



Project title: Creating Conditions for Reintroduction of the Turan Tiger and Assisting in the Conservation of Natural, Historical and Cultural Sites of the Ulytau Mountains

Annual Project Progress Report

Donor: Government of the Republic of Kazakhstan



Implementing Agency:	United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) Forestry and Wildlife Committee of the Ministry of Ecology and Natural Resources of the Republic of Kazakhstan (FWC MENR RK)
Project ID: Gender Marker: Digitalization Marker: Project Title:	00111147 GEN2 - Creating Conditions for Reintroduction of the Turan Tiger and Assisting in the Conservation of Natural, Historical and Cultural Sites of the Ulytau Mountains
Project Duration:	27 July 2021 – 31 December 2026
Country / Region:	Kazakhstan
Funding Partner/s:	Forestry and Wildlife Committee of the Ministry of Ecology and Natural Resources of the Republic of Kazakhstan
Responsible Parties:	UNDP - FWC MENR RK
Reporting Period:	01 January 2025 – 31 December 2025
Project Manager:	Name: Meruyert Sarsembayeva Email: meruyert.sarsembayeva@undp.org

Table of Contents

I. Executive Summary..... 5

II. Introduction / Background..... 5

III. Progress Review: Key Activities and Results,2025 6

Section 1: Analysis of Theory of Change 9

Section 2: Overall progress against outcomes 10

Section 3: Monitoring and Evaluation of activities. 11

Section 4: Progress against each output..... 12

Section 5: Cross-Cutting Integration..... 18

IV. Partnerships and Sustainability 21

V. Update on risks and mitigation measures..... 22

VI. Key Challenges, Lessons Learned and Recommendations 24

VII. Financial Summary 25

VIII. Annexes 27

Annex II: Updated Risk Log..... 33

Annex III: Annual Work Plan for (next year) 39

Annex IV: Assets List. 44

Annex V: Knowledge Generation 45

(Note: Please use table of contents maker to ensure automatic updating of pages and content).

Acronyms

FWC MENR RK	Forestry and Wildlife Committee <i>Ministry of Ecology and Natural Resources Republic of Kazakhstan</i>
RBEC	Regional Bureau for Europe and the Commonwealth of Independent States
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
WWF	Worldwide Fund for Nature

I. Executive Summary

The Project aims to support the implementation of the national biodiversity conservation priorities of the Republic of Kazakhstan through two key areas: preparation for tiger reintroduction in the Balkhash region and support for the establishment and development of the State National Nature Park “Ulytau.” The Project contributes to the expansion of the protected areas network, restoration of degraded ecosystems, and strengthening of the institutional capacity of conservation authorities. It is aligned with the country’s strategic policy documents and contributes to the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), in particular SDG 15 and SDG 13.

The tiger reintroduction initiative forms part of a long-term international programme for the recovery of this species, implemented by the Government of Kazakhstan in cooperation with international partners, including WWF and UNDP. As part of the preparatory phase, the Ile-Balkhash State Nature Reserve and the Kapshagay-Balkhash ecological corridor have already been established, providing the foundation for ecosystem restoration and the species’ return. At the same time, the ecosystems of the Ili River delta remain degraded, and the reserve’s capacities require further strengthening. The Project therefore focuses on habitat restoration, strengthening the material and technical base of the reserve, increasing prey populations, developing an ecological monitoring system, and engaging local communities in conservation activities and sustainable livelihood opportunities.

The second key component of the Project is support for the establishment and effective functioning of the Ulytau National Nature Park, a unique natural and historical-cultural area. The Project provides institutional support to the park, contributes to strengthening biodiversity protection mechanisms, and promotes the establishment of the Ulytau-Arganaty wildlife sanctuary to ensure the ecological integrity of the protected area. Particular attention is given to the development of sustainable tourism, enhanced cooperation with the Ulytau Museum-Reserve, and the engagement of local communities in tourism- and conservation-related economic activities.

The Project is implemented in partnership with the Forestry and Wildlife Committee of the Ministry of Ecology and Natural Resources of the Republic of Kazakhstan, UNDP, WWF, national conservation organizations, and local executive authorities. Monitoring and evaluation are carried out based on ecological and institutional indicators, including monitoring of ecosystem conditions, key species populations, and the effectiveness of protected area management.

The Project aims to establish a sustainable foundation for tiger reintroduction within its historical range, including the Ile-Balkhash State Nature Reserve; to conserve the natural and historical-cultural heritage of the Ulytau mountain massif and adjacent territories; and to promote tourism assets of this unique region. The main expected results include comprehensive improvement of ecosystems in the Ili River delta and the southern Balkhash region; strengthening of the Ile-Balkhash State Nature Reserve and the Ulytau National Nature Park; development of the protected areas network and tourism in the Ulytau region; increased environmental awareness among the population and improved stakeholder engagement; and the establishment of a foundation for collaborative ecosystem management that delivers benefits both for biodiversity conservation and for local communities.

II. Introduction / Background

The Project aims to support the implementation of the national biodiversity conservation priorities of the Republic of Kazakhstan through two key areas: preparation for tiger reintroduction in the Balkhash region, and support for the development of the Ulytau State National Nature Park and sustainable tourism in the Ulytau region. The Project is aligned with the country's strategic policy documents and contributes to the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals, in particular SDG 15 and SDG 13.

The Project is implemented in partnership with the Forestry and Wildlife Committee of the Ministry of Ecology and Natural Resources of the Republic of Kazakhstan, UNDP, WWF, national conservation organizations, and local executive authorities. It aims to establish a sustainable foundation for tiger reintroduction within its historical range, including the Ile-Balkhash State Nature Reserve; to conserve the natural and historical-cultural heritage of the Ulytau mountain massif and adjacent territories; and to promote the tourism potential of this unique region.

The main expected results include comprehensive improvement of ecosystem conditions in the Ili River delta and the Southern Balkhash region; strengthening of the Ile-Balkhash State Nature Reserve and the Ulytau State National Nature Park; development of the protected areas network and tourism in the Ulytau region; increased environmental awareness and improved information-sharing among stakeholders; and the establishment of a basis for collaborative ecosystem management within the project area, ensuring benefits both for biodiversity conservation and for local communities.

Tiger reintroduction forms part of a long-term international programme for the recovery of this species, implemented by the Government of Kazakhstan in cooperation with international partners, including WWF and UNDP. As part of preparatory activities implemented under a Global Environment Facility (GEF) and UNDP project focused on the conservation of desert ecosystems, the Ile-Balkhash State Nature Reserve and the Kapshagay–Balkhash ecological corridor was established, providing a foundation for ecosystem restoration and the future return of the species. At the same time, the ecosystems of the Ili River delta remain degraded, and the reserve's institutional and operational capacities require further strengthening. The Project therefore focuses on habitat restoration, strengthening the reserve's material and technical base, increasing prey populations, developing an ecological monitoring system, and engaging local communities in conservation activities and sustainable livelihood opportunities.

A second key component of the Project is support for the development of the relatively newly established Ulytau State National Nature Park, which was also created with UNDP support. The Project further envisages assistance in the establishment of the Ulytau–Arganaty wildlife sanctuary to ensure the ecological integrity of the protected area system. Particular attention is given to the development of sustainable tourism, strengthening cooperation among stakeholders, and engaging local communities in economic activities related to tourism and nature conservation.

III. Progress Review: Key Activities and Results, 2025

Component 1: Creating the necessary conditions for tiger reintroduction based on the Ile-Balkhash State Nature Reserve

Under Component 1, the Project continued to support the restoration of ecosystems in the Ili River delta and the Southern Balkhash region, while strengthening the institutional and operational capacity of the Ile-Balkhash State Nature Reserve. Activities focused on

biodiversity conservation, improvement of protection and monitoring systems, and enhancement of environmental awareness and stakeholder engagement. In 2025, a comprehensive needs assessment was conducted in the Ile-Balkhash State Nature Reserve to identify priority capacity gaps in scientific research, ecotourism development, management, and community engagement. Based on the findings, targeted capacity-building and experience-exchange measures were designed, including study visits, joint research initiatives, and the introduction of modern monitoring and planning tools. Capacity development activities included training on the establishment of fee-based services, covering legal frameworks and pricing mechanisms, with participation of representatives from other protected areas. The training addressed existing barriers to the introduction of fee-based services and resulted in recommendations for improving regulatory frameworks and piloting such services in selected protected areas. While the reserve currently does not generate own-source revenues, it demonstrates strong potential for sustainable tourism development. The update of the Ile-Balkhash State Nature Reserve Management Plan was initiated to reflect planned territorial expansion, preparations for tiger reintroduction, and strengthened protection and wildlife monitoring. The revised Plan will also include provisions on resource mobilization, development of tourist trails, and the introduction of fee-based tourism and recreation services. During the reporting period, the SMART patrol system was fully introduced in the Ile-Balkhash State Nature Reserve. Training was delivered to management, ranger, and scientific staff, as well as relevant territorial inspections, in both Kazakh and Russian. The SMART system, including a bilingual database and cartographic layers, was installed on computers and mobile devices, significantly enhancing patrol planning, data collection, and analysis. The Project strengthened the reserve's material and technical base through the procurement of key equipment, including a fire-fighting boat for addressing wildfires in reed areas, laptops to support data management, and a flatbed vehicle to support fire prevention, anti-poaching, and biotechnical activities. Preparatory works for infrastructure development were advanced, including the preparation of design and cost estimate documentation for a fire observation tower, an administrative building, an operational base, and a Visitor Centre. Conceptual designs for standard ranger housing units were initiated, with completion planned for 2026. As part of efforts to improve the prey base for tiger reintroduction, 17 kulans were translocated from Altyn-Emel State National Nature Park to the Ile-Balkhash State Nature Reserve in accordance with approved plans and permits. Progress was also achieved in forest restoration activities. Positive State Expert Review conclusions were obtained for the "Water Supply to the Karabakanas Channel" project, and conditions were further developed for expanding tugai forests, including support to the Kurtinsky Forest Nursery through the installation of off-grid solar power to ensure uninterrupted operations.

Component 2: Improvement of the condition, protection and use for scientific, cultural and recreational purposes of natural and historical and cultural heritage sites of the Ulytau mountains and adjacent territories

In 2025, a series of activities were carried out in cooperation with the Ulytau National Park as part of the Project's efforts in the Ulytau region. These activities included the introduction of the SMART patrol system and the revision of the technical and economic justification for the Ulytau National Park. Functional zoning schemes were updated to reflect the current situation of the national park, and the general infrastructure development plan was revised. Potential areas for short-term and long-term use for tourism and recreation were identified, and corresponding cartographic materials were prepared.

A landscape planning concept and the issue of land degradation were presented to the Ulytau regional authorities, addressing these challenges through the proposed approach. Discussions were held at the regional level and based on support from local executive bodies and previous socio-economic studies, the scope of work and materials necessary for landscape planning were prepared. Expert groups will develop analytical and cartographic materials and recommend models for managing pastures and other land categories within the long-term development plans of the Ulytau region.

A comprehensive needs assessment was conducted in the Ulytau National Park to identify priority capacity gaps in protected area management, including scientific research, ecotourism development, community engagement, and management aspects. Based on the findings, a capacity-building program was developed, including practical experience exchanges with leading conservation organizations, joint research, and the introduction of modern monitoring and planning technologies.

In February 2025, a seminar-training on "Fee-based Services in the Protected Areas System of Kazakhstan: Rules, Approaches, and Experience" was held in Almaty for staff from environmental organizations. As a successful outcome, the introduction of fee-based services at the Ulytau National Park was achieved, contributing to the formation of the park's own revenue streams.

Throughout the project period, there has been a phased procurement of equipment and materials to strengthen the Ulytau National Park's material and technical base. This equipment supports activities aimed at protecting natural complexes, preventing and mitigating wildfires, and ensuring fire safety. In 2025, a flatbed vehicle was acquired for the transportation of logging waste following sanitary felling operations.

A tourism development justification for the Ulytau region and Ulytau National Park was prepared, considering the ecological capacity of the landscapes. Methodologies for calculating recreational loads on tourist trails were adapted, highlighting the need for differentiation by landscape types and seasonality. Recommendations were made for managing tourist flows, zoning the territory, monitoring, and mitigating negative impacts on ecosystems. A structure for a tourist route passport and a concept for a map of prospective routes, reflecting the area's tourist attractiveness, accessibility, and uniqueness, were proposed. This work is part of the broader goal of preserving the natural and cultural heritage and promoting sustainable tourism development in the region.

In April 2025, strategic recommendations for the development of tourism in the Ulytau region were presented to a broad range of stakeholders, including local executive bodies such as the Akimat, regional departments for natural resource use, economy, entrepreneurship, tourism, agriculture, and more. Independent tourism experts and tour operators from Karaganda, Almaty, and Astana also participated in the event. Based on the feedback, the document was revised and presented to the Akim of the Ulytau region during a roundtable held in June 2025. The recommendations were integrated into the Ulytau Regional Development Plan. This document aims to stimulate the growth of tourism flows to the region, expand local employment opportunities, and promote the historical, cultural, and natural heritage of Ulytau. It establishes a sustainable approach to tourism development based on ecological and social responsibility, creating a foundation for the balanced and systemic development of the Ulytau region, considering its unique geographical location and rich resources.

Together with the local community, discussions were held to pilot tourism projects, as well as to familiarize stakeholders with ongoing sustainable development initiatives, ecotourism

projects, and social interaction efforts in the Ulytau region, including meetings with members of the local Maslikhat and the Public Council in the Akimat.

Component 3: Informing and working with local communities to educate the population and involve them in the biodiversity conservation

The main factor ensuring the sustainability of the project's results is the involvement of local communities in environmental activities conducted in the regions. In this context, the project includes measures for public engagement and collaboration with local communities. In the Ulytau region, an informational tour was organized, along with a consultative session aimed at discussing the strategic aspects of tourism development in the Ulytau region. The goal of this event was to stimulate the development of the region's tourism industry and to hold consultations on strategic tourism development issues.

In 17 schools in the Ulytau region, educational kits of the adapted Kazakhstani version of the "Climate Box" were distributed. This initiative will enhance climate education, provide schools with modern educational materials, and raise students' awareness of climate change and sustainable development. The program is designed to educate schoolchildren and youth on the topic of climate change, offering both an educational program and a set of teaching materials under the theme "Climate Change."

The project continuously works to inform the public. To this end, documentary films were produced highlighting the importance of the work being carried out in the Ile-Balkhash and Ulytau pilot areas. Additionally, social media platforms are being used to keep the public informed about ongoing activities and project progress:

- <https://x.com/UNDPKAZ/status/1998745079620481265?s=20>
- https://www.instagram.com/p/DSFm7y8iAcy/?utm_source=ig_web_copy_link&igsh=NTc4MTIwNjQ2YQ==
- <https://www.facebook.com/share/p/16TygYvdCH/>
- <https://www.instagram.com/p/DJ8pBs1ouTw/?igsh=anY3bWo4YnYydXZn>

Links to the YouTube region of Ulytau:

- <https://youtu.be/A0ziMCfUe-A> KAZ
- <https://youtu.be/BOm8Ot5fAgY> RUS
- <https://youtu.be/Ls7E7rQgs28> ENG

Links to the YouTube region of Ile-Balkhash:

- <https://youtu.be/SYskBZQDtgo> KAZ
- <https://youtu.be/TntdA4W1T5U> RUS

The program of additional environmental education for the Ile-Balkhash region developed in 2023 in 2024 was posted on the website [Program of Supplementary Environmental Education for the Ile-Balkhash Ecoregion in Kazakhstan – Learning for Nature](#). Anyone (teachers, pupils, students, nature lovers) can take a training course and receive a certificate.

Section 1: Analysis of Theory of Change

The assumptions underlying the project's Theory of Change remain valid and continue to support the achievement of the intended outcomes. The project assumes that strengthening institutional capacity, restoring ecosystems, improving protected area management, and engaging local communities will create sustainable conditions for tiger reintroduction and biodiversity conservation.

During the reporting period, significant progress was achieved in strengthening the institutional and operational capacity of the Ile-Balkhash State Nature Reserve and the Ulytau State National Nature Park. Comprehensive needs assessments were conducted, identifying priority gaps in management, monitoring, scientific research, ecotourism development, and stakeholder engagement. Based on these findings, targeted capacity-building activities, training programmes, and planning tools were introduced.

The introduction of the SMART patrol system significantly improved monitoring, law enforcement, and data management capabilities. Procurement of essential equipment, including vehicles, fire-fighting equipment, and IT tools, strengthened operational effectiveness and enhanced the protection of ecosystems and wildlife. Infrastructure planning and design activities further contributed to establishing long-term operational capacity.

Ecological restoration and prey base improvement activities also demonstrated progress. The successful translocation of 17 kulans and continued forest restoration and water supply planning contributed to improving ecosystem conditions and habitat suitability for future tiger reintroduction.

The project's assumptions regarding sustainable tourism development and community engagement were also validated. Tourism planning, landscape planning, and introduction of fee-based services strengthened the financial sustainability of protected areas and increased local stakeholder engagement.

Based on the achieved progress, the project strategy remains highly relevant and appropriate. No fundamental changes to the Theory of Change are required. However, minor adjustments in implementation timelines and infrastructure development planning may be required due to delays in funding and construction documentation approvals.

Overall, the Theory of Change remains valid, and the project is progressing toward achieving its intended outcomes

Section 2: Overall progress against outcomes

The project continues to make significant progress toward its overall outcome of creating sustainable ecological, institutional, and socio-economic conditions for tiger reintroduction and biodiversity conservation.

Under Component 1, the project strengthened the operational and institutional capacity of the Ile-Balkhash State Nature Reserve. Key achievements include the introduction of the SMART monitoring system, strengthening of material and technical capacity through procurement of vehicles and equipment, and initiation of infrastructure planning and development. Ecosystem restoration activities progressed through forest restoration initiatives, water supply planning, and successful translocation of 17 kulans, contributing to strengthening the ecological foundation for tiger reintroduction.

Under Component 2, the project strengthened the institutional and operational capacity of the Ulytau National Park. Functional zoning plans and tourism development plans were prepared, and landscape planning activities were initiated. Fee-based services were introduced, creating new revenue streams and improving financial sustainability. Equipment procurement further enhanced operational capacity and ecosystem protection.

Tourism development planning, including ecological carrying capacity assessments, route planning, and strategic tourism recommendations, was completed and integrated into

regional development planning. This contributed to strengthening sustainable tourism development and improving regional socio-economic opportunities.

Under Component 3, the project strengthened public awareness and community engagement. Educational programmes were implemented in 17 schools, and awareness materials, documentary films, and public information campaigns were conducted. Stakeholder consultations and community engagement activities strengthened local support for conservation and sustainable development initiatives.

Overall, measurable progress was achieved in strengthening protected area management, improving ecosystem conditions, enhancing biodiversity conservation capacity, and preparing ecological and institutional conditions for tiger reintroduction. The project remains on track to achieve its planned outcomes.

Section 3: Monitoring and Evaluation¹ of activities.

Throughout the year, the rollout of SMART was carried out in the Ile-Balkhash State Nature Reserve and the Ulytau State National Nature Park, including staff training, the installation of bilingual databases, and verification of the quality of patrol data uploads.

In February 2025, a workshop on fee-based services was held in Almaty, after which recommendations and operational adjustments for protected areas were recorded, including the launch of such services in Ulytau.

From April to June 2025, consultations were conducted on the implementation of the tourism development strategy in the Ulytau region and its subsequent integration into the regional development plan.

The translocation of kulan from Altyn-Emel National Park to the Ile-Balkhash Reserve was monitored, along with the animals' adaptation and movement patterns.

Support was provided for the development of design documentation for the fire observation tower, administrative building and Visitor Centre, and a positive state expert review was obtained for the project on water supply to the Karabakanas Channel.

As part of public outreach and environmental education, the delivery of 17 Climate Box kits to schools in the Ulytau region was monitored.

At the Steering Committee meeting in December 2025, delays in project financing (with funds released only in October) and adjustments to the implementation schedule were reviewed.

¹ The later if applicable.

Section 4: Progress against each output

Component 1. Creation of the necessary conditions for the reintroduction of tigers on the basis of the Ile-Balkhash State Natural Reserve		
Output indicators	Targets	Progress against targets
1.1.1. Number of trained specialists from the reserve and regional nature conservation institutions on tiger reintroduction, equipment maintenance, monitoring	Baseline: 2 AWP target: 5	Reporting period: 14 Cumulative total: 40
1.1.2. There is a system for monitoring ecosystems and fauna, with regular data entry into the computer base	Baseline: 0 AWP target: 1	Reporting period: 1 Cumulative total: 1
1.1.3. Number of agricultural equipment, cars, scientific equipment and office equipment (computers, printer)	Baseline: 0 AWP target: 2	Reporting period: 6 Cumulative total: 53
1.1.4. The number of installed observation towers	Baseline: 1 AWP target: 0	Reporting period: 0 Cumulative total: 1
1.1.5. An approved design and estimate for the visit center of the Ile-Balkhash reserve	Baseline: 0 AWP target: 0	Reporting period: 0 Cumulative total: 0
1.2.1. Percentage or numbers of increased ungulates	Baseline: wild boar - 1,000, kulan - 0, Bukhara deer – 20 AWP target: Kulan – 16	Reporting period: kulan –17 Bukhara deer - 0 Cumulative total: kulan – 122; Bukhara deer - 12
1.2.2. Number of restored watering places for wild animals	Baseline: 0 AWP target: 0	Reporting period: 0 Cumulative total: 1
1.3.1. Number of km of cleaned bottom of the Ile River	Baseline: 0 AWP target: 3 km	Reporting period: 0 Cumulative total: 0
1.3.2. Number of installed fire towers	Baseline: 1 AWP target: 0	Reporting period: 0 Cumulative total: 1

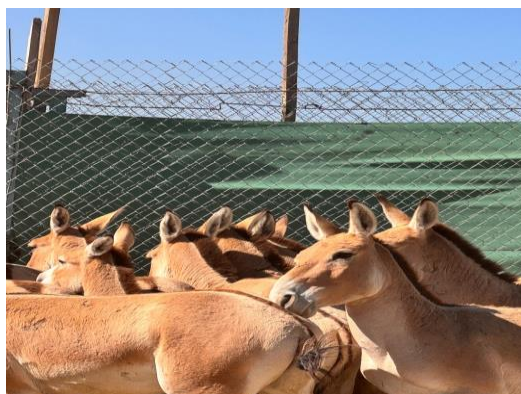
1.3.3. Number of permanent forest nurseries created for local deciduous species based on the Kurtin Forestry Communal State Institution, with an initial area of 5 ha.	Baseline: 0 AWP target: 0	Reporting period: 0 Cumulative total: 1
Component 2. Improvement of the condition, protection and use for scientific, cultural and recreational purposes of objects of natural and historical and cultural heritage of the Ulytau mountain range and adjacent territories		
Output indicators	Targets	Progress against targets
2.1.1. Number of approved documents for the development of the PAs system in the Ulytau region (FR for creation of a wildlife reserve, Management Plans for the Ulytau Reserve Museum and the Ulytau State National Park).	Baseline: 0 AWP target: 1	Reporting period: 1 Cumulative total: 3
2.1.2. Atlas of landscape planning of the Ulytau region was accepted for use and is used by the Akimat	Baseline: 0 AWP target: 0	Reporting period: 0 Cumulative total: 0
2.1.3. Number of trained specialists of environmental institutions on the sustainable operation of PAs and monitoring	Baseline: 2 AWP target: 7	Reporting period: 38 Cumulative total: 62
2.1.4. Number of purchased equipment the Ulytau Reserve Museum and the Ulytau State National Park (after creation)	Baseline: 0 AWP target: 3	Reporting period: 24 Cumulative total: 147
2.2.1. Number of developed tour routes and tour packages considering the norms of tourist load in the Ulytau State National Park	Baseline: 0 AWP target: 0	Reporting period: 0 Cumulative total: 5
2.2.2. Number of equipped tour routes	Baseline: 0 AWP target: 0	Reporting period: 0 Cumulative total: 2
2.3.1. Local community engagement strategy was accepted for use, held round tables (their number and number of local participants, proportion of women)	Baseline: 0 AWP target: 1	Reporting period: 0 Cumulative total: 1

2.3.2. Number of local residents that participated in business trainings on the possibilities of developing alternative activities, including tourism development taking into account a gender approach (number of trainings, number of participants - at least 25, number of local residents involved in the tourism business - at least 20, proportion of women participants - at least 60%).	Baseline: 0 AWP target: 0	Reporting period: 0 Cumulative total: 71
Component 3. Information and work with local communities to educate the population and involve them in the conservation of biological diversity		
Output indicators	Targets	Progress against targets
3.1 Number of trainings conducted for local residents who started engaging in alternative activities - at least 20, including more than 50% women)	Baseline: 0 AWP target: 0	Reporting period: 0 Cumulative total: 7
3.2 Number of publications, articles, brochures, interviews on informing the local population and the public	Baseline: 0 AWP target: 3	Reporting period: 20 Cumulative total: 70
3.4 Number of video products	Baseline: 0 AWP target: 0	Reporting period: 0 Cumulative total: 3
3.5 Number of developed school environmental education curricula at the level of Ulytau and Balkhash districts	Baseline: 0 AWP target: 0	Reporting period: 0 Cumulative total: 1
Component 4. Project management - coordination and monitoring of project activities		
Output indicators	Targets	Progress against targets
Number of PB meetings	Baseline: 0 AWP target: 1	Reporting period: 4 Cumulative total: 10

Key Activities:

Component 1: Tiger Reintroduction (Ile-Balkhash State Nature Reserve)

- **Training and Capacity Building:** Conducted a needs assessment of staff, organized training on paid services, developed recommendations for knowledge exchange; prepared 50 printed user manuals for the SMART system.
- **Monitoring and SMART System:** Installed database and mobile applications; conducted staff training and resolved technical issues.
- **Material-Technical Base:** Procured 3 HP EliteBook laptops, 1 Kazboat-42PO fireboat, and 1 FAW JK6 CA3250 vehicle.
- **Infrastructure Development:** Prepared design and cost documentation for a fire-watch tower and an administrative building with a visitor center.
- **Ungulate Reintroduction:** Translocated 17 kulan from Altyn-Emel National Park; animals housed in enclosures to establish a prey base for tigers.
- **Hydrology and Ecosystems:** Obtained approval for the “Water Supply to Karabakanas Channel” project; works planned for 2026.
- **Forest Restoration:** Installed 6 kW energy panels for the Kurtinsky Forest Nursery; submitted forest restoration project to the Committee of Forestry and Wildlife Management (CFLWM).



Component 2: Development of Protected Areas and Tourism (Ulytau)

- **Planning and Infrastructure Development:** Updated feasibility study of Ulytau National Park; prepared maps and functional zoning schemes; announced a call for experts in landscape planning.
- **Staff Capacity Building:** Conducted seminar on paid services; implemented revenue-generation practices in the park.
- **Material-Technical Base:** Procured 1 FAW JK6 CA3250 vehicle for transporting logging residues from sanitary cuts and conducting fire prevention activities.
- **Tourism and Recreation:** Developed methodologies for calculating tourist carrying capacity, recommendations for managing visitor flows, and prepared tourist routes; project to relocate the checkpoint to “Aulietau” under review.
- **Community Mobilization:** Presented strategic recommendations for tourism development; integrated into the Regional Development Plan; conducted consultations and experience-sharing with local communities and authorities.

Component 3: Public Awareness and Community Engagement

- **Info-Tours and Consultations:** Organized info-tours and consultation sessions on sustainable development and alternative livelihoods.
- **Social Media Outreach:** Ongoing communication to inform the public about project activities and results.

Key Results:

Component 1: Creating Conditions for Tiger Reintroduction (Ile-Balkhash State Nature Reserve)

Task 1.1: Strengthening Human Capacity and Material-Technical Base

- Conducted a needs assessment for Ile-Balkhash staff, identifying priority areas: science, ecotourism, and management.
- Organized a training on paid services, legal frameworks, and pricing; developed recommendations for introducing paid services.
- Announced a call for updating the Reserve Management Plan, considering the planned territorial expansion and tiger reintroduction.
- Implemented the SMART ecosystem and wildlife monitoring system on computers and mobile devices; conducted staff training and prepared 50 printed user manuals.
- Strengthened material-technical capacity: three HP EliteBook laptops, Kazboat-42PO fireboat; initiated design projects for residential ranger stations.
- Developed design and cost documentation for a fire-watch tower and visitor center (ready for expertise review).

Task 1.2: Establishing a Tiger Prey Base

- Reintroduced 17 kulan (1 male, 10 females, 6 juveniles) from Altyn-Emel National Park into the Ile-Balkhash reserve enclosure, following veterinary and transport protocols.
- Organized feeding and supplied hay and fodder to maintain the animals.

Task 1.3: Ecosystem Restoration

- Obtained approval for the “Water Supply to Karabakanas Channel” project (implementation planned for 2026).
- Procured a FAW JK6 vehicle to support wildfire prevention and sanitary logging activities.
- Established material-technical support for the Kurtinsky Forest Nursery: installed 6 kW energy panels and prepared a forest restoration project (submitted to the Committee of Forestry and Wildlife Management).

Component 2: Development of Protected Areas and Tourism (Ulytau)

Task 2.1: Development and Support of Protected Areas

- Updated the feasibility study and master plan for Ulytau National Park, including revised functional zoning and infrastructure plans.
- Announced a call for experts in landscape planning, socio-economic development, agriculture, and historical-cultural heritage.
- Conducted a seminar on paid services in protected areas; implemented paid services and generated revenue for Ulytau National Park.
- Strengthened material-technical capacity: FAW JK6 vehicle for transporting logging residues from sanitary cuts and conducting fire prevention activities.

Task 2.2: Tourism Development

- Prepared methodologies for calculating tourist carrying capacity, recommendations for visitor flow management, and the structure of tourist routes.
- Ongoing work on developing tourist routes (activities relocated to the “Aulietau” checkpoint).

- Developed a communication program for protected areas to promote tourism (completed in 2022).

Task 2.3: Community Mobilization

- Developed strategic recommendations for tourism development in Ulytau with a gender-sensitive approach; integrated into the Regional Development Plan.
- Conducted consultations and training for local communities on ecotourism and sustainable development.

Component 3: Public Awareness and Community Engagement

- Organized info-tours and consultation sessions for local communities on sustainable development and alternative livelihoods.
- Maintained ongoing communication on social media to inform the public about project activities and results.

Section 5: Cross-Cutting Integration

Project Overview

The Project addresses two strategic national priorities:

- Establishing enabling conditions for tiger reintroduction in the South Balkhash region based on the State Nature Reserve «Ile-Balkhash»;
- Supporting the development of Ulytau National Park while ensuring the conservation of the region's natural and historical-cultural heritage.

The Project is designed as a comprehensive cross-sectoral initiative that integrates environmental, economic, social, and cultural policy frameworks.

Key Areas of Cross-Sectoral Integration

1. Environment and Economic Development

The Project positions biodiversity conservation as a driver of sustainable territorial development through:

- promotion of regulated and sustainable tourism;
- job creation at the local level;
- support for alternative livelihood opportunities;
- introduction of concessional financing mechanisms (Eco-Damu programme, GEF Small Grants Programme).

Integration nexus: environment + regional economic development + financial inclusion mechanisms.

2. Environmental Policy and Natural Resource Management

Tiger reintroduction requires:

- maintaining the hydrological regime of the Ili River;
- restoration of tugai (riparian) forests;
- strengthening the protection and management system of protected areas.

Integration nexus: biodiversity conservation + water resource management + forestry + climate resilience.

3. Environment, Culture and Tourism

In Ulytau, the Project combines:

- establishment and operationalization of the national park;

- conservation of archaeological and historical sites;
- development of sustainable tourism routes;
- assessment and management of carrying capacity.

A key institutional partner is the National Historical, Cultural and Natural Museum-Reserve «Ulytau», with the participation of the Ministry of Culture and Sports of the Republic of Kazakhstan.

Integration nexus: nature conservation + cultural policy + sustainable tourism.

4. Social and Educational Integration

The Project provides for:

- active engagement of local communities;
- capacity-building for alternative income-generating activities;
- mainstreaming of a gender-responsive approach;
- integration of schools in the Balkhash and Ulytau districts into environmental awareness and education activities.

Integration nexus: environmental sustainability + social inclusion + education + gender equality.

5. Institutional Partnership and Governance

The Project is implemented in coordination with:

- Ministry of Ecology, Geology and Natural Resources of the Republic of Kazakhstan;
- Committee of Forestry and Wildlife;
- United Nations Development Programme;
- WWF Russia;
- QazaqGeography.

The governance model brings together national and local government institutions, international organizations, civil society, local authorities, and the private sector.

Conclusion

The Project establishes a systemic cross-sectoral integration model in which:

- biodiversity conservation serves as a catalyst for regional development;
- cultural heritage strengthens sustainable tourism potential;
- social support mechanisms reduce anthropogenic pressure on ecosystems;
- international partnerships enhance institutional sustainability and global environmental alignment.

The integrated design of the Project ensures long-term environmental, economic, and social benefits for the Balkhash and Ulytau regions, in line with national priorities and international commitments.

Human and Social Context:

• Leave No One Behind

The project ensures the engagement and support of all population groups, including local communities and women, so that no one is left behind in the processes of nature conservation and sustainable development.

• Human Rights

The project integrates human rights principles by promoting inclusive participation, gender equality, and community empowerment. It ensures that local communities, including vulnerable and marginalized groups, have access to information, decision-

making, and benefits from conservation and sustainable development activities, while respecting their rights and dignity.

- **Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment**

The project promotes gender equality and the empowerment of women by actively involving women in biodiversity conservation, sustainable tourism, and local development processes. It ensures equal access to training, consultations, and income-generating opportunities, while integrating a gender-responsive approach across all project activities.

- **Disability Inclusion**

The project promotes the inclusion of persons with disabilities by ensuring their access to project activities, consultations, training, and community initiatives. Measures are taken to remove barriers and provide equal opportunities for participation in conservation, sustainable tourism, and local development processes.

- **Cultural Heritage**

The project supports the preservation and promotion of cultural heritage by integrating historical and cultural sites, as well as traditional practices, into conservation, tourism, and sustainable local development activities. It ensures the protection of these resources while enabling community participation in their management and use.

Interactions between Social and Environmental Factors:

- **Sustainability and Resilience**

The project promotes sustainable development and resilience by combining biodiversity conservation, ecosystem restoration, and the development of sustainable tourism. Community engagement and inclusive approaches strengthen local governance and social resilience. The use of renewable energy, fire prevention measures, and monitoring systems ensures long-term environmental sustainability.

Natural Environment:

- **Biodiversity Conservation**

The project promotes biodiversity conservation through a comprehensive approach to ecosystem and species protection. Key actions include the reintroduction of the tiger in Ile-Balkhash State Nature Reserve with the establishment of a sustainable prey base, the translocation and monitoring of kulans and Bukhara deer, the restoration of tugai forests and hydrological regimes, and the implementation of the SMART monitoring system for flora and fauna. These measures ensure the long-term protection of rare and threatened species while maintaining the ecological balance of the region.

- **Sustainable Natural Resource Management**

The project promotes sustainable natural resource management by strengthening ecosystem protection, restoring forests and wetlands, and implementing integrated monitoring systems. It supports evidence-based decision-making, community involvement, and capacity-building for local authorities, ensuring that natural resources are used responsibly and sustainably for long-term ecological and socio-economic benefits.

- **Climate Change**

The project contributes to climate change mitigation and enhanced resilience of ecosystems and communities through the restoration of tugai forests, the introduction of renewable energy solutions, and the strengthening of fire prevention measures.

Ecosystem monitoring and sustainable natural resource management support climate adaptation efforts and reduce environmental risks.

- **Disaster Risks**

The project contributes to disaster risk reduction by strengthening fire prevention infrastructure, procuring specialized equipment, and introducing monitoring systems for early threat detection. The restoration of tugai forests and hydrological regimes enhances ecosystem resilience to droughts and wildfires. An integrated approach to natural resource management reduces the territory's vulnerability to natural and climate-related hazards.

IV. Partnerships and Sustainability

Partnerships

- The Project implementation and management model ensures close collaboration between the executing partner – the Committee of Forestry and Wildlife of the Ministry of Ecology, Geology and Natural Resources of the Republic of Kazakhstan – and the responsible partner, UNDP, together with other key partners, primarily WWF Russia and QazaqGeography.
- The primary beneficiary of the Project is the Ministry of Ecology, Geology and Natural Resources of Kazakhstan, including its protected area units and other relevant organizations in the project's operational area. Additional beneficiaries include the Ministry of Culture and Sports of Kazakhstan (Ulytau Historical and Cultural and Nature Reserve), Forestry and Wildlife Departments of the Balkhash and Ulytau districts, district akimats, tourism companies, and local education departments. The UNDP Country Office is responsible for overall project management.
- Success factors of the Project rely on active engagement of beneficiaries and coordination among stakeholders. The Project will be implemented in close cooperation with relevant government authorities. Agreements will be signed between key partners and beneficiaries responsible for specific tasks after a careful assessment of partner capacity to co-implement UNDP projects in accordance with UNDP rules and procedures.
- To ensure effective engagement of local communities, field visits and consultations with local authorities will be conducted to identify stakeholders and relevant civil society actors.
- Capacity building of protected area staff and responsible authorities, as well as training for local residents on alternative livelihoods, will be conducted with a mandatory gender-responsive approach, including study tours, online trainings, seminars, and workshops.
- Environmental education initiatives in schools will involve local education departments in Balkhash and Ulytau districts and selected pilot schools.
- Stakeholder engagement will be facilitated through systematic communication channels, including consultations (both in-person and online), seminars, roundtables, and workshops.
- The Project builds on previous successful partnerships between NGOs and government institutions in biodiversity conservation, protected area management,

and heritage preservation, promoting green economy development and contributing to the SDGs.

- The Project will facilitate knowledge exchange and good practice sharing with similar projects implemented by UNDP and other donors in Central Asia, the Caucasus, and Eastern Europe, including experiences in Russia (reintroduction of ungulates and predators, ecosystem restoration), Uzbekistan (ungulate reintroduction), and Mongolia.

Sustainability

The Project strengthens ecosystem resilience within protected areas (PAs) while also supporting sustainable income generation for local communities. Ecosystem resilience is enhanced through improved protection, regulated use, increased species diversity via reintroduction of key species, and biotechnical interventions aimed at improving the structure of biocenoses and increasing populations of key species across both project sites.

These measures are reinforced by strengthening the resilience of PAs through capacity building of staff, enhancement of material and technical resources, and improvement of management plans. Local communities are guided toward environmentally sustainable alternative livelihoods—such as ecotourism and other activities—that reduce pressures on biodiversity and ecosystems while increasing household incomes.

The package of project interventions in these areas fully aligns with environmental sustainability principles and the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). Throughout project implementation, including planning and interim evaluations, progress toward ecosystem resilience will be monitored, and adjustments will be made as necessary to maximize the Project's impact in this area.

V. UPDATE ON RISKS AND MITIGATION MEASURES

1. Strategic and Institutional Risks

Risk: Potential delays in the approval of design and cost-estimate documentation (fire observation tower, visitor center, hydrotechnical works) may affect the overall implementation timeline.

During the reporting period, design and cost-estimate documentation for priority infrastructure facilities was prepared and submitted for state expert review. A positive expert conclusion was obtained for the “Water Supply to the Karabakanas Channel” project, with implementation scheduled for 2026.

Mitigation Measures:

- Continuous coordination with state expert review authorities;
- Advance preparation of procurement documentation;
- Phased implementation planning.

2. Financial and Budgetary Risks

Risk: Budget constraints resulted in the cancellation or postponement of certain activities (including the unsuccessful procurement process for the “Edige” tourism route).

No cases of fraud, corruption, or misuse of funds were identified during the reporting period. Financial management is carried out in full compliance with UNDP rules and procedures.

Mitigation Measures:

- Reprioritization of activities within the approved budget ceiling;

- Consideration of alternative solutions (including construction of a checkpoint on the “Aulietau” route);
- Ongoing financial monitoring and transparent procurement procedures.

3. Environmental Risks

Risk: Continued degradation of ecosystems in the Ili River delta and Southern Balkhash region, as well as increased fire risk in tugai and reed-bed ecosystems.

During the reporting period, fire prevention measures were strengthened through the procurement of specialized equipment and machinery. A renewable energy system (6 kW solar panels) was installed at the Kurty Forestry Nursery to support forest restoration activities.

All project activities are implemented in accordance with UNDP Social and Environmental Standards (SES). No significant adverse environmental impacts were recorded.

Mitigation Measures:

- Strengthening fire prevention and response capacity;
- Restoration of tugai forests and hydrological regimes;
- Implementation of the SMART monitoring system;
- Environmental screening of infrastructure and tourism-related interventions.

4. Operational Risks Related to Tiger Reintroduction

Risk: Insufficient development of the prey base and habitat readiness may affect the long-term success of tiger reintroduction.

During the reporting period, 17 kulans were successfully translocated to the Ile-Balkhash State Nature Reserve. The animals are housed in temporary enclosures and remain under continuous monitoring. Fodder supply contracts have been secured.

Mitigation Measures:

- Gradual establishment of a sustainable prey base;
- Ongoing veterinary supervision and ecological monitoring;
- Strengthening of the reserve’s material and technical capacity and staff qualifications.

5. Social Risks and Community Engagement

Risk: Limited engagement of local communities in conservation and sustainable tourism development processes.

During the reporting period, consultations, roundtables, and information tours were conducted in Ulytau District. Strategic tourism development recommendations were integrated into the Regional Development Plan. No grievances were submitted through project mechanisms.

Mitigation Measures:

- Continued stakeholder consultations;
- Application of a gender-responsive approach;
- Support for alternative livelihood opportunities linked to tourism and conservation.

6. Integrity and Safeguarding Risks

The Implementing Partner maintains a zero-tolerance policy towards fraud, corruption, sexual exploitation, abuse, and harassment. No related cases were reported during the reporting period.

Mitigation Measures:

- Compliance with financial and anti-corruption procedures;
- Inclusion of relevant clauses in contractual agreements;
- Availability of confidential grievance mechanisms;
- Adherence to UNDP accountability standards.

Overall Risk Assessment

The overall project risk level is assessed as Moderate.

Key risks are primarily related to infrastructure approval procedures and budget constraints; however, the mitigation measures in place are considered sufficient to manage their potential impact on the achievement of planned results.

VI. Key Challenges, Lessons Learned and Recommendations

Key Challenges:

The project faced delays related to the preparation and state expertise review of design and estimate documentation, which required more time than initially anticipated. Budget constraints led to the postponement or cancellation of certain activities. Additionally, ecological pressures in the Ili-Balkhash region, including fire risks and ecosystem degradation, required adaptive management and strengthened preventive measures.

Lessons Learned:

Early and continuous engagement with state authorities and expert bodies is essential to minimize procedural delays. Flexible planning and prioritization within available budgets improve implementation continuity. Integrated ecosystem restoration, combined with monitoring systems such as SMART and strengthened institutional capacity, enhances long-term conservation outcomes. Active community engagement increases local ownership and sustainability of results.

Recommendations:

Further streamline coordination with state expertise bodies and initiate technical documentation processes at earlier stages. Maintain adaptive management approaches to address budget and environmental uncertainties. Continue strengthening institutional capacity, community participation, and ecosystem-based solutions to ensure the long-term sustainability and resilience of project achievements.

Challenges:

During the implementation period, the project encountered several institutional, financial, and environmental challenges.

1. Procedural and institutional constraints – The preparation and state expertise review of design and estimate documentation required more time than initially planned, affecting the timeline for the commencement of certain infrastructure activities.
2. Budgetary limitations – Funding reductions and reallocations resulted in the postponement or cancellation of selected activities and required reprioritization of planned interventions.
3. Environmental factors – High wildfire risks in tugai and reedbed ecosystems, localized ecosystem degradation, and climate-related pressures necessitated strengthened preventive measures and adaptive management approaches.

4. Operational challenges – Activities related to tiger reintroduction and the establishment of a sustainable prey base require a phased and long-term approach, continuous monitoring, and veterinary oversight.

Despite these challenges, the project continues implementation in line with adaptive management principles and established procedures.

Lessons Learned:

1. Procedural and Institutional Factors

- Successes: Early engagement with government authorities and expert bodies facilitated smoother preparation of project documentation.
- Challenges: The state expertise review took longer than anticipated, delaying certain infrastructure activities.
- Recommendations: Initiate technical documentation and coordination with state authorities at earlier stages; adjust timelines and indicators to reflect procedural realities.

2. Budget and Financial Management

- Successes: Prioritization of activities within the available budget ensured the continuation of core project interventions.
- Challenges: Budget delays led to the postponement or cancellation of some activities.
- Recommendations: Maintain flexible budgeting and alternative planning; strengthen financial monitoring to respond quickly to changes in funding.

3. Ecological and Environmental Management

- Successes: Implementation of the SMART monitoring system, ecosystem restoration, and fire prevention measures strengthened conservation outcomes.
- Challenges: High fire risks and ecosystem degradation required adaptive management.
- Recommendations: Continue ecosystem-based monitoring, expand preventive measures, and integrate climate and disaster risk indicators.

4. Community Engagement and Social Inclusion

- Successes: Consultations, infotrips, and inclusive participation increased local ownership and project sustainability.
- Challenges: Some communities were initially unaware of project benefits.
- Recommendations: Strengthen ongoing engagement, track participation indicators, and enhance gender-sensitive and inclusive approaches.

Project Actions on Learning:

The project actively applied lessons by adjusting workplans, prioritizing activities, and strengthening monitoring systems. Data collection and M&E frameworks were refined to more accurately track progress, and feedback from previous implementation periods was integrated into adaptive management processes.

VII. Financial Summary²

² Disclaimer 1: Data contained in this financial report section is an extract of UNDP financial records. All financial provided above is provisional. Certified financial statements will be provided on <indicate date (30 June of the following year)>.

Table 1: Overview of available resources for the project duration

Donor	Opening Balance	Contribution Received	Available Resources
Government Republic of Kazakhstan	213 480	564 114	777 594

Table 2: Overview of allocation and utilization³ per output

<i>Output</i>	<i>Government Republic of Kazakhstan</i>	
	<i>Budget</i>	<i>Utilization</i>
Component 1: Creating the necessary conditions for tiger reintroduction based on the Ile-Balkhash State Nature Reserve	442,450	362,585
Component 2: Improvement of the condition, protection and use for scientific, cultural and recreational purposes of natural and historical and cultural heritage sites of the Ulytau mountains and adjacent territories	171,671	59,150
Component 3: Informing and working with local communities to educate the population and involve them in the biodiversity conservation	16,745	3,549
Component 4. Project management	50,374	83,868
<i>Total</i>	681,240	509,152

3 Disclaimer 2: Of the USD xxxxx presented above, USD xxxx corresponds to eligible expenses (as per IPSAS terminology), and USD xxxx corresponds to legal commitments in force between UNDP and third parties for the reporting period.

VIII. Annexes

Annex I: Progress Review: detailed matrix of activities and results

Output 1	Indicators	Baseline	Annual target	Progress / Milestone
Outcome 1: Creating the necessary conditions for tiger reintroduction based on the Ile-Balkash State Nature Reserve Budget: 442,450 Expenditure to date: 496,491	1.1.1. Number of trained specialists from the reserve and regional nature conservation institutions on tiger reintroduction, equipment maintenance, monitoring	2	5	14
	1.1.2. There is a system for monitoring ecosystems and fauna, with regular data entry into the computer base	0	1	1
	1.1.3. Number of agricultural equipment, cars, scientific equipment and office equipment (computers, printer)	0	2	6
	1.1.4. The number of installed observation towers	1	0	0
	1.1.5. An approved design and estimate for the visit center of the Ile-Balkhash reserve	0	0	0
	1.2.1. Percentage or numbers of increased ungulates	wild boar - 1,000, kulan - 0, Bukhara deer - 20	Kulan – 16	kulan –17
	1.2.2. Number of restored watering places for wild animals	0	0	0

	1.3.1. Number of km of cleaned bottom of the Ile River	0	3 km	0
	1.3.2. Number of installed fire towers	1	0	0
	1.3.3. Number of permanent forest nurseries created for local deciduous species based on the Kurtin Forestry Communal State Institution, with an initial area of 5 ha.	0	0	0
Activities	Results			
1.1. Increasing human resources and strengthening the material and technical base of the Ile-Balkhash State Nature Reserve, working with the local community	In the reporting period under Task 1.1, a training session on the development of paid services was conducted with the participation of other protected areas, covering legal foundations, pricing, and the causes of slow implementation, and resulting in proposals for amending regulatory acts and launching pilot services. The bilingual SMART-patrolling system was fully implemented, accompanied by training for staff of protection units, scientific departments, and territorial forestry and wildlife inspections. Follow-up field visits allowed for the correction of technical errors, the update of the user manual and video instructions, and the delivery of 50 printed copies of the manual. The material and technical base was strengthened through the procurement of a Kazboat-42PO fireboat with a YAMAHA E75 engine and three HP EliteBook 840 G11 laptops to support monitoring systems. In addition, project design documentation was prepared for the fire-observation tower and the administrative complex with a visitor center, both of which are fully ready for expert review.			
1.2. Creating conditions for restoring and improving the tiger's food potential with the involvement of women researchers	During the reporting period under Task 1.2, activities were carried out to restore habitat and build a prey base for tigers through the reintroduction of ungulates. Seventeen kulan were transferred from the Altyn-Emel State National Nature Park to the Ile-Balkhash State Nature Reserve, following a preparatory phase that included assessment and repair of the corral, preparation of equipment and transport, risk-mitigation training for capture and transport, obtaining all required permits, and involvement of veterinary services. The capture was conducted using a coral drive method with sedation; the animals were delivered in two trips and placed in a temporary holding enclosure by sex and age group. All 17 individuals were successfully relocated and will remain in the adaptation enclosure until spring 2026. Additionally, a contract was signed for the supply of hay and feed to ensure their maintenance.			

1.3. Creation of a sustainable basis for the restoration of floodplain forests of the Balkhash region	During the reporting period under Task 1.3, work continued to establish sustainable conditions for the restoration of the Ili-Balkhash floodplain forests. The working project on ensuring water supply to the Karabakanas channel received a positive state expertise conclusion, after which a contract was signed to carry out the works in 2026, although the start was delayed by ten months due to late financing. To strengthen measures against forest fires and illegal logging, a FAW JK6 board vehicle was procured. Development of the permanent forest nursery at the Kurtin Forestry Institution continued, and energy-efficient 6 kW panels were installed to ensure uninterrupted operation. The working project based on soil and forest-reclamation surveys, which passed state expertise, was transferred to the Forestry and Wildlife Committee for use in reforestation activities.			
Output 2	Indicators	Baseline	Annual target	Progress / target
Outcome 2: Improvement of the condition, protection and use for scientific, cultural, and recreational purposes of sites of natural, historical and cultural heritage of the Ulytau mountains and adjacent territories. Budget: 171,671 Expenditure to date: 94,973	2.1.1. Number of approved documents for the development of the PAs system in the Ulytau region (FR for creation of a wildlife reserve, Management Plans for the Ulytau Reserve Museum and the Ulytau State National Park).	0	1	1
	2.1.2. Atlas of landscape planning of the Ulytau region was accepted for use and is used by the Akimat	0	0	0
	2.1.3. Number of trained specialists of environmental institutions on the sustainable operation of PAs and monitoring	2	7	38
	2.1.4. Number of purchased equipment the Ulytau Reserve Museum and the Ulytau State National Park (after creation)	0	3	24
	2.2.1. Number of developed tour routes and tour packages considering	0	0	0

	the norms of tourist load in the Ulytau State National Park			
	2.2.2. Number of equipped tour routes	0	0	0
	2.3.1. Local community engagement strategy was accepted for use, held round tables (their number and number of local participants, proportion of women)	0	1	0
	2.3.2. Number of local residents that participated in business trainings on the possibilities of developing alternative activities, including tourism development taking into account a gender approach (number of trainings, number of participants - at least 25, number of local residents involved in the tourism business - at least 20, proportion of women participants - at least 60%).	0	0	0
Activities	Results			
2.1 Establishment of a foundation and support for the development of specially protected natural areas in the Ulytau district	Under Task 2.1, the technical and economic justification and development plans of the Ulytau National Park were revised, including adjustments to functional zoning schemes and the general infrastructure plan. Potential areas for tourism and recreational use were identified, and cartographic materials were prepared. A landscape planning concept was presented and technical assignments developed; in December 2025, a competitive selection was launched to engage experts in spatial planning, socio-economic development, cultural heritage, and agriculture for the preparation of analytical and cartographic materials, as well as models for sustainable land management. A needs assessment of park staff was conducted, resulting in a capacity-building programme focused on financial management, territorial protection, and ecotourism infrastructure. In February 2025, a training seminar was held in Almaty, leading to the introduction of paid services in the park and the generation of its own revenues. To strengthen the material and technical base, equipment and machinery were procured, including the acquisition in 2025 of a FAW JK6 vehicle for the			

	removal of logging residues from sanitary cuttings, thereby enhancing the park's capacity for ecosystem protection and fire safety.			
2.2. Promotion of Sustainable Tourism Development in the Ulytau District	Under Task 2.2 on tourism development in the Ulytau district, a tourism development rationale was prepared taking into account the ecological capacity of landscapes. Methodologies for calculating recreational loads were defined and adapted, with recommendations developed on visitor flow management, territorial zoning, and mitigation of negative impacts on ecosystems. A structure for a tourism route passport and a concept for a map of prospective routes were proposed, highlighting the attractiveness, accessibility, and uniqueness of the area. For the arrangement of the "Edige" route, technical specifications were developed and approved; however, the procurement procedure was declared unsuccessful. The proposal to redirect activities towards establishing a checkpoint on the previously developed "Aulietau" route is currently under consideration by the Project Management Committee. In addition, the communication programme for protected areas aimed at tourism development and the creation of an attractive visitor gateway was completed in 2022.			
2.3. Community Mobilization and Engagement	Under Task 2.3 on community mobilization, strategic recommendations for tourism development in the Ulytau district, incorporating a gender-sensitive approach, were developed and presented to a wide range of stakeholders. Following consultations, the document was refined and integrated into the Ulytau Regional Development Plan. The recommendations aim to stimulate tourism flows, expand local employment opportunities, and promote the region's cultural and natural heritage, while fostering a sustainable approach based on ecological and social responsibility. In addition, discussions were held with local communities and government representatives to pilot tourism projects and to review ongoing initiatives in sustainable development, ecotourism, and social engagement.			
Output 3	Indicators	Baseline	Annual target	Progress / target
Outcome 3: Informing and working with local communities to educate the population and involve them in the biodiversity conservation Budget: 16,745 Expenditure to date: 3,991	3.1 Number of trainings conducted for local residents who started engaging in alternative activities - at least 20, including more than 50% women)	0	0	0
	3.2 Number of publications, articles, brochures, interviews on informing the local population and the public	0	3	20

	3.4 Number of video products	0	0	0
	3.5 Number of developed school environmental education curricula at the level of Ulytau and Balkhash districts	0	0	0
Activities	Results			
Strengthening the capacity of local communities in sustainable development and alternative livelihoods, with a gender-sensitive approach	Under Task 3.1 In the Ulytau district, an information tour was conducted and a consultation session was organized as part of the implementation of strategic aspects of tourism development. The purpose of the event was to stimulate the growth of the regional tourism sector and to hold consultations on key strategic directions for tourism development.			
Public awareness and community engagement in the management of protected areas through the activation or establishment of Coordination Councils	Under Task 3.2 Public awareness activities are being carried out through social media to inform communities about the ongoing work: https://x.com/UNDPKAZ/status/1998745079620481265?s=20 https://www.instagram.com/p/DSFm7y8iAcy/?utm_source=ig_web_copy_link&igsh=NTc4MTIwNjQ2YQ== https://www.facebook.com/share/p/16TygYvdCH/			
Number of video products	Under Task 3.4 Production of audio and video materials, including audio guides, travel guides, and other related products. https://www.instagram.com/p/DJ8pBs1ouTw/?igsh=anY3bWo4YnYydXZn			

Conducting information activities targeting diverse stakeholder groups, and developing and introducing school-based environmental education programmes.	Under Task 3.5 In 17 schools of the Ulytau district, educational kits of the adapted Kazakhstani version of the “Climate Box” were distributed. This initiative strengthens climate education, equips schools with modern learning materials, and raises students’ awareness of climate change and sustainable development. The Climate Box is an educational programme and a set of teaching materials designed for schoolchildren and youth on the topic of climate change.			
Output 4	Indicators	Baseline	Annual target	Progress / target
Outcome 4: Project management - coordination and monitoring of project activities	Number of PB meetings	0	1	4
Activities	Results			
Number of PB meetings	During the reporting period, four meetings of the Project Steering Committee (PSC) were held, where work plans were reviewed and approved, interim results were assessed, and decisions on key project implementation issues were made.			

Annex II: Updated Risk Log

#	Description	Date Identified	Type	Impact & Probability	Counter-measures / Mngt response	Owner	Last Update	Status
1	Incomplete implementation of the project budget	28.02.2025	An additional agreement between UNDP and the Committee of Forestry and Wildlife of the Ministry of Natural Resources of the Republic of Kazakhstan to finance the Project in 2025-2026 was signed in February this year, but the transfer of funds to the UNDP account was actually made on	Later, the financing of the project in 2025 led to the suspension of contracts concluded in 2024 and to the postponement of the planned start date for 9 months. Enter probability on a scale from 1 (low) to 5 (high) P = 5 Enter impact on a scale from 1 (low) to 5 (high) I = 5	Updating and agreeing with the BGC of the Project Work Plan for 2025, taking into account the risks and tight deadlines for the organization of procurement and the implementation of activities.	FWC MENR RK UNDP	31.12.2025	Dead

			October 8 this year.					
2	Delay in obtaining approval of the state expertise for the design and estimate documentation for the construction of the fire tower and the administrative building of the Ile-Balkhash State Nature Reserve	03.11.2025	The work was resumed in October this year after receiving funding, in connection with which the deadline for the completion of tasks by the Supplier was revised. Also, the period for consideration of the design and estimate documentation by the state examination body takes up to 45 days, which may additionally involve a	Untimely implementation of project activities Enter probability on a scale from 1 (low) to 5 (high) P = 5 Enter impact on a scale from 1 (low) to 5 (high) I = 5	Revision of the work schedule taking into account the regulations of the state examination body. Constant monitoring of the progress of the contract by the Service Provider.	FWC MENR RK UNDP	31.12.2025	No change

			breakdown from the work schedule.					
3	The tender for the purchase of landscape planning services in the pilot territory of Ulytau will not take place the first time.	15.10.2025	Specificity of the subject of work, a narrow market of suppliers and specialists in this field. Lack of interest of potential suppliers due to the lack of a state-approved methodology of work.	Untimely disbursement of the project budget. Untimely implementation of project activities Enter probability on a scale from 1 (low) to 5 (high) P = 5 Enter impact on a scale from 1 (low) to 5 (high) I = 5	Thorough analysis of the service market, posting information about the competition on various platforms. Holding a preliminary conference by interested suppliers	FWC MENR RK UNDP	31.12.2025	Reducing
4	The tender for the purchase of water supply services to the Karabakanas channel will not take place on the first try	05.11.2025	Lack of interest of potential suppliers due to the remoteness and inaccessibili	Untimely disbursement of the project budget. Untimely implementation of project activities	Detailed analysis of the service market, conducting a preliminary briefing among possible	FWC MENR RK UNDP	18.12.2025	Dead

			ty of the territory, which is aggravated by the fact that during the period of deteriorating weather conditions, work can be significantly complicated .	A number of environmental consequences, such as further disruption of biological equilibrium; the process of drying out channel processes. Enter probability on a scale from 1 (low) to 5 (high) P = 5 Enter impact on a scale from 1 (low) to 5 (high) I = 5	service providers and explaining the goals and expected final results of work.			
5	The tender for the purchase of heavy-duty equipment for the transportation of goods during the implementation of biotechnical measures, as well as for the removal of	15.10.2025	A possible increase in the cost of heavy-duty vehicles on the market. Low interest of suppliers in participation due to the need to obtain VTA	Untimely disbursement of the project budget. Untimely implementation of project activities Enter probability on a scale from 1 (low) to 5 (high) P = 5	Maximum dissemination of information on the purchase of equipment in order to expand the range of potential suppliers.	Portfolio Coordinator	01.12.2025	Dead

	elling residues after salvage logging in the Ile-Balkhash State Nature Reserve and the Ulytau State National Park will not take place.		(Vehicle Type Approval), as this is not economically beneficial, especially for small companies.	Enter impact on a scale from 1 (low) to 5 (high) I = 5				
6	The purchase of services for the development of design and estimate documentation for the working design of standard residential cordons of two types (for mountainous and plain areas) will not take place.	25.11.2025	Lack of interested service providers	Untimely disbursement of the project budget. Untimely implementation of project activities Enter probability on a scale from 1 (low) to 5 (high) P = 5 Enter impact on a scale from 1 (low) to 5 (high) I = 5	Activation of the Work Procurement Process in cooperation with the FOLUR Project	Portfolio Coordinator	30.12.2025	Dead

Annex III: Annual Work Plan for (next year)

Docusign Envelope ID: 1506F7E0-3E0A-47AF-84B0-2CB94C9EEA1C

United Nations Development Programme



Annual Work Plan 2026

UNDP Kazakhstan

Project Title: Creation of conditions for the reintroduction of the Turan tiger and assistance in the preservation of natural, historical and cultural objects of the Ulytau mountain range

Project Number: 00111147

Implementing Partner: Forestry and Wildlife Committee of the Ministry of Ecology and Natural Resources of the Republic of Kazakhstan

Start Date: July, 2021 **End Date:** December, 2026 **LPAC date:** 23 July, 2021

Brief Project Description:

The Project is aimed at creating a sustainable base for reintroduction of tigers in historical habitats, spanning the Ile-Balkhash SNR, conservating the natural, historical and cultural heritage of Ulytau mountain range and adjacent territories, and promoting the tourist sites in this unique region. The Project's main results will be a comprehensive improvement of ecosystems along the Ile river delta and the Southern Balkhash region, strengthening Ile-Balkhash SNR and Ulytau SNNP (which is being created), developing a PAs network and tourism in Ulytau region, raising the level of environmental awareness by population and informing all stakeholders, creating a basis for joint ecosystems management with the project sites with benefits for biodiversity conservation and local communities.			
Contributing Outcome (CPD 2026-2030): 3.2. By 2030, all people in Kazakhstan, especially the most vulnerable, benefit from enhanced age and gender-sensitive environmental resilience, as well as inclusive, rights-based climate, nature and pollution action and sustainable management of natural resources. Indicative Output(s) with gender marker: GEN1	Total resources required 2026:		\$487 010
	Total resources allocated:	Government of the Republic of Kazakhstan	\$333 238
		UNDP (in-kind):	\$153 772

Agreed by:

UNDP

Sukhrob Khojimatov

Resident Representative a.i.

DocuSigned by:

2E5B234D09CB4DA...
Date: 30-Dec-2025

Forestry and Wildlife Committee of the Ministry of Ecology and Natural Resources of the Republic of Kazakhstan

Andrey Kim

Deputy Chairman / National Director of Biodiversity Projects

Date: 30.12.2025

Docusign Envelope ID: 1506F7E0-3E0A-47AF-84B0-20B94C9EEA1C

I. ANNUAL WORK PLAN FOR 2026

EXPECTED OUTPUTS	PLANNED ACTIVITIES	TIMEFRAME (QUARTER)				RESPONSIBLE PARTY	PLANNED BUDGET		Amount (USD)
		Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4		Funding source	Budget description	
Outcome 1: Creation of the necessary conditions for the reintroduction of tigers on the basis of the Ile-Balkhash State Nature Reserve Indicators: 1) Design and estimate documentation of the administrative building with Visit Center of SNR "Ile-Balkhash"; 2) Increase in the number of ungulates; 3) Length of the cleaned Ile River riverbed; 4) Number of fire towers installed. Targets: 1) one design and estimate documentation; 2) kulans – at least 14; 3) 1.5 km; 4) One. Gender marker: GEN0	1.1. Increasing human resources and strengthening the material and technical base of the Ile-Balkhash State Nature Reserve, working with the local community								
	1.1.1. Development and implementation of a comprehensive program for monitoring biodiversity and habitat (scientific, field equipment, office equipment, technical facilities, research for the Ile-Balkhash NR)								
	1.1.2. Development of the general plan, design and estimate documentation of the administrative building, production base, Visit Center and a fire observation tower of the Ile-Balkhash (continuation of work)	X	X	X	X	UNDP	Gov. of RK	72100 - Contractual services - Companies	7 357
	1.1.3. Development of design project document standard cordon design (continuation of work)								
	1.2. Creating conditions for restoring and improving the tiger's food potential with the involvement of women researchers								
	1.2.1. Introduction of Bukhara deer and kulan population in the project area to provide a permanent food base		X	X	X	UNDP	Gov. of RK	72100 - Contractual services - Companies	21 319
	1.3. Creation of a sustainable basis for the restoration of floodplain forests of the Balkhash region								
	1.3.1. Development of measures to improve the hydrological regime of the distributary of the Ili River delta, to preserve and restore floodplain riparian forests as a potential habitat of the Turanian tiger and fish resources (continuation of work)	X	X	X	X	UNDP	Gov. of RK	71600 - Travel	1 000

DocuSign Envelope ID: 1506F7E0-3E0A-47AF-84B0-2CB94C9EEA1C

Outcome 2: Assessment of the state of the objects of natural, historical and cultural heritage of the Ulytau mountain range and the development of measures to improve their condition, protection and use for scientific, cultural and recreational purposes Indicators: 1) The number of trained specialists of environmental institutions on the sustainable operation of PAs and monitoring;	1.3.2. Strengthening the prevention of measures to prevent forest fires and illegal logging. Construction and installation of observation fire towers	X	X	X	X	UNDP	Gov. of RK	72100 - Contractual services - Companies	50 629
	1.3.3. Strengthening forest protection and reforestation activities by supporting existing and creating new forest nurseries	X	X	X	X	UNDP	Gov. of RK	72100 - Contractual services - Companies	4 861
	Monitoring of results, reporting, meetings with partners, acceptance of works, goods	X	X	X	X	UNDP	Gov. of RK	72400 - ICT	2 000
		X	X	X	X	UNDP	Gov. of RK	71400 - NP5A	14 848
		X	X	X	X	UNDP	Gov. of RK	71600 - Travel	3 000
	Total for activities of Outcome 1:								105 014
	GMS:								
	Total for activities of Outcome 1 with GMS:								30 761
	2.1. Creation of the basis for the organization of protected areas within the planned territory								
Outcome 2: Assessment of the state of the objects of natural, historical and cultural heritage of the Ulytau mountain range and the development of measures to improve their condition, protection and use for scientific, cultural and recreational purposes Indicators: 1) The number of trained specialists of environmental institutions on the sustainable operation of PAs and monitoring;	2.1.1. Preparation of documents for the development of the PA system in the Ulytau district	X	X	X	X	UNDP	Gov. of RK	72100 - Contractual services - Companies	20 000
	2.1.3. Capacity building of specialists of environmental institutions on the sustainable operation of protected areas (trainings, workshops), experience exchange between protected areas (off-site seminar).	X	X			UNDP	Gov. of RK	71600 - Travel	5 660
	2.1.4. Capacity building and material and technical base of existing and planned protected areas.		X	X		UNDP	Gov. of RK	72100 - Contractual services - Companies	5 660
	2.2. Development of tourism in Ulytau district								

DocuSign Envelope ID: 1506F7E0-3E0A-47AF-84BC-2CB94C9EEA1C

2) Number of local residents that participated in business trainings on the possibilities of developing alternative activities including tourism development taking into account a gender approach. Targets: 1) No less than 7; 2) No less than 5. Gender marker: GEN1	2.2.1. Territorial planning, development of tourist routes, determination of load norms, marketing analysis, development of tour packages, organization of an information tour.	X	X	X	X	X	UNDP	Gov. of RK	72100 - Contractual services - Companies	10 941
	2.2.2. Organization of tourist routes	X	X	X	X	X	UNDP	Gov. of RK	72100 - Contractual services - Companies	35 707
	2.3. Mobilization of the local community									
	2.3.1. Development of a strategy, round tables on mobilization of the local community and employment of the population, taking into account the gender approach (participation of at least 40% women).	X	X	X	X	X	UNDP	Gov. of RK	72100 - Contractual services - Companies	6 980
	2.3.2. Business trainings for the local community on tourism development taking into account the gender approach (participation of at least 40% women).	X	X	X	X	X	UNDP	Gov. of RK	71600 - Travel	3 773
	Monitoring of results, reporting, meetings with partners, acceptance of works, goods	X	X	X	X	X	UNDP	Gov. of RK	71400 - ICT	2 000
	Total for activities of Outcome 2:								71400 - NPSA	14 848
	GMS:						UNDP	Gov. of RK	75100 -GMS	8 446
	Total for activities of Outcome 2 with GMS:									114 015
	3.1. Capacity building of the local population in the field of sustainable development and alternative activities, taking into account the gender approach (participation of at least 40% women).		X	X			UNDP	Gov. of RK	72100 - Contractual services - Companies	4 716
Outcome 3: Inform and work with local communities to educate and engage people in biodiversity conservation Indicators: 1) Number of publications, articles, brochures, interviews on informing	3.2. Informing the public and involving local communities in the management of protected areas through the activation or creation of Coordination Councils.	X	X	X	X	X	UNDP	Gov. of RK	72100 - Contractual services - Companies	6 942

Annex IV: Assets List.

List of Tangible Assets
Transferred to the Balance Sheet of the Project Beneficiaries

No.	Item Description	Quantity	Date of Transfer (Year)	Recipient, Beneficiary	Project
1	FAW JK6 onboard vehicle, model CA3250	1	2025	Ile-Balkhash State Reserve (GPR "Ile-Balkhash")	Nature "Ile-Balkhash"
2	Kazboat-42PO fire boat комплекted with firefighting equipment and YAMAHA E75 BMHDL 2-stroke outboard motor	1	2025	Ile-Balkhash State Reserve (GPR "Ile-Balkhash")	Nature "Ile-Balkhash"
3	HP EliteBook 840 G11 laptop	3	2025	Ile-Balkhash State Reserve (GPR "Ile-Balkhash")	Nature "Ile-Balkhash"
4	Energy-saving and energy-efficient panels (including equipment) to ensure operation of the Kurtinsky Forest Nursery, capacity 6 kW	1	2025	KSU "Kurtinsky Forestry"	
5	FAW JK6 onboard vehicle, model CA3250	1	2025	State National Nature Park "Ulytau" (GNPP "Ulytau")	
6	Oukitel G1 smartphones	20	2025	State National Nature Park "Ulytau" (GNPP "Ulytau")	
7	Smartphone cases	20	2025	State National Nature Park "Ulytau" (GNPP "Ulytau")	
8	Car chargers for smartphones	20	2025	State National Nature Park "Ulytau" (GNPP "Ulytau")	
9	Mobile аккумуляторы (power banks)	20	2025	State National Nature Park "Ulytau" (GNPP "Ulytau")	
10	HP EliteBook 840 G11 laptop	3	2025	State National Nature Park "Ulytau" (GNPP "Ulytau")	
11	HP LaserJet Pro multifunction printer (MFP)	1	2025	Committee of Forestry and Wildlife of the Ministry of Ecology and Natural Resources of the Republic of Kazakhstan	

Annex V: Knowledge Generation

Within the framework of the Project, a systematic approach to knowledge generation, integration, and transfer is ensured, aimed at fostering environmentally responsible mindsets and promoting sustainable natural resource management practices. Targeted training programmes and capacity-building activities are delivered to staff of protected areas, state forestry and wildlife protection institutions, local communities, and school students in two districts, with a focus on the introduction of alternative livelihood options, the development of sustainable tourism, and enhanced ecosystem management effectiveness.

The Project supports the documentation and application of traditional knowledge of local communities, particularly in the Ulytau region, and its integration with contemporary scientific approaches. Experience-sharing is facilitated with specialists from adjacent hunting enterprises, and the Project draws upon the accumulated national and international expertise of UNDP and WWF, engaging national and international experts in the development of methodological and information materials.

In addition, practical management tools are developed and disseminated, including territorial zoning schemes for tourism, methodologies for assessing tourism carrying capacity, and guidance materials on tested models of alternative income-generating activities. A gender-responsive approach is systematically applied across all learning and capacity-development processes to ensure equitable access to knowledge and to contribute to the economic empowerment of women.

Signed by:

8DF83D49EF3649F...

Meruyert Sarsembayeva
Biodiversity Portfolio Coordinator