

PROJECT BRIEF

1. IDENTIFIERS

PROJECT NUMBER	Number will be assigned later
PROJECT TITLE	Regional: China, Iran, Kazakhstan & Russian Federation – Development of a Wetland Site and Flyway Network for Conservation of the Siberian Crane and Other Migratory Waterbirds in Asia
DURATION	6 years, in two 3-year phases
IMPLEMENTING AGENCY	United Nations Environment Programme
EXECUTING AGENCIES	State Forestry Administration (People’s Republic of China), Department of Environment (Islamic Republic of Iran), Ministry of Natural Resources & Environmental Protection (Republic of Kazakhstan), Ministry of Natural Resources (Russian Federation), and the International Crane Foundation in consultation with the Secretariat of the Convention on Migratory Species of Wild Animals
REQUESTING COUNTRIES	China, Islamic Republic of Iran, Kazakhstan & Russian Federation
ELIGIBILITY	All four countries are eligible under paragraph 9b of the Instrument for the Restructured GEF and have ratified the CBD
GEF FOCAL AREA	Biodiversity
GEF PROGRAMMING FRAMEWORK	Operational Programme #2: Coastal, Marine and Freshwater Ecosystems

2. SUMMARY

The main outcome will be the sustained ecological integrity of a network of globally important wetlands in Asia and the migratory waterbirds that depend on them. This outcome will be accomplished through components at wetland site, national and regional levels. Site-level outputs address the management of globally significant flyway wetlands through legal protection, management plans, stakeholder participation, capacity building, public awareness programmes and alternative livelihood projects. These activities are supported by national measures to strengthen legislation, policies and plans; biodiversity input to regional planning; monitoring; capacity building for international cooperation; training; and education and public awareness programmes. The regional component focuses on the development of wetland site networks using the Siberian Crane as a “flagship species” for wetland and migratory waterbird conservation, based on the qualities that lend it both popular appeal and cultural importance in the regions where it occurs. The project will be implemented using a phased approach in order to focus on priorities, rationalize execution and learn from experience during implementation.

3. COSTS AND FINANCING (MILLION US\$)

GEF:	-Project Phase 1	: US\$	4.4
	-Project Phase 2	: US\$	5.6
	- PDF	: US\$	0.350
Subtotal GEF		: US\$	10.350
Co-financing:			
	- Project		
	- IA (ICF)	: US\$	0.740
	- (cash	\$0.122)	
	- (in kind	\$0.618)	
	- CMS	:	0.156
	- (cash	\$0.120)	
	- (in kind	\$0.036)	
	- Government (in kind)		
	- China		2.025
	- Iran		1.410
	- Kazakhstan		2.533
	- Russian Federation		1.363
	<i>Subtotal</i>	:	<i>7.331</i>
	- Government (cash)		
	- China		3.913
	- Iran		0
	- Kazakhstan		0
	- Russian Federation		0
	<i>Subtotal</i>	:	<i>3.913</i>
	- Private (in kind / cash):		0.765
	- PDF		
	- IA (ICF) (cash)	:	0.041
	- CMS (in kind)	:	0.015
	- Government (in kind)		
	- China		0.022
	- Iran		0.012
	- Kazakhstan		0.010
	- Russian Federation		0.018
	<i>Subtotal</i>	:	<i>0.062</i>
	- Private (cash)	:	0.100
Subtotal Co-financing		: US\$	13.334.37
Total Project Cost		: US\$	23.684.37

4. ASSOCIATED FINANCING:

5. OPERATIONAL FOCAL POINT ENDORSEMENT

ZHENG WENCAI, DIRECTOR
IFI DIVISION I, INTERNATIONAL DEPARTMENT
MINISTRY OF FINANCE, CHINA,
SEPTEMBER 29, 2001

PIROOZ HOSSEINI, AMBASSADOR,
PERMANENT MISSION OF THE ISLAMIC REPUBLIC OF IRAN TO THE UN AND
OTHER INTERNATIONAL ORGANIZATIONS,
SEPTEMBER 25, 2001

VICE-MINISTER MURAT MUSSATAYEV,
MINISTRY OF NATURAL RESOURCES AND ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION OF THE
REPUBLIC OF KAZAKHSTAN,
SEPTEMBER 18, 2001

M. AMIRKHANOV, DIRECTOR
DEPARTMENT OF ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION, RUSSIAN FEDERATION,
FEDERATION, OCTOBER 1, 2001

6. IA CONTACT

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LIST OF ACRONYMS & ABBREVIATIONS

ADB	Asian Development Bank
AEWA	Agreement on the Conservation of African – Eurasian Migratory Waterbirds
AP MWCS	Asia Pacific Migratory Waterbirds Conservation Strategy
ARRINP	All Russia Research Institute for Nature Protection
BLI	BirdLife International
CAIF	Central Asian-Indian Flyway project (Wetlands International)
CAFF	Programme on Conservation of Arctic Flora and Fauna
CBD	Convention on Biological Diversity
CEP	Caspian Environment Programme
CIS	Commonwealth of Independent States
CMS	Convention on the Conservation of Migratory Species of Wild Animals
CPAN	Circumpolar Protected Areas Network
CWG	Crane Working Group (under the AP MWCS)
DoE	Department of Environment of the Islamic Republic of Iran
GEF	Global Environment Facility
IA	Implementing Agency
ICF	International Crane Foundation
IUCN	World Conservation Union
MAB	Man and the Biosphere Programme (UNESCO)
MNR	Ministry of Natural Resources of the Russian Federation
MNREP	Ministry of Natural Resources & Environmental Protection, Republic of Kazakhstan
MoU	Memorandum of Understanding
NPAG	National Project Advisory Group
NPCU	National Project Coordination Unit
NEA	National Executing Agency
NEACSN	North East Asia Crane Site Network
NGO	Non Governmental Organization
NNR	National Nature Reserve
PA(S)	Protected Area (System)
PAG	Project Advisory Group
PDF B	Project Development Facility, Block B (GEF project development grant)
PSC	Project Steering Committee
RCU	Regional Coordination Unit
SFA	State Forestry Administration of the People's Republic of China
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
UNEP	United Nations Environment Programme
UNESCO	United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization
WB	World Bank
WI AEME	Wetlands International – Africa, Europe, Middle East
WI AP	Wetlands International – Asia Pacific
WWF	World Wide Fund for Nature

PROJECT DESCRIPTION

BACKGROUND AND CONTEXT – BASELINE COURSE OF ACTION

Scope of the Project

1. The project will focus on a network of globally significant wetland ecosystems in Asia (50% of which are designated Ramsar sites, and all of which are national conservation priorities) that serve as critical habitat for a wide range of migratory waterbirds (of which 32 species are of global significance) including the Critically Endangered Siberian Crane *Grus leucogeranus*. These flyway site networks sustain millions of migratory waterbirds along their migration routes, which span the Asian continent between northern breeding grounds and southern wintering areas (see the *Asia Pacific Migratory Waterbird Conservation Strategy 2001-2005* for further information). These wetlands are also of considerable socio-economic and cultural importance, supporting the livelihoods of local communities, as well as contributing to regional and national economic development in many cases.
2. The Siberian Crane represents a “flagship species” for wetland conservation, in the same way that other charismatic species have been used to attract public attention on conservation issues – for instance, the Giant Panda (WWF logo), the Tiger (for forest conservation), gorillas and whales. ICF has championed this approach successfully over many years in North America (Whooping Crane *Grus americana* recovery programme), Vietnam and Cambodia (where Sarus Crane *Grus antigone sharpii* conservation measures have led to the protection of wetlands in the Mekong Delta at Tram Chim and other sites) and other countries in Asia and Africa. The Siberian Crane is a charismatic bird, with dramatic courtship and territorial displays, and acts as an international ambassador, traversing long, difficult migration routes through diverse countries. It is revered as a symbol in many cultures of long life, good marriage and as a spirit guide. It is globally endangered. These qualities, and its large size and beauty, make it an excellent flagship species to focus peoples’ attention on the conservation of its main habitat requirement – large open wetlands.
3. Over the past 25 years, the International Crane Foundation has been working with a network of experts in the project countries to discover basic information about the Siberian Crane, including the location of its breeding grounds, the migration routes it uses, and the gauntlet of threats it encounters. This research has resulted in a good understanding of the life history of the species, which is briefly summarized here (for further information, please refer to Sauey (1985), Meine & Archibald (1996) and other references in Annex M.). The Siberian Crane is the most specialized of the cranes, utilizing shallow wetland habitats at all stages of its migration cycle. It is Critically Endangered (BirdLife International, 2001) with a world population of less than 3000 individuals, the vast majority of which belong to the Eastern population. The Western population has numbered 7-11 birds over the last decade, while the Central population has declined dramatically from perhaps 200 birds in 1965 to a single pair in 2001. The Eastern population breeds in north-eastern Siberia and winters some 3100 miles to the south at Poyang Lake Basin in Central China; the Western and Central populations breed in north-western Siberia in the Ob River basin (see Figures 1 – 3 in Annex B2). The Western flock winters in the south Caspian lowlands of Iran, while the central flock winters in northern India near Bharatpur, a journey of 3,700 miles. At the

staging areas and wintering grounds, the cranes feed on the tubers of wetland plants such as *Vallisneria spiralis*. On the breeding grounds their diet is more varied, including invertebrates, cranberries, frogs, mollusks and fish. Typically the Siberian Cranes lay 2 eggs in a large nest in an open bog area, of which only one chick will typically survive. Cranes typically reach sexual maturity around 3-4 years of age, and non-breeding birds may over-summer in areas away from the main breeding grounds. The project intervention strategy reflects the life history of the Siberian Crane, in that the selection of project sites covers the main breeding, wintering and staging areas for both Western and Eastern populations. Those sites that are of greatest importance for the species (for instance, the Eastern population's main breeding grounds in Kytalyk and main wintering site at Lake Poyang) and/or are under most immediate threat (staging areas at Zhalong and Xianghai in China, and the Western population's main wintering site at Fereydoon Kenar in Iran, staging area at Naurzum and Zharsor-Urkash in Kazakhstan, and breeding grounds in Konda-Alymka Rivers Basin Wetlands and Kunovat River Basin) are given priority in Phase 1 of the project. Targeted research designed to fill gaps in our knowledge of migration routes and identify further priority sites will also be given priority in Phase 1.

4. ICF efforts for the conservation and recovery of this critically endangered species gained momentum in recent years through the CMS *Memorandum of Understanding Concerning Conservation Measures for the Siberian Crane*, which all 4 participating countries have signed*. These measures have included substantial investment in captive breeding and release programmes, which are ongoing in parallel with this project. These species conservation efforts provide the possibility to undertake reintroduction programmes where population levels have declined to unviable levels, in combination with habitat conservation and other measures.

*Note – the Russian Federation must re-sign this agreement due to changes in Ministry of Natural Resources structure and personnel.

5. This project represents the next stage in this prolonged conservation effort, focusing specifically on the conservation of the international network of wetlands upon which this species depends, together with a wide range of other wetland biodiversity. The results of this project will provide a basis for the expansion of the wetland site networks and wider application of the approaches that have been developed in each participating country.
6. The project area covers the flyways used by populations of the Siberian Crane in Western / Central Asia and in East Asia, targeting key wetland sites located in China, Iran, Kazakhstan and Russia (see Figures 1 – 3 in Annex B2; see Table 1, list of key sites, in Annex G). It does not cover the Central Asian-Indian Flyway of the Siberian Crane outside Russia and Kazakhstan where the species is virtually extinct, owing to the intractable nature of the threats to the few remaining birds.

Global Biodiversity Importance

7. The wetlands that have been identified as sites for project intervention all meet the Ramsar Convention's criteria for Wetlands of International Importance and many have existing international designations (see Table 1 and datasheets in Annex G). The flyways used by the Siberian Cranes are shared with many other species of migratory waterbirds, including at least 32 globally threatened waterbird species (see Annex G), and thus have significance far beyond

conservation of the Siberian Crane alone. For example, Zhalong Nature Reserve, one of China's project sites, supports at least 11 other globally threatened bird species, including the largest breeding population of Red-crowned Cranes in the world; Poyang Lake, another Chinese project site, supports at least 14 species of globally threatened birds, including over half the world population of the White-naped Crane through the winter.

Western Asian Flyway Importance for Migratory Waterbirds

8. The route taken by the Siberian Cranes from their breeding grounds in NW Siberia through Central Asian Staging Areas to wintering grounds in the South Caspian lowlands is shared in part or in whole by many other migratory waterbirds, within the broader "Western Siberian – Kazakhstan – Caspian Flyway described by Flint & Krivenko (1990). They define this flyway as occupying the Western Siberian Plain and Western Taimyr, Kazakhstan and the regions of Central Asia and the area of the Caspian Sea and Sea of Azov. They estimate the total waterfowl number as varying between 27 and 37 million. The wetlands of the lower Ob Basin have long been recognized as an important waterfowl breeding area for Europe and Central Asia (whose populations focus on major deltas such as the Volga, Ural and Terek to moult and stage on their migratory journeys southwards to the mild and wet climate of the South Caspian). The number of waterfowl wintering in the north Caspian is determined by the weather conditions, with a 1982 maximum January count of 755,800 (Krivonosov & Rusanov, 1990). The total number of ducks moulting in the Volga Delta was estimated at 400,000 in the early 1980s, and over 1.5 million migratory waterfowl have been counted there in autumn (Finlayson *et al.* 1993). The South Caspian lowlands of Iran support well over one million wintering waterfowl, with perhaps the same number again occurring on passage (Evans 1994).
9. This route is shared in part by Common and Demoiselle Cranes, whose passage concentrations in the wetlands of N Kazakhstan are spectacular, accompanied by endangered goose species such as the Lesser White-front and Red-breasted Goose.

Western Asian Flyway Importance for Wetland Conservation

10. Details of the international importance of each project site is given in Annex G. The breeding and staging areas in Western Siberia are of recognized importance for wetland conservation, reflected in their designation as Ramsar Sites or inclusion in the shadow list of Ramsar Sites (see Krivenko 1999 & 2000). The staging areas in Kazakhstan are also of considerable conservation importance, as key wetlands in an arid zone. Waterfowl concentrate on to such areas during migration, and a complex of sites is required to provide for varying hydrological conditions between years. Naurzum was designated as a Ramsar site when Kazakhstan was part of the USSR, and the Convention's obligations remain in force through the Alma Ata Declaration.
11. The wetlands of the South Caspian Lowlands in Iran are of recognized international importance – two of the project sites are Ramsar Sites and designation of the third is under preparation.

East Asian Flyway Importance for Migratory Waterbirds

12. Waterfowl breeding in NE Siberia may fall within two overlapping flyways according to Flint and Krivenko (1990), leading from Arctic breeding grounds to the Pacific coast of America (Northeast Siberian flyway) or from Arctic and Subarctic breeding grounds southwards to SE Asia (Eastern Siberian flyway). A third flyway lies to the east of the last-mentioned, leading from the Far East of Siberian to the Pacific. This project focuses on the Eastern Siberian flyway, with a total waterfowl population of 14-17 million. Critical sites such as Poyang Lake Basin may hold in excess of 100,000 waterbirds.
13. This flyway contains a significant number of waterbirds that are endangered or suffering significant population declines (see Annex G), and there is widespread concern over the threats to migratory waterbirds in the staging and wintering areas along this flyway (see APMWCC 2001).

East Asian Flyway Importance for Wetland Conservation

14. Details of the international importance of each project site is given in Annex G. The main breeding site in Yakutia – Kytalyk Resource Reservation is being considered for submission for World Heritage Site status, a reflection of its international importance for nature conservation. All five project sites in China are National Nature Reserves and three are currently Ramsar Sites. All five sites provide important natural resources for local human populations, including fish, reeds for paper and thatching, grazing land and fodder.

Threats to Global Biodiversity

15. Due to the destruction and disturbance of key wetlands throughout Asia, numerous migratory waterbirds are in serious decline (see *Asia-Pacific Migratory Waterbird Conservation Strategy 2001-2005*). The decline of wetland ecosystem integrity and waterbird species is primarily due to the impact of human activities, including the killing and disturbance of waterbirds. The situation is extremely precarious for the Siberian Crane, necessitating urgent conservation measures: the bird itself, although protected throughout its range, relies on a series of shallow wetlands along its flyways that are under serious pressure from a range of human activities (see below). Other globally threatened, rare and economically important species also depend on the project sites. Attrition of wetland habitat is a major phenomenon throughout Asia. Threats at the local level include over-utilization and disturbance from hunting, fishing, trapping, logging, and/or grazing; reclamation for agriculture; local overuse or diversion of water; oil and gas field development; dams and other forms of river regulation; and degradation of watersheds. A description of the threats and root causes specific to individual sites is presented in Annex D. It should be noted that the types and levels of threat are highly site-specific, and that the risks posed by hunting are a more serious threat to the western population of Siberian Cranes than to the eastern population.

Causes of Threats

16. The causes of many of these threats include increasing human pressure on natural resources; exploitation of wetlands by rural communities; lack of coordination among sectoral agencies; lack of capacity and financial resources for protected area management and species protection; poor levels of environmental awareness and understanding; weak legislation or enforcement related to nature protection; and a lack of integration of conservation concerns into development

planning. Also related to human impacts are the long-term implications of climate change on wetlands in the region. At the international level, capacity is lacking for international coordination of conservation efforts; existing international cooperation is relatively low; and limited information is available about migration routes and sites for many waterbird species. This problem includes a lack of systematically collected information on threats to wetlands in Asia. Background on the national socio-economic context is given in Annex D.

GEF Programming Context

17. All four participating countries have ratified the Convention on Biological Diversity. This project is designed to support the objectives of the CBD: the conservation of biological diversity, the sustainable use of its components, and the equitable sharing of the benefits of resource utilization. The project also adheres to the principles of the Joint Work Plan (1998) between the CBD and the Ramsar Convention, and addresses many of the objectives of the Ramsar Convention Work Plan 2000-2002.
18. The project is eligible for GEF assistance under Operational Program #2 Coastal, Marine and Freshwater Systems. The project directly addresses OP #2 objective of *the conservation and sustainable use of the biological resources in freshwater ecosystems*, and will generate substantial global benefits. The project involves the integrated management of freshwater wetland ecosystems, and will strengthen networks of protected areas at both national and international levels. The global significance of the wetland sites selected under this project and their attendant biodiversity is detailed in the datasheets in Annex G. All four participating countries are eligible for GEF assistance (see letters of endorsement from GEF National Focal Points in Annex N).
19. The project fully complies with COP Decision V/6 of the Convention on Biological Diversity, in that it adopts the ecosystem approach interlinked with a single-species conservation programme. The multi-level approach to flyway conservation is also fully covered by Decision V/6.
20. In describing the ecosystem approach, Decision V/6 notes that the ecosystem approach should be integrated with other approaches including single-species conservation to deal with complex situations as follows:
“5. The ecosystem approach does not preclude other management and conservation approaches, such as biosphere reserves, protected areas, and single-species conservation programmes, as well as other approaches carried out under existing national policy and legislative frameworks, but could, rather, integrate all these approaches and other methodologies to deal with complex situations. There is no single way to implement the ecosystem approach, as it depends on local, provincial, national, regional or global conditions. Indeed, there are many ways in which ecosystem approaches may be used as the framework for delivering the objectives of the Convention in practice.”
21. Finally, the additional guidance provided to GEF by Decision V/13 notes that the application of single species conservation programmes may be required:
“The Conference of the Parties... 2. Decides to provide the following additional guidance to

the Global Environment Facility in the provision of financial resources, in conformity with decisions I/1, II/6, III/5 and IV/13 of the Conference of the Parties... The Global Environment Facility...should provide support: (a) *For projects utilizing the ecosystem approach, without prejudice to differing national needs and priorities which may require the application of approaches such as single-species conservation programmes, in accordance with decision V/6.*"

UNEP Programming Context

22. UNEP's role in the GEF is detailed in the *Action Plan on Complementarity Between the Activities Undertaken by UNEP under the GEF and its Programme of Work (1999)*. This project addresses the *Action Plan* strategic objective: *promoting multi-country cooperation directed to achieving global environmental benefits* by establishing international cooperation mechanisms and building capacity for the conservation of a network of globally important wetlands in Asia that are required for the survival of migratory waterbirds including the globally endangered Siberian Crane. The project also links to the strategic objective: *relating national and regional priorities to global environmental objectives* by building capacity for flyway conservation at national and regional levels and by directing resources towards project activities that will achieve global benefits (such as conservation of internationally important wetlands and threatened waterbird species).

International Strategic and Policy Context

23. All four countries are signatories to CBD, CITES, World Heritage Convention and the Ramsar Convention* - under which China has listed 7, Iran 21 and Russia 35 sites. Further Ramsar site nominations will be proposed as a result of this project. Membership of CMS is under discussion in all 4 countries, and this project aims to assist these states to complete the accession process. There are also 11 bilateral agreements on the conservation of migratory birds in the region. Member states of the CIS cooperate on conservation matters through the CIS Environment Ministers meetings. The Arctic Council and Programme for the Conservation of Arctic Flora and Fauna also contribute to the conservation of Arctic-breeding migratory waterfowl and wetlands, including the Siberian Crane.

**Note: Kazakhstan is in process of ratifying this convention, and has undertaken, in the Alma-Ata Declaration of 21 December 1991, to guarantee "conformity with their legislative procedures, the fulfillment of international obligations, stemming from the agreements signed by the former USSR".*

24. The Project is nested within a developing framework of regional waterbird flyway conservation networks and programmes that are fully described in Annex H.

National Wetlands Policies, Strategies, Plans & Protected Area Systems

25. All four participating countries have completed national biodiversity strategy and action plans (NBSAPs) that highlight the importance of the conservation of wetlands and migratory waterbirds. These plans are integrated into national policies and legislation to varying degrees. In addition, each country has adopted policies, strategies and plans for the conservation and sustainable use of wetlands, further details of which are given in the introduction to Annex D and in Annex H.

26. In all four participating countries, the existing Protected Areas Systems have some specific weaknesses in terms of representation of globally significant wetlands, and/or in the capacity to manage the sites within the systems. While this project will not seek to address the strengthening of these national PAS as a whole, it will contribute towards the representation of wetlands in these systems as well as the capacity for management of specific globally significant wetlands. Further information on national PA systems is given in Annex D.

Existing Capacity for Flyway Network Conservation

27. Current international capacity for flyway conservation consists of the coordinating body and officers of the APMWCS, the North East Asian Crane Site Network (NEACSN) under the APMWCS with 18 sites in 6 countries coordinated by a Crane Working Group and Flyway Officer, developing programmes for the AEWA and CAIF, and other initiatives coordinated by international NGOs in partnership with global conventions and national governments. Extensive networks of experts and amateur ornithologists participate in the International Waterbird Census and the wetland and waterbird specialist groups coordinated by WI and IUCN (over 11,000 observers in 47 countries participated in the IWC in 1995-6). In much of Western and Central Asia, however, there is a dearth of experts available, indicating the need for awareness raising, training and network development.
28. At the national level, there are shortages of financial resources and trained staff to undertake waterbird and wetland monitoring and data management, and to coordinate flyway network conservation. Important flyway wetlands are inadequately represented in PA systems, and existing PAS require stronger management capacity to address threats.

Linkage with other Wetlands Projects (see Annex H for further details)

29. In addition to ongoing activities of the NEAs and related agencies in the fields of PA management and species conservation, there is also a wide range of projects concerning wetland conservation. These include: the UNDP/GEF PDF B Project on Conservation of Iranian Wetlands; UNDP/GEF Project on Kazakhstan Wetlands Conservation; UNDP/GEF China Wetlands Conservation Project; WB/GEF Nature Reserve Management Project (including Poyang Lake NNR); UNDP/GEF PDF B project on Conservation of Wetland Biodiversity in the Lower Volga region; two GEF projects in the Daurian Steppe Region in Russia and Mongolia; WWF China Living Yangtze Programme; ADB/GEF Songhua River, Flood, Wetland and Biodiversity Management Project; and WWF projects for the conservation of the Lesser White-fronted Goose in Kazakhstan and conservation of Naurzum wetlands. In addition, a range of wetland conservation activities are included under the *Working Program on Nature Management and Environmental Cooperation 2001-2003 between the Russian Federation and the Netherlands*, based on an MoU signed in 1993 and linked to WI-Russia Programme.
30. The current project has been designed in close coordination with these other programmes, and collaboration will be further developed during the full project. For example, project sites in Iran will complement the few sites included in the project Conservation of Iranian Wetlands, and benefit from national level activities of the latter programme. In China, the project will build on the increased capacity developed by the earlier GEF project within

Poyang Lake NNR (just 4% of the lake basin), to extend conservation efforts to wetlands and waterbirds throughout the basin. Within the Songhua River Basin, this project's site level water management activities will be supported by the basin-wide approach of the ADB/GEF project.

31. While Azerbaijan is not a full participant in this project, the relevant authorities have agreed to participate in the Western Flyway Coordination Group under this project. This will permit Azerbaijan's participation in flyway-level conservation activities and provide a means of disseminating information. In addition, a suite of activities has been identified for Azerbaijan within the Conservation Plan 2001-2003 under the CMS MoU on the Siberian Crane. ICF is locating funds to support these activities.
32. This project does not aim to establish full regional waterbird site networks for Western/Central Asia and Eastern Asia. This need is being addressed by WI through the *Asia Pacific Migratory Waterbirds Conservation Strategy 2001-2005*, the *Central Asian-Indian Flyway* project, and the *Agreement on the Conservation of African – Eurasian Migratory Waterbirds*. This project will contribute to a larger programme of action within the combined framework of these initiatives. By being more focused in terms of sites, species and experts, it will have a more immediate impact. See Annex H for project linkages. The Project Advisory Group (see Annex E) provides a formalized mechanism for inter-project coordination. Efforts will be made to maximize the demonstration value of activities under these projects. This project will also implement components of the Conservation Plan under the CMS MoU on the Siberian Crane, strengthen capacity for coordination of the NEACSN activities in China and Siberia, and contribute to the International Waterbird Census coordinated by WI.
33. The project avoids duplication of activities with national projects, through selection of sites that are additional and complementary to those of other projects (thus strengthening the overall network of sites), by focusing on specific national activities that are not addressed by them and by establishing cooperative activities in order to maximize synergies between projects.

Consequences of Continuing Baseline Conditions

34. The current limited level of coordinated international action for the conservation of wetlands and migratory waterbirds and lack of systematic information available on these resources is allowing the progressive loss of these resources to continue. The weakness of current mechanisms for inter-sectoral cooperation and the lack of resources for protected area management will remain as major barriers for integrated management of wetland resources. The relative dearth of private and other donors in this region for wetland and waterbird conservation, and the dependence on a handful of donor countries for international assistance in this field (e.g., Australia, Japan, Netherlands) are insufficient to support adequate conservation effort, underlining the crucial role that GEF can play. Without increased capacity for cooperative action and additional resources for protected area management, the network of internationally important wetland sites addressed by this project will suffer further degradation and habitat loss. The further loss of globally significant wetland biodiversity will

therefore ensue. Consequently, it is also likely that populations of threatened migratory waterbird species, including the Siberian Crane, will continue to decline.

RATIONALE AND OBJECTIVES (GEF ALTERNATIVE STRATEGY)

35. The governments of China, Iran, Kazakhstan and Russia recognize the importance of their countries' wetland biodiversity and have made commitments under international conventions and agreements to conserve wetlands of international importance and threatened waterbird species. Additional technical and financial assistance, however, is required to strengthen capacity in each of these countries in order to achieve flyway conservation goals, in view of the difficulties being experienced during their current social and economic transitions.
36. In addition, there is a significant gap in terms of coordinated international action to conserve wetlands and waterbirds in Asia. While this is being partially addressed by a number of international NGOs and international programmes, these activities are inadequate to address the major and widespread attrition of wetland resources and decline in waterbird populations across the region. These losses are occurring as a result of a wide range of factors. The causes of many of these threats involve increasing population pressure on natural resources at some sites; lack of coordination between sectoral agencies; lack of capacity and financial resources for protected area management and species protection; poor levels of environmental awareness and understanding; weak legislation or enforcement in relation to nature protection; and a lack of integration of conservation concerns into development planning. Also related to human impacts are the wider long-term implications of climate change on wetlands in the region. At the international level, there is a serious lack of capacity for international coordination of conservation efforts, relatively low levels of existing international cooperation, and limited information about migration routes and sites for many waterbird species. The threats and causes operating on the project sites are detailed in Annex D.
37. The GEF supported alternative is designed to improve the ecological integrity of a network of globally important wetlands that are of critical importance for migratory waterbirds and other wetland biodiversity, using the globally threatened Siberian Crane as a flagship for this effort. The alternative will undertake actions principally at three levels, described below. The project has been structured into two phases with top priority sites being addressed during the first phase, and sites under less immediate threat in the second phase. A mid-term evaluation will provide the opportunity to learn from experience during the first phase and to adapt plans for the second phase accordingly.

(a) Site level

38. The project will address threats to key wetlands of international importance that are of critical importance for the conservation of the Siberian Crane and other migratory waterbirds. Site interventions will involve primarily three sites in China, two sites in Iran, four sites in Kazakhstan and four sites in Russia. A range of measures will be undertaken at each site in relation to its specific situation, in order to ensure its future ecological integrity. These measures will involve a high degree of stakeholder participation, and contribute to local

community development through pilot sustainable livelihood projects where these are a priority.

(b) National level

39. The project will undertake specific actions to strengthen the national legislative, policy and planning framework for wetland and waterbird conservation, strengthen capacity for international cooperation, and undertake activities that support site conservation such as monitoring, training, education and public awareness programmes. These activities will be coordinated with other national wetlands projects and programmes and strengthen mechanisms for integrated wetland management through inter-sectoral collaboration. In China, flyway coordination within the country will be a priority.

(c) International level

40. The project will focus on building capacity for the coordination of flyway networks of wetlands along the West/Central and East Asian flyways for migratory waterbirds, led by sites of importance for the flagship species. These networks will be carefully coordinated with other flyway conservation initiatives in order to form an integrated programme, contributing significantly towards the implementation of international conventions. This component will be accompanied by applied field research in support of flyway conservation.

PROJECT COMPONENTS AND EXPECTED RESULTS

41. The proposed project aims to develop a coordinated approach towards the conservation of a chain of internationally important wetlands along two flyways used by the Critically Endangered Siberian Crane *Grus leucogeranus*. It encompasses actions at site, provincial, national and international levels in four Asian countries. In view of the inherent scale and complexity of this undertaking, an adaptive management approach is advocated under which the project has been compartmentalized into two inter-dependent phases.

42. The project is divided into three main components, reflecting different levels of intervention: site, national and regional flyway. Together these components will provide a comprehensive approach to the protection of a network of important flyway wetlands, including a substantial programme of practical site management activities.

43. Recognizing the capacity of the executing agencies to undertake this project simultaneously on several different levels, and the likelihood of practical difficulties taking place during its implementation, the project proponents support the idea of an adaptive approach towards project management. This approach will provide the opportunity to learn from the experience of implementing activities during the first three years (phase 1), and to incorporate these lessons into refining the design of the second phase. Given that the project is likely to require 6 years to accomplish all of its objectives, both phases are presented from the outset as an integrated package in this project proposal. The phased approach to project implementation also allows partitioning of the workload, which should maintain its overall feasibility in relation to the capacity of the executing agencies.

44. The implementation of the project will consist of two phases, each with a proposed duration of 3 years, but with the option of amending the second phase, depending on the outcomes of the first phase. The project will commence with inception workshops in each country that will address the detailed plans for implementation of Phase 1. The benchmarks for Phase 1 are reflected in the project and national logframes (see Annex B), subject to establishment of baseline conditions for a number of indicators at the start of the project. The implementation of Phase 1 activities will be monitored regularly, and outputs will be evaluated against the benchmarks during mid-term workshops in Year 3. These workshops will also identify the lessons to be learned from experience during the implementation of Phase 1 activities, for the consideration of project management. The Project Steering Committee will then review the results of these workshops as well as the recommendations for modifications in the design of Phase 2 activities. Benchmarks will then be established for Phase 2. Once approval has been given for the continued implementation of the project and the second tranche of funds has been disbursed, implementation of Phase 2 will commence. Contingency bridge funding will be secured to cover any unexpected lengthy delays between the two Phases.
45. Monitoring of project activities will continue during Phase 2, and the achievements of Phase 2 and of the overall project will be reviewed at project completion workshops in the final year of the project (see the timeline in Annex B for the timing of these workshops). The results of these workshops will provide input to the Final Project Evaluation Report.
46. In dividing the project into two phases, the primary considerations were:
- The relative importance of the selected project sites to the life cycle of the Siberian Crane and other migratory waterbirds.
 - The urgency required in addressing the threats to these critical wetlands and to the Siberian Crane along the length of these two migration routes.
 - The period required to accomplish specific activities and site conservation goals.
 - The logical flow of activities, leading from capacity building, training, planning, research and information collection through to implementation of management plans, pilot activities, education and public awareness programmes, dissemination of information and adoption of the project's approach into NEA procedures for other sites and species.

Other factors have also been taken into account in the scheduling of activities, such as the existence of opportunities for collaboration with other projects or programmes, and the political, administrative and socio-economic conditions prevailing in the project countries.

47. The approach of this project is to use the Siberian Crane as a flagship for wetland conservation and international cooperation, and the strategy for project implementation is inextricably linked to the life history of this species. ICF and the other agencies involved in this project have a history of collaboration that goes back more than 20 years, including research into the behaviour, ecology, and migration routes of the Siberian Crane, as well as pioneering work into creative methods for successful captive breeding and reintroduction into the wild (outside the immediate scope of this project). Detailed information has been collected over this period and collated during the PDF B phase on the nature of its breeding, staging and wintering areas, land uses at these sites and the threats that now operate on them. In view of the scarcity of ornithologists and

the remoteness of the terrain over much of the species' range, there are still facets of its life cycle that remain obscure and that are the subject of continuing research efforts. The highest priorities in terms of applied research (focusing on the identification of additional key sites and site management priorities) are included in this project.

48. Some detailed considerations for project priorities in relation to the life history of the Siberian Crane are given below. These considerations are based on a long history of research, including an in-depth study of the range, status and winter ecology of the species by Sauey (1985) and a thorough review of the species' status, distribution, ecology, threats, current conservation measures and priority conservation measures in Meine and Archibald (1996). More recent work giving the results of satellite-tracking studies for the Eastern and Western populations are currently in the process of being published (Kanai *et al.* in prep. (a); and Kanai *et al.* in prep. (b) respectively), and support the site priorities identified by this project.

- Wintering sites are used for prolonged periods and are most severely threatened due to high human population density, habitat loss, and disturbance. While the cranes can be concentrated into relatively small areas, changing hydrological conditions at Poyang Lake Basin in China often require the flocks to move to different locations during the winter or between different years. Wintering Siberian Cranes are territorial at Fereydoon Kenar in Iran and defend scarce resources – thus this small site can only support a few families. Alternate wintering sites in the Caspian Lowlands must be identified and protected. The cranes' energetic balance on departure for spring migration can impact breeding success, a factor largely determined by the quality of over-wintering habitats. Consequently, effective management of wintering sites is an important component of the overall conservation of the species.
- Siberian Cranes require migratory stopover sites to rest and replenish depleted energy reserves to complete migration and successfully breed. These sites also provide key habitats for other endangered waterbirds. Population pressure and conflicts with water and wetland use threaten the important sites on Songnen Plain in NE China.
- Summering areas for sub-adult Siberian Cranes (age 1-5 years) are unknown and must be identified, assessed, and protected.
- Siberian Cranes are highly sensitive to disturbance on their breeding grounds and pairs require large territories. The main threats at these far northern sites are disturbance from human activities including natural resource use.

Sequencing of Project Activities (Please also refer to Table B2 in Annex B that shows the distribution of project activities between the two phases.)

PHASE 1

49. Project activities during Phase 1 will address those sites that are under most immediate threat, are most critical for the life cycle and survival of the endangered Siberian Crane, and that are also most critical for a range of other globally significant species. These are as follows:

China

- Poyang Lake Basin – 95% of the total Siberian Crane population winters here. The site is under a range of threats requiring immediate and significant intervention during both phases. Poyang is the highest priority site
- Zhalong NNR – an important staging area for Siberian Cranes, and the second highest priority. The reserve has been under immediate and severe threat from diversion of water resources and immediate and significant intervention is needed during both phases to counter this and secure this wetland. During the PDF-B phase, the Chinese government committed to delivering more water to the wetland, an important precedent for China wetland conservation.
- Xianghai NNR - an important staging area for Siberian Cranes. The reserve is under immediate threat from unsustainable natural resource use and immediate and significant intervention is needed to improve management.
- Momoge NNR – Phase 1 activities will be limited to the inclusion of important staging areas for the Siberian Crane into the reserve.

Iran

- Fereydoon Kenar/Ezbaran/Sorkhe Rud Damgahs complex – this wetland is the only known wintering site for the Western population. Shooting is a threat in the vicinity of the site, requiring improved legal protection and integration of local communities into site management. Water management is also an issue.

Kazakhstan

- Naurzum Lake System – this site is a regular staging area for the Siberian Crane. Immediate action is required to annex Lake Kulagol, address threats to the water regime, and to educate hunters about this protected species.
- Zharsor-Urkash Lake – key staging area for numerous waterbirds. Urgently need legal protection, management capacity, and implementation of hunting regulations.

Russian Federation

- Kytalyk – this critical site encompasses a major portion of the breeding range of the Eastern (and therefore, world) population and increased legal protection is an urgent priority to regulate resource use and improve management.
- Konda-Alymka Rivers Basin Wetlands – breeding area for the Western population requiring immediate intervention to secure legal protection and regulate and curtail resource use.
- Kunovat River Basin Wetlands – breeding site. While not under immediate threat, limited legal protection and capacity building activities are planned for phase 1 in order to retain the support of the regional government and Sterkh Foundation.

50. In addition to selected activities at the above-mentioned sites, certain national and regional activities will be undertaken. During Phase 1, priority will be given to the following types of activities:

- Training and capacity building for the priority sites, as well as national and provincial agencies.

- Review of national legislation, policies, plans and financing mechanisms, and development and promotion of alternative options.
- Improvements to provincial planning will be linked to the phasing of activities for relevant sites.
- Applied research and data collection in support of site management, and filling of gaps in our knowledge of the flyways. This information will support phase 2 activities.
- Priority awareness activities such as education of hunters around staging and wintering areas.
- The monitoring of migratory waterbirds will be more evenly spread over both phases of the project.
- Development of flyway site networks.

51. It is important to realize that the site, national and regional level activities are required in combination in order to maximize their impact and effectiveness, a need recognized by COP Decision V/6: "... 2. Calls upon Parties, other Governments, and international organizations to apply, as appropriate, the ecosystem approach, giving consideration to the principles and guidance contained in the annex to the present decision, and to develop practical expressions of the approach for national policies and legislation and for appropriate implementation activities, with adaptation to local, national, and, as appropriate, regional conditions, in particular in the context of activities developed within the thematic areas of the Convention; 3. Invites Parties, other Governments and relevant bodies to identify case-studies and implement pilot projects, and to organize, as appropriate, regional, national and local workshops, and consultations aiming to enhance awareness, share experiences, including through the clearing-house mechanism, and strengthen regional, national and local capacities on the ecosystem approach; For this reason, it is considered crucial to move ahead with developing the flyway networks and related regional activities in parallel with the site and national level activities.

PHASE 2

52. Phase 2 will address sites important to the Siberian Crane and other globally significant species, but under a less urgent level of threat. It will also include sites for which a period greater than three years is required to accomplish conservation objectives; these sites will be included in both phases (i.e., those sites with very significant interventions, or with activities that by necessity take a long period to implement).

China

- Poyang Lake Basin – Continuation of activities from Phase 1.
- Zhalong NNR – Continuation of activities from Phase 1.
- Xianghai NNR - Continuation of activities from Phase 1.
- Momoge NNR – Low-level intervention to address threats arising from inappropriate natural resources and water resource management.
- Keerqin NNR – Activities carried out in cooperation with Xianghai NNR to address water management issues.

Iran

- Fereydoon Kenar/Ezbaran/Sorkhe Rud Damgahs complex – continuation of Phase 1 activities
- Bujagh / Sefid Rud Delta – Increase in legal protection and introduction of systematic management methods to reduce illegal incursions and improve habitat management.
- Amirkelayeh – low-level intervention to develop closer relations between the reserve and local communities.

Kazakhstan

- Naurzum Lake System – continuation of phase 1 activities
- Kulykol Lake – increase legal protection and management capacity in order to seize window of opportunity while agriculture remains at a low level.
- Tontegir-Zhanshura Lake –increase legal protection and management capacity in order to seize window of opportunity while agriculture remains at a low level.

Russian Federation

- Kytalyk – continuation of phase 1 activities – focusing on management systems and ecotourism development
- Tyumen – Kurgan Transboundary Wetlands – increase legal protection and management capacity in order to seize window of opportunity whilst agriculture remains at a low level.
- Kunovat River Basin Wetlands – continuation of phase 1 activities - establish regional biosphere reserve to jointly protect rare waterbirds and traditional lifestyle of endangered indigenous people.

53. National and Regional activities will continue in Phase 2. Priority will be given to:

- Environmental education and public awareness programmes
- Dissemination of information and results of project activities
- Confirmation of management systems to ensure the sustainability of project actions
- Continued monitoring of migratory waterbirds and completion of assessments based on monitoring data.
- Continued training and development of flyway networks

54. The above paragraphs give an indication of priorities for each of the two phases. At the end of Phase 1, the activities to be undertaken in Phase 2 will be adapted based on the information collected and experiences gained during the implementation of Phase 1. Certain activities, such as alternative livelihood pilot projects, require a long period to achieve results, and these will run through both phases, pending satisfactory evaluation at the end of the first phase.

55. Please refer to Annexes B and B1 for the project logical framework matrix, project timeline, national logframe matrices, list of project activities and related tables. These provide substantial detail in relation to the summarized descriptions given in this section. In addition, a detailed rationale for dividing the project into two equal phases is given in Table B2 of Annex B. In general, project activities during Phase 1 will address those sites under most immediate threat, most critical for the life cycle and survival of the endangered Siberian Crane, and most critical for a range of other globally significant species. Phase 2 will address sites important to the Siberian Crane and other globally significant species, but under less urgent level of threat. Sites

for which a period greater than three years is required to accomplish conservation objectives will be included in both phases.

COMPONENT 1: CONSERVATION OF GLOBALLY SIGNIFICANT WETLAND BIODIVERSITY AT THE PROJECT SITES

Output 1.1: Appropriate legal protection, clear regulations and identified enforcement responsibilities in place at selected project sites.

56. This output aims to increase the representation of wetlands that are of international importance for migratory waterbirds in the PA Systems of the participating countries. It also aims to ensure that the levels of legal protection and enforcement afforded to these wetlands are adequate to achieve site management goals. Activities under this output include: establishment and upgrading of protected areas, demarcation of site boundaries and zones, establishment of regulations, and improvement of enforcement arrangements. The national logframes and Table B1 in Annex B give details of proposed improvements to legal protection of the project sites.

Output 1.2: Participatory management plans for the conservation of selected project sites developed and implemented.

57. This output aims to ensure that systems are established or improved for the effective management of the selected project sites (see national logframes and activities in Annexes B and B1), with an emphasis on upgrading or developing practical site management plans. The project takes a strong participatory approach towards site management, and stakeholder consultation procedures are an integral part of the management planning approach, building on those undertaken during the PDF B phase. For priority sites, the site management plans will be prepared during the first phase of the project, and implementation will be undertaken, monitored and evaluated during the second phase. The information requirements for effective site management are a component of this output, including survey, monitoring and data management activities. Monitoring of progress towards management plan objectives will be accomplished through the measurement of specific parameters (to be defined in the management plans' prescriptions) and determination of whether these measurements lie within limits of acceptable change.

Output 1.3: External threats to sites reduced through off-site activities.

58. Wetlands are highly susceptible to external influences. Output 1.3 will address these external influences in areas adjacent to the wetlands and within their watersheds. An important aspect of this output will be linkage of site management concerns to regional water management policies, plans, and programmes (see also Output 2.2), of particular importance in NE China where the arid climate and dense population exert pressure on surface water resources. This output will also link coastal sites in the Caspian region to coastal zone management programmes under the CEP.

Output 1.4: Implementation of site management plans is supported by application of results of applied field studies.

59. In order to achieve sustainable results, site management must be based on adequate scientific information regarding the hydrological and ecological processes influencing the project sites, and on the impacts of human activities. For many of the project sites, limited baseline information exists. This output will seek to provide both baseline information (at sites where this is needed), and more specific information on key management issues that have been identified for particular project sites, especially where these issues are common to several sites, and/or have a wider value for other wetlands outside the immediate scope of this project. The identified field studies (see activities in Annex B1) will present a range of management options on specific subjects for consideration by protected area managers, and establish a basis for monitoring.

Output 1.5: Sustainable, alternative livelihood projects developed with local communities in and around selected project sites.

60. The threat analysis (see Annex D) reveals that a number of project sites are subject to intense levels of exploitation by people living in and around their borders, threatening the ecological integrity of these sites. Often the communities involved are relatively poor and are dependent upon the land to support their livelihoods, through farming, fishing and natural resource collection activities. Levels of education are relatively low and capacity for other work is limited. In these situations, the development of sustainable, alternative livelihood projects with local communities is of great importance, and this objective will address this need through a variety of activities. These activities will include development of pilot projects on ecotourism, sustainable agricultural practices (grazing, tree crops, etc.), aquaculture and artisanal fisheries, and reed processing (see Annexes B and B1 for details). Small loan schemes will also be tested at project sites, based on ICF project experience in China, and extension training will be offered where needed. These schemes will be evaluated in the final year of the project and options for their extension determined depending upon their success.

Output 1.6: Capacity of staff of relevant agencies strengthened to ensure effective implementation of site management plans.

61. The NEAs generally have limited budgets and staff resources for the management of protected areas, and in some cases these resources are minimal. Activities under this output will aim to strengthen the management presence at each site, based on expert recommendation and consultations with local agencies and other stakeholders during the PDF B phase. Activities will include: strengthening manpower resources in line with the requirements of management plans, upgrading site office facilities, communications and equipment in line with management needs, and training technical and managerial staff.

62. Training will aim to strengthen management capacities of the protected area agencies, and will be organized strategically, based on an assessment of training needs and long-term mechanisms for maintaining capacity. Preliminary assessment during the PDF B phase has formed the basis for the Training Strategy given in Annex L. Additional consideration of training needs during Year 1 of the project will elaborate the training requirements and approaches (see Output 2.5). The training provided to site management staff will cover

subjects such as wetland assessment, monitoring and integrated management, conservation biology, species management, community based management, conflict resolution, and visitor management. Training will also cover the sustainable utilization of wetland resources and water resource management. The project will also maximize the opportunity to build international cooperation between countries by organizing staff exchanges, study tours and international technical workshops for project staff and other personnel (see Outputs 2.5 and 3.1).

Output 1.7: Awareness of wetland biodiversity values raised among stakeholders.

63. Lack of conservation awareness among local communities and government agencies is one of the key root causes of a range of threats resulting in the loss of biodiversity at the project sites. The implementation of environmental education and public awareness activities will therefore be a priority at all project sites, in addition to wider national and regional activities. A strategic approach will be taken in developing public programmes, based upon the identification of key target groups (see site stakeholder lists), methods of delivery and sustainability of the programmes. Activities will include the establishment of wetland education and information centres at selected sites; programmes for schoolchildren, students and local communities; development of educational resource materials; and production of public awareness materials.

COMPONENT 2: NATIONAL MEASURES TO STRENGTHEN WETLAND AND MIGRATORY WATERBIRD CONSERVATION

Output 2.1: Improvements made to national and sectoral legislation, policies, plans, and financial mechanisms in support of the conservation of migratory waterbirds and wetland biodiversity.

64. Analysis of national legislation, policies, plans and financial commitments during the PDF B phase has revealed that improvements can be made to these instruments in favour of the conservation of wetlands and migratory waterbirds. While this project will not attempt to develop comprehensive national policies, strategies or plans for wetland conservation (as this need is largely being addressed by national wetland conservation projects in all four countries), this project will contribute towards the strengthening of such instruments and focus on making improvements where specific weaknesses have been identified. These include harmonizing provincial and local legislation with federal legislation, revising species protection legislation, increasing penalties for offences under species protection legislation, creation or strengthening of budgetary support for protected areas, strengthening of national programmes on wildlife and natural resource management. See national logframes in Annex B for details.

Output 2.2: Wetland biodiversity input to provincial land use planning, water resource management and coastal zone management through baseline surveys, monitoring and improved inter-sectoral cooperation.

65. The weak representation of wetland biodiversity interests in regional planning organizations contributes to the loss of wetland resources. Government institutions in all participating countries are highly sectoral in their approach, and there is often a lack of institutional

cooperation. The project will promote the participation of agencies with responsibility for wetland conservation in such regional bodies. This output will involve the development of links between the relevant agencies and the promotion of an integrated approach to natural resource management through organizing consultation meetings (see national logframes for details). The project will also provide information on wetland biodiversity into regional land use, water management and coastal zone management plans, including the Caspian Biodiversity Strategy and coastal zone management plans for Gilan and Mazandaran Provinces in Iran, and water resource management plans for the Songhua River Basin and Poyang Lake Basin in China.

Output 2.3: Monitoring programme implemented on distribution and movements of the Siberian Crane and other globally significant migratory waterbirds.

66. Monitoring of wetland conditions at individual project sites will be specifically targeted at accomplishing site management objectives, according to the management plans. This effort will involve the measurement of a wide range of parameters to establish whether they lie within predetermined limits of acceptable change (see Output 1.2 and introduction to Annex B). At the macro-level, one of the indicators of success for this project is that the effective conservation of a flyway site network has secured the future of globally significant migratory waterbirds including the flagship species, the critically endangered Siberian Crane. In order to monitor the conservation status of this species and other globally significant migratory waterbirds using the same flyways, it is necessary to develop a monitoring programme that will provide adequate information on their use of the project sites on a regular basis. Data from these national monitoring programmes will be fed to the databases maintained by the flyway coordinators and used to support species conservation status assessments under the relevant plans. This programme can be extended to other sites according to the capacity available in each country.

Output 2.4: Measures undertaken at national level to enhance international cooperation.

67. Project sites and other flyway wetlands meeting international criteria will be promoted for designation under international conventions (Ramsar Convention, World Heritage Convention), agreements and for inclusion in conservation networks (e.g., North East Asia Crane Site Network, MAB network, CPAN). Targets are set in the logframes (see Annex B). National legislation will be reviewed by NEA staff and improved in relation to overcoming weaknesses in national implementation of international agreements on wetland and waterbird conservation. The capacity of NEAs to implement their obligations under international agreements will also be strengthened through additional staffing, improvements in equipment and office facilities, and improved networking and access to relevant information.

Output 2.5: Training programme implemented to enhance national capacity for wetland and waterbird management.

68. The project will include a significant investment in training aimed primarily at strengthening the overall protected area management capacities at the project sites (see also Output 1.6). While a training needs analysis will be undertaken in each country during the first year of the project in order to determine detailed national training strategies, a preliminary assessment of training needs and costs is given in Annex L. This strategy also takes account of available

international wetland management courses and the Ramsar Convention's initiative to coordinate global training resources.

69. The sustainability of training efforts will be a priority. This approach will include the training of trainers (for example, training on wetland management for trainers at a national training institute, who then train site staff). The development of training materials or modules that can be used repeatedly in the future will also be considered. The development of links between nature reserves and local universities or institutes is another means of developing a long-term basis for training. Linkages and cooperation with training programmes being undertaken by other wetlands projects will be established in Year One of the project. International training activities will also serve to strengthen international cooperation for flyway network conservation, a principal aim of the project.

Output 2.6: Environmental education and public awareness measures undertaken at national level.

70. While most environmental education and public awareness activities will be undertaken at the site level, a limited array of national programmes will address broader priority regions of wetlands used by the Siberian Crane and other migratory waterbirds (for instance, the Caspian lowlands of Iran). National activities are also required to target central government agencies and other stakeholders that are not associated with specific sites. This output will complement education and public awareness programmes by other national wetlands projects. International awareness and information sharing activities are described in outputs 3.1 and 3.2, and these will be further elaborated through development of an international awareness strategy. A preliminary awareness strategy is given in Annex K.

COMPONENT 3: ENHANCED INTERNATIONAL COOPERATION FOR THE DEVELOPMENT OF WETLAND SITE NETWORKS

Output 3.1: Regional flyway networks developed in Western/Central Asia and Eastern Asia, and a programme of regional activities undertaken within the framework of adopted conservation plans for cranes.

71. This output will build capacity for flyway coordination and wetland site network development in Western/Central Asia, including the establishment of a Regional Coordination Centre based in Moscow, which will link with the initiatives under the CWGE, CMS MoU, CAIF, AP MWCS and AEWA. Staff will include a Flyway Coordinator for Western/Central Asia, technical consultants and an administrative assistant.
72. The project will strengthen capacity for coordination of NEACSN activities in China and Eastern Siberia. In China, this will involve building capacity of the National Bird Banding Center in Beijing for both national and international coordination. The project will also support the operation of a subgroup of the CWG on the Siberian Crane, and facilitate an enhanced level of flyway conservation activities in line with existing plans and institutional frameworks.
73. The programme will include activities that address specific points in the adopted flyway

conservation action plans. Activities will be regional in nature (including range states within the scope of the CMS MoU for instance), involve more than one of the four project countries, or be located within one of them. These activities will contribute towards broader waterbird conservation strategies and will be carefully coordinated with these other initiatives.

74. The main focus will be on capacity building activities, that include: international training courses, study tours and exchanges (including exchanges between project sites); support for participation in international workshops, meetings and conferences associated with flyway conservation; investment in communications equipment for network participants; support for international communications through websites and newsletters; and translation of relevant information and documents into major regional languages.
75. Links between network sites will be strengthened through a “twinning programme” in line with Ramsar Convention guidelines, in order to share information, expertise and resources between sites (see also the training strategy in Annex L). The programme will also continue to develop the knowledge base through supporting surveys and monitoring of poorly known areas, and developing centralized databases in order to improve access to available information. Regional databases will be established on experts, projects, network sites and waterbird monitoring results. Data from national census activities will be compiled at flyway level and used for conservation status assessments in relation to the relevant flyway plans.
76. Participation of NGOs, local communities and schools, scientists and government staff will be encouraged through promotion of public awareness events at network sites.
77. In view of current information gaps, the project will undertake applied field studies using satellite telemetry to identify further sites used by the Siberian Cranes during their annual migration cycle, and to assist species protection and ecological studies. This research will build on the work that has already been undertaken by ICF, the Wild Bird Society of Japan, and other international researchers and national government agencies over the past 20 years. This effort will be coordinated by ICF in collaboration with the NEAs and the flyway coordination centres established by the project. The results of this research will provide a basis for the continuing development of the site networks during and after this project.
78. In addition, a recently developed technique known as “voice printing” (a recording and computer analysis technique that allows crane calls to be analysed, creating an acoustic fingerprint, or “voiceprint”) will also be tested as a technique to identify individuals of a species without the need to capture and mark them. This method will be applied by its developer, Dr. Bernhard Wessling of ORMECON CHEMIE GmbH & Co., KG using co-financing. This method has great potential to support recovery efforts for endangered cranes and other vocal species.

Output 3.2: Results of project disseminated for the benefit of the global conservation community.

79. The project will produce a wide range of technical information, including results of regional applied field research studies, evaluations of pilot projects (e.g., wetland restoration at

Poyang Lake Basin), and data from monitoring programmes. The project will make this information available to a wider audience of professionals involved in wetland and waterbird conservation through publication of reports, papers and articles in scientific journals and newsletters such as The ICF Bugle, Wetlands (WI), CMS Bulletin, the Ramsar Newsletter, Bird Conservation International, NEACSN Newsletter, WWF Arctic Bulletin, as well as national publications. Project results will also be presented at international workshops and conferences, and through websites established by ICF, CMS, other project partners, and associated organizations such as the Ramsar Convention Bureau and WI.

80. While this output concerns the dissemination of information at international level, it should be noted that the stakeholder participation arrangements at national and site levels will also ensure that information is shared with relevant partners at these levels (refer to implementation arrangements and stakeholder participation plans in Annex E for details). Publication of papers and articles in local language journals and national press coverage as part of national awareness programmes (output 2.6) will also disseminate information on project activities.
81. The uptake and promulgation of the project's approaches by the NEAs into their other programmes and projects will be addressed by the National Project Management Groups during Phase 2 of the project. The mid term project evaluation workshops provide an opportunity to review and fine-tune this process, based on progress during Phase 1.

IMPLEMENTATION ARRANGEMENTS AND STAKEHOLDER PARTICIPATION

PROJECT IMPLEMENTATION ARRANGEMENTS

82. The organizational structures for project implementation at regional and national levels are shown in Figures 1 and 2 in Annex E1.
83. The project will be executed by the Governments of China, Islamic Republic of Iran, Kazakhstan, and the Russian Federation. Overall responsibility will be vested with the following National Executing Agencies (NEAs): State Forestry Administration (China), Department of the Environment (Islamic Republic of Iran), Ministry of Natural Resources and Environmental Protection (Kazakhstan) and Ministry of Natural Resources / All Russia Research Institute for Nature Protection (Russian Federation). These agencies will implement the project in collaboration with other national, provincial and local government agencies, NGOs, and local communities. In order to ensure joint programming of GEF interventions with related projects, formal and informal inter-agency links will be maintained.
84. Agency responsibilities: UNEP is the Implementing Agency for this GEF project. The International Crane Foundation (ICF) will serve as the International Executing Agency. ICF will handle the overall management, administration and financial management of the project. ICF will coordinate activities with CMS under the MoU. CMS will organize the Steering Committee Meetings and provide advice on flyway issues.

Project Steering Committee

85. A Project Steering Committee (PSC) will be maintained at the international level to provide guidance to the project and monitor progress and performance. The PSC will serve under the Terms of Reference (TOR) approved during the PDF B phase of the project. The PSC will monitor and review progress on an annual basis. See Annex E for TOR and membership.

Project Advisory Group

86. A Project Advisory Group (PAG) has been established under TOR approved by the PSC to provide international expertise and to ensure coordination of activities with other relevant agencies and projects at the international level. Membership has been approved by the PSC and confirmed by the nominated advisors. Additional advisors may be appointed at the discretion of the PSC. See Annex E for TOR and membership.

Regional Coordination Unit (RCU)

87. The project RCU will be established at the National Bird Banding Center of the State Forestry Administration, in Beijing, China. The RCU will be co-located with the NPCU for China (also responsible for flyway coordination in China), and will provide the NPCUs with technical assistance. The RCU staff (see Annex E1) will be appointed by ICF and supported by part-time input from a range of ICF staff, including management, finance and administration staff, and a wide range of technical expertise including Chinese and Russian staff.

Regional Flyway Coordination Centres

88. The project will support the development of regional flyway coordination centres for Western/Central Asia (based in Moscow) and Eastern Asia (in Beijing and Eastern Russia). The coordination centre in Moscow will be established under this project. The existing NE Asia Crane Site Network will be strengthened in China and Eastern Russia (see Outputs 3.1 and 3.2).

Financial Arrangements

89. GEF funds will be transferred from UNEP to the NEAs for Iran, Kazakhstan and Russia (in consultation with the UNEP representative in Moscow) via national UNDP offices, according to mechanisms that have been established during the PDF B phase. Funds will be disbursed directly from UNEP to ICF for international components and for China (ICF will transfer funds directly to the NEA in China).

National Project Management Groups

90. A National Project Management Group (NPMG) will be established for each country. The NPMG will facilitate inter-agency coordination and guide the execution of Phases 1 and 2 of the project in each country, as described in this document. This will include evaluating the lessons learned from Phase 1 during the mid term workshops and adjusting the plans for Phase 2 activities outlined in this document accordingly. The NPMG will be led by a National Project Director, who will bear overall responsibility for the execution of the project in each country. Each country will designate a Governmental Representative and Technical / Scientific Representative. One of these two positions will serve as the National Project

Director and both will serve on the PSC. The NPMGs will establish National Project Advisory Groups (see below).

National Project Coordination Units (NPCUs)

91. The NPCUs work under the guidance of the NPMGs. The NPCU will have a full time National Project Manager (funded by GEF), who will report to the National Project Director (part time supervisory input, co-financed by the NEA). The National Project Manager will be responsible for the day-to-day management of the project. Each NPCU will receive international technical assistance through the RCU and short-term consultancy inputs. A full time financial manager experienced in international project accounting will be included in each NPCU to ensure that UNEP/GEF financial planning and reporting procedures are fully complied with.

STAKEHOLDER INPUT TO PROJECT IMPLEMENTATION

92. While primary responsibility for project implementation rests with the National Executing Agencies (NEA) in each participating country, this project has been designed to facilitate stakeholder participation at international, national and site levels of implementation.

93. At the international level, a Project Advisory Group (PAG) has been established during the PDF B phase (see above). The PAG provided input to the design of the Full Project through comments on draft proposals and through direct communication with executing agency staff. The PAG will provide external input to the Project Steering Committee through correspondence, invitations to comment on documents and invitations to attend PSC meetings as observers. An important function of the PAG is to ensure that project implementation is linked effectively with external programmes and projects, such as the regional flyway programmes coordinated by WI.

94. At the national level, each NEA established a National Project Advisory Group (NPAG) during the PDF B phase, comprised of academic, technical and provincial experts and representatives of other organizations. The NPAGs provided technical advice to the NEAs and assisted in implementation of some PDF B activities. During the Full Project, the NPAGs will provide technical advice to the National Project Management Groups. The NPAGs provide a mechanism for input from other government agencies, NGOs and experts into project implementation and will meet at least once each year. Procedures for involving appropriate stakeholders (such as NPAG members) in project monitoring and evaluation will be established. These procedures will describe the process, methods, and frequency of monitoring activities.

95. During the PDF B phase, each country identified sites for inclusion in the full project, for which stakeholder lists were developed and consultations carried out with major stakeholders in order to develop the intervention proposals (see project activities in Annex B1 and stakeholder participation plans in Annex E). During the Full Project, Site Management Committees (SMCs) will be established based on further stakeholder consultations as part of the process for the preparation or revision of management plans for each site.

96. The project will foster stakeholder participation in the determination of management objectives, preparation and implementation of management plans for each project site, zoning of areas for multiple uses, and implementation of activities. This process will, as a first step, involve the use of participatory assessment tools, such as participatory rural appraisal, and identify barriers to community involvement in conservation.
97. The site management plans will clearly delineate responsibilities for implementation by stakeholder group (i.e., national government, provincial government, local government, reserve staff, local user groups, NGOs). The possibility of stakeholder self-enforcement of regulations will be explored, as a complement to formal law enforcement.
98. While a preliminary assessment of training needs has been conducted during the PDF B phase and a training strategy prepared (see Annex L), a more detailed assessment of training needs will be conducted at the start of the Full Project. Based upon this analysis, site management personnel will be trained in relevant subjects such as PRA, conflict management and visitor management. Capacity building for stakeholder organizations will also be undertaken at selected sites.
99. Stakeholder analyses were conducted during the PDF B phase (see Annex E), and more detailed guidelines for stakeholder participation will be developed during Year One, with indicators identified to monitor the quality of participation. There have only been limited instances of effective stakeholder participation in conservation and development initiatives within the participating countries, including a few NGO sponsored programmes. The project will break new ground in establishing and implementing public participation arrangements. Training for NEA staff will be an important initial step in this process.

INCREMENTAL COSTS AND PROJECT FINANCING

Incremental costs table

100. Table 1 presents an incremental cost table based on the component costs presented in Table 2 and the more detailed analysis contained in Annex A. The benefits that result from the project are primarily global in nature, with some limited domestic benefits. The project will result in direct environmental benefits through significant interventions at site level in the participating countries. In addition, indirect benefits will be realized through interventions at national level, which support changes in policy, legislation, inter-sectoral coordination arrangements and capacity for coordination. By increasing capacity for regional flyway conservation, the project provides an additional level of global environmental benefits, which should also have a multiplier effect in the longer term through catalysing the development of related conservation initiatives and stimulating release of additional financing.

Table 1: Baseline and Incremental Costs and Global and Domestic Environmental Benefits (in US\$ thousands)

GLOBAL ENVIRONMENTAL BENEFITS	Baseline	Alternative	Increment
PDF B Phase	707.00	1,265.00	558.00
<i>Component 1- Conservation of Biodiversity at Project Sites</i>	-	-	-
Output 1.1 – Legal protection measures	592.30	1,622.50	1,030.20
Output 1.2 – Site management plans	757.70	1,604.33	846.63
Output 1.3 – Reduction of external threats to sites	372.24	650.64	278.40
Output 1.4 – Applied field studies for site management	90.10	1,403.88	1,313.78
Output 1.5 – Alternative livelihood projects	165.60	847.13	681.53
Output 1.6 – Capacity building for site management	687.20	3,004.02	2,316.82
Output 1.7 – Education & public awareness	79.36	903.61	824.25
Subtotal - Global Component 1	2,744.50	10,036.11	7,291.61
<i>Component 2 – National Measures to Strengthen Wetland & Migratory Waterbird Conservation</i>	-	-	-
Output 2.1 – Improved legislation, policies, plans & budgets	1,004.96	1,289.66	284.70
Output 2.2 – Biodiversity input to provincial planning	195.90	879.00	683.10
Output 2.3 – Monitoring programme on Siberian Cranes	30.00	443.10	413.10
Output 2.4 – Measures to enhance international cooperation	315.15	968.85	653.70
Output 2.5 – Training programme to enhance national capacity	172.00	518.50	346.50
Output 2.6 – National education & public awareness measures	188.64	388.54	199.90
Subtotal - Global Component 2	1,906.65	4,487.65	2,581.00
National project management costs	-	3,119.28	3,119.28
UNDP administrative charges 3%	-	118.26	118.26
Subtotal – Global Management and Administrative Costs	-	3,237.54	3,237.54
<i>Component 3 - Enhanced international cooperation for the development of wetland site networks</i>	-	-	-
Output 3.1 – Regional flyway network programmes developed	2,000.00	2,557.90	557.90
Output 3.2 – Project results disseminated	-	50.00	50.00
Subtotal - Global Component 3	2,000.00	2,607.90	607.90
Regional project management costs	-	2,590.50	2,590.50
Subtotal – Global Regional Management Costs	-	2,590.50	2,590.50
Subtotal - Global Environmental Benefits	6,651.15	22,959.70	16,308.55
DOMESTIC ENVIRONMENTAL BENEFITS			
PDF B Phase	53.00	63.00	10.00
<i>Component 1- Conservation of Key Flyway Wetlands</i>	-	-	-
Output 1.1 – Legal protection measures	4.60	229.54	224.94
Output 1.2 – Site management plans	-	95.77	95.77
Output 1.3 – Reduction of external threats to sites	80,110.29	80,967.59	857.30
Output 1.4 – Applied field studies for site management	16.00	259.70	243.70
Output 1.5 – Alternative livelihood projects	9.15	144.15	135.00
Output 1.6 – Capacity building for site management	709.55	2,032.55	1,323.00
Output 1.7 – Education & public awareness	1,442.75	3,723.75	2,281.00
Subtotal - Domestic Component 1	82,292.34	87,453.05	5,160.71
<i>Component 2 – National Measures for Wetland Conservation</i>	-	-	-
Output 2.1 – Improved legislation, policies, plans & budgets	16.64	100.64	84.00
Output 2.2 – Biodiversity input to provincial planning	2.70	94.80	92.10
Output 2.3 – Monitoring programme on Siberian Cranes	-	161.60	161.60

Output 2.4 – Measures to enhance international cooperation	-	198.50	198.50
Output 2.5 – Training programme to enhance national capacity	1.00	363.10	362.10
Output 2.6 – National education & public awareness measures	2.66	18.46	15.80
Subtotal - Domestic Component 2	23.00	937.10	914.10
National project management costs	3.00	736.01	733.01
Subtotal – Domestic National Management Costs	3.00	736.01	733.01
<i>Subtotal - Domestic Environmental Benefits</i>	<i>82,371.34</i>	<i>89,189.16</i>	<i>6,817.82</i>
TOTAL GLOBAL AND DOMESTIC ENVIRONMENTAL BENEFITS	89,729.49	113,413.86	23,684.37

101. The development of an integrated regional approach towards the conservation of networks of wetlands for the Siberian Crane and other biodiversity includes costs associated with coordination among a wide range of actors, including national governments, regional and national NGOs, scientific experts, and site managers. Most benefits derived from such regional cooperation are global in nature, and would not be met without a GEF intervention as they result in little direct national benefit. The participating countries' involvement in global conservation conventions, wider regional wetland and waterbird conservation activities and implementation of the PDF B process is evidence of their commitment to such a regional approach.
102. The project interventions at identified sites are necessary to address the causes of threats impacting their biodiversity. These threats are likely to persist under prevailing baseline conditions and would result in losses of globally important biodiversity without this project. The global importance of the wetland sites, the Siberian Crane and other biodiversity dependent upon these sites supports the view that the benefits arising from site level activities are of global benefit. National level activities are necessary to support the integrated management of project sites, national wetland and waterbird resources, and improved regional cooperation.
103. Table 2 presents a summary of the project budget and component financing (see Annex F for more detail), including subtotals for each phase. The total cost of the project (including the PDF B phase) is US\$ 23.7 million of which US\$ 11.3 million is the anticipated costs to national governments in cash and in kind. The majority of the co-financing consists of national government inputs to protected area management and wetland conservation. Co-financing for regional activities includes funds secured by the International Executing Agency, CMS Secretariat and national contributions towards the implementation of international conservation agreements. In addition, significant co-financing is assured in principle from a number of external sources (see letters in Annex N).

Table 2. Summary of the Project Budget and Component Financing (in US\$ thousands)

Project Activities	GEF Phase 1	GEF Phase 2	GEF Total	Co-Financing Sources		Total
				Governments	Other Sources	
<i>Component 1</i>			-	-	-	-
Output 1.1	75.45	71.55	147.00	1,092.14	16.00	1,255.14
Output 1.2	229.33	207.10	436.43	491.97	14.00	942.40
Output 1.3	105.00	137.00	242.00	893.70	-	1,135.70
Output 1.4	270.20	460.08	730.28	629.20	198.00	1,557.48
Output 1.5	151.30	353.70	505.00	288.00	23.53	816.53
Output 1.6	432.53	860.97	1,293.50	2,346.32	-	3,639.82
Output 1.7	65.32	349.58	414.90	2,619.35	71.00	3,105.25
Subtotal - Component 1	1,329.13	2,439.98	3,769.11	8,360.68	322.53	12,452.32
<i>Component 2</i>						
Output 2.1	-	-	-	368.70	-	368.70
Output 2.2	172.82	189.38	362.20	413.00	-	775.20
Output 2.3	159.00	217.20	376.20	198.50	-	574.70
Output 2.4	245.80	292.00	537.80	292.40	22.00	852.20
Output 2.5	212.44	127.16	339.60	369.00	-	708.60
Output 2.6 35.76	35.76	84.44	120.20	95.50	-	215.70
Subtotal - Component 2	825.82	910.18	1,736.00	1,737.10	22.00	3,495.10
<i>Component 3</i>						
Output 3.1	161.70	111.80	273.50	-	284.40	557.90
Output 3.2	13.30	17.70	31.00	-	19.00	50.00
Subtotal - Component 3	175.00	129.50	304.50	-	303.40	607.90
National project management	1,172.06	1,204.57	2,376.63	1,357.34	118.32	3,852.29
Regional project management	855.00	840.50	1,695.50	-	895.00	2,590.50
UNDP administrative charges	50.99	67.27	118.26	-	-	118.26
Subtotal – Management and Administrative Costs	2,078.05	2,112.34	4,190.39	1,357.34	1,013.32	6,561.05
Project Total	4,408.00	5,592.00	10,000.00	11,455.12	1,661.25	23,116.37
PDF B Phase			350.00	62.00	156.00	568.00
GRAND TOTAL			10,350.00	11,517.12	1,817.25	23,684.37

RISKS AND SUSTAINABILITY

RISKS

104. The logical framework matrix presented in Annex B details the project-related risks and assumptions. Risks are mitigated by the project strategy and activities, as far as possible.

105. Overall, the project has been designed to minimize risk. Risk reduction in conservation and sustainable use activities has been a key consideration in the design of the project, including the management structure, strategic approach and integration of best practice. The design of related projects, including GEF projects on wetland conservation in China, Iran and Kazakhstan have been taken into account, as well as other international experience and guidelines developed by ICF, IUCN, Wetlands International, WWF and other agencies. ICF has been actively working on crane and wetland conservation in the region for the past 25 years, and for 10-15 years specifically at some of the project sites in China, Russia, and Iran.

This experience has guided design of site interventions. In addition, ICF is committed to continuance of follow up activities at project sites and along the flyways to ensure that project achievements can be sustained, and lead to further improvements in management of site networks and waterbird populations.

106. One category of external risk that could have a far-reaching effect on the project is macro-economic factors (such as a downturn in either Asian economies or the global economy). While current development indicators have shown positive growth trends in all four countries in recent years, if any of the participating countries experiences a financial crisis during the period of the full project, this change could affect their ability to contribute the agreed co-financing, or result in delays in the provision of such funds. In such an event, adjustments would have to be made to the project budget, and/or additional co-financing raised from other sources.
107. In addition, an economic downturn could increase the pressure on wetland resources for short-term commercial gains rather than long-term and partially non-commercial benefits. By focusing on addressing the root causes of wetland loss and degradation and improving the livelihoods of local people, the project should help to mitigate such conditions.
108. Another risk is the potential shift in government priorities associated with political changes. Such change could result in a reduction in priority for biodiversity conservation. This risk is partially offset by the adherence of the project to national policy priorities and plans that underpin government programmes, and in some cases, strong baseline conditions. The project participatory approach involving all relevant stakeholders would mitigate this risk, including all levels of government and local communities. The risk that countries are unwilling to cooperate with other countries is addressed by the solid history of collaboration outlined