the relevant stakeholders	Government gazette notification of Bangabandhu Biodivesity-rich Heritage Halda declaration - Notification of establishment of biodiversity heritage management committees and VCGs -Approved management plan for biodiversity heritage

				staff and procedures – (i) at least 2 district ECA and biodiversity heritage Committee; (ii) at least 4 Upazilla ECA and biodiversity heritage Committee; (iii) at least 12 Union ECA and biodiversity heritage Committee. The 94km of Halda River biodiversity heritage with established biodiversity management committees at National, district, upazila and union levels; established as cooperative societies; rules in place in terms of permissible and prohibited activities;		

				management plan approved		
Output 1.2: Strengthened institutionalization and multi-sector coordination at national, district, upazila, union and community levels.	Limited institutional capacities for planning, management and monitoring of ecosystem-based approaches to Morjat Baor ECA and proposed Biodiversity Heritage Halda as measured by UNDP Capacity Development Scorecard baseline values of 29	Indicator 4: Measurable Level of institutional capacities for integrated ecosystem-based planning, management and monitoring of ECA and proposed Biodiversity Heritage Halda	TBD	Average increase of institutional capacity as measured by 20 points in UNDP Capacity Development Scorecard from baseline values		; UNDP capacity scorecard Progress reports
Output 1.1: Improved ecosystem-based framework for effective planning and management of ECAs.	Currently there does not exist clear biodiversity features and values for establishing favorable ecological conditions in ECA and biodiversity heritage	Indicator 5: Percentage of Morjat Baor ECA and proposed Biodiversity Heritage Halda with defined ecosystem-based framework/system and standards to achieve favorable ecological	TBD	Ecosystem based framework/system established for at least 50% of Morjat Baor ECA and proposed Biodiversity Heritage Halda for identifying standards for achieving long-term	After formulation of Management plan the Morjat Baor ECA and Halda River Proposed Biodiversity areas will have designated areas for bio diversity	New regulations and other legal instruments issued by national and sub-national governments. Compliance data held on ECA and proposed Biodiversit

		conditions with the documents of valuation of Ecosystem Services for both areas		favorable ecological conditions with the documents of valuation of Ecosystem Services for both areas	conservation and also buffer zone for fishing and other allowable activities like egg collection.	y Heritage Halda Information System.
Output 1.4: Sustainable financing strategy for ECAs developed and implemented	Currently, Ecologically Critical Area Management Rules 2016 ECA have yet to be applied and there is no scientific framework against which compliance monitoring can be applied.	Indicator 6: Implementation of Ecologically Critical Area Management rules and its compliance as measured/indicated by: • Sustainable financing strategy and action plan Ecosystem management fund	Initial discussion started	DoE strengthened and adequately resourced with respect to ECA and biodiversity heritage, as evident from: - ECA MMCU and fully operational across ECA network, monitoring compliance; - ECA Technical Advisory Panel functional with clear rules and procedures - 'Polluter pays' policy successfully applied in Environmental Courts with respect to project sites. - Private-public partnerships for resource conservation functional in two pilot Morjat Baor		*New regulations and other legal instruments issued by national and sub-national governments. Compliance data held on ECA and proposed Biodiversity Heritage Halda Information System.*

				ECA and proposed Biodiversity Heritage Halda - Ecology Management Fund functional with clear rules for soliciting financial resources and procedures for fund utilization and monitoring		
Output 2.1: Assessment of current ecological conditions in the target ECA and proposed biodiversity heritage to inform future management	Morjat Baor ECA and proposed Biodiversity Heritage Halda do not have ecosystem-based management and financing plans	Indicator 7: Number of ECA and proposed Biodiversity Heritage Halda management plans adequately sourced in terms of staff and resources and approved by government	Initial discussion started	At least 50% of ECA and proposed Biodiversity Heritage Halda have approved and revised management and financing plans with clear staffing and financial sources identified		*ECA and proposed Biodiversity Heritage Halda management and financing plans approval notices*
Output 2.2: Ecosystem-based management plans (5 years), with associated monitoring, action, and financing plans, prepared and being implemented	Baselines for Halda River are: DO (0.93-5.15 mg/L); BOD5 (30-545 mg/L); COD (43-983 mg/L); pH (6.3-7.3); EC (110-524 uS/cm);	**Indicator 8:** Improvement in water quality in Morjat Baor ECA and proposed Biodiversity Heritage Halda in terms of pH, DO, COD, BOD, N and P and other relevant parameters as	TBD	10-15% improvement in water quality indices from baselines at selected monitoring stations		Annual sampling reports for DO, BOD5, COD, PH, EC, Chloride, Alkalinity and Hardness etc.

for target sites	Chloride (12-56 mg/L); Alkalinity (35-67 mg/L); and Hardness (38-121 mg/L),	determined by ECA and proposed Biodiversity Heritage Halda frameworks				
Output 2.3: Range of activities piloted in target sites to enhance protection of biodiversity and restore ecosystem to improve livelihoods.	0 250 fishers in Morjat Baor ECA receiving annual income of approximately USD357 from fisheries activities and 50 agricultural farmers 500 (non-professional) fishers from proposed Halda River biodiversity heritage receiving annual income of approxim	Indicator 9: (i) No. Village Conservation Groups (VCGs); and (ii) Total no. VCG members with at least 30% female representation Indicator 2: (ref: GEF-7 Core Indicator 11): Number of direct fisher and agricultural beneficiaries with increased incomes (15% increase) disaggregated by gender)	TBD	• 50 • 1,000 a. 250 fishers and 50 agricultural farmers from Morjat Baor; and b. 500 fishers and 100 agricultural farmers from Halda River heritage and around 350 other dependents on ECA and proposed Biodiversity Heritage Halda resources receiving at least 15% increase in annual income from baseline values, with		Consultation with communities reports. Number of villages to be confirmed. Annual income surveys and reports Progress reports Community consultation reports

	ately USD324 and 100 agricultural farmers from heritage area will be supported with environment friendly agricultural practices			at least 30% women beneficiaries.		
Output 3.2: ECA Management, Monitoring & Compliance Unit established within DoE	Limited capacity and technical competence in wetland restoration and management prevent DoE from fulfilling its mandate in safeguarding ECA and biodiversity heritage, all of which are wetlands.	Indicator 10: Establishment and technical capacity of ECA and proposed Biodiversity Heritage Halda Management, Monitoring & Compliance Unit (MMCU) within DoE as measured by: •MMCU established and operational • Number of staff recruited and trained to safeguard ECA and biodiversity heritage	Initial discussion started	4. MMCU fully staffed (3 wetland ecologists, 1 compliance officer, 1 IT/systems specialist, 1 communications officer), fully funded by DoE and 5. restoration measures identified, prescribed and being monitored for 100% ECA and biodiversity heritage.		ECA and biodiversity heritage management and monitoring reports Progress and staffing reports Training reports
Output 3.1: Communications Strategy and Action Plan developed and implemented	Coordinated outreach on conservation threats lacking. Limited	Indicator 11: Increase in level of knowledge (disaggregated by gender) on ecosystem-based	11 Trained	At least 500 community members trained in relevant ecosystem-based best practice	. A ToR has been developed to hire a firm to develop the communic	1.KAP surveys 2. KM documents, best practice documents,

	awarenes s of impact unplanne d developm ent among general public. Baseline survey establishe d in Year 1 after KAP survey	approaches as defined by the following: 1. Number of community members trained and adopting new technologies and practices 2. Communicatio n strategy and action plan developed and effectively implemented		approaches and 50% effectively applying these measures (at least 30% women beneficiaries)	ation strategy and action plan.	proceedin gs of disseminati on events and implement ation reports
Output 3.3: Modular training program, informed by competency-based needs assessment for ECA stakeholders , designed, operational and institutionaliz ed.	Limited number (less than 5) of KM products on conservati on and sustainabl e resource managem ent codified and dissemina ted nationally and regionally	Indicator 12: Number of knowledge products that reflects best practices and lessons learned	TBD	At least 20 additional KM products on conservation and sustainable resource management codified and disseminated nationally and regionally	The project has published a flyer with the informatio n of the projects and shared with the stakeholde rs joined in the inception workshop. A ToR has been developed to hire a firm to produce the KM documents .	1.KAP surveys 2. KM documents , best practice documents , proceedin gs of disseminati on events and implement ation reports

Data sources and references (can be prepared as an annex with details)

3. **Communications, visibility, and partnerships** (1000 characters maximum)

The project gained visibility through the national-level Inception Workshop held at DoE. Media coverage and stakeholder engagement enhanced awareness.

Strong collaboration established between DoE and UNDP Bangladesh. Coordination initiated with Department of Fisheries, Forest Department, BWDB, district administrations, academia (including Halda River Research Laboratory), and civil society organizations.
Parallel co-financing commitments remain on track, primarily in-kind technical support and institutional coordination.

4. **Project risks and mitigation measures** (1000 characters maximum)

During the reporting period, several key risks were identified that may affect timely and effective implementation of the project. One of the primary risks relates to procurement delays arising from the transition to the Public Procurement Rules (PPR) 2025, which has required adjustments to procedures and reconstitution of procurement committees. In addition, delays in the recruitment of technical staff may affect the pace of technical studies and field-level implementation.
There is also a potential risk of political or administrative changes that could influence approval processes and decision-making timelines. Furthermore, pollution from external industrial sources, which remains beyond the direct control of the project, poses a continued threat to ecosystem health in the target areas and may undermine conservation outcomes if not adequately addressed.
To mitigate these risks, a revised procurement schedule has been developed in alignment with PPR 2025 requirements to streamline processes and minimize delays. Early and proactive engagement with the Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change and the Planning Commission is being maintained to facilitate timely approvals and policy support. Close coordination with district administrations has been strengthened to ensure smoother implementation at the local level. In parallel, the project is promoting advocacy efforts for the application of the Polluter Pays Principle to address industrial pollution and reinforce environmental accountability.

Most updated Offline Risk Register must be attached as an annex to the report.

5. **Lessons Learned** (800 characters maximum)

Several important lessons emerged during the reporting period. Early and proactive engagement with procurement authorities proved essential under the revised Public Procurement Rules (PPR) 2025, as procedural adjustments and compliance requirements can significantly affect implementation timelines if not addressed in advance.
It also became clear that baseline data should be reviewed and updated immediately after project approval. Delays between project design and formal endorsement may result in outdated assumptions, which can create planning gaps and affect target setting and monitoring accuracy.
Finally, strong high-level political commitment plays a critical role in building stakeholder confidence and ensuring effective coordination across institutions. Visible leadership and policy support help facilitate inter-agency collaboration and reinforce accountability at both national and local levels.

6. **Way Forward** (800 characters maximum)

In the upcoming implementation period, priority will be given to completing the baseline surveys in early 2026, including assessments of water quality, income levels of target communities, and key biodiversity indicators. These updated datasets will provide a solid evidence base for planning, monitoring, and performance measurement.
Efforts will also focus on finalizing the recruitment of required technical experts and establishing the Management, Monitoring and Compliance Unit (MMCU) to strengthen institutional oversight and field-level monitoring.
The project will initiate the development of ecosystem-based management plans for both intervention sites, ensuring that planning is participatory, science-based, and aligned with national regulatory frameworks. At the same time, stakeholder coordination platforms at district and upazila levels will be operationalized to enhance multi-sector collaboration and local ownership.
Subject to government approval, the procurement process for a vehicle-mounted mobile laboratory for the Halda River will be advanced to strengthen real-time monitoring and compliance capacity.

Priority actions for the project and other teams before the next reporting cycle.

Issue/observation	Action to be taken	Responsible	Timeline
The Govt. approval is required for procuring vehicle mounted mobile laboratory for Halda.	A letter will be written to the concerned ministry to get the permission.	Project Director	February 2026

7. Annexures

Provide links to the sources of evidence (based on entries described in Q2 and 3)

Other relevant information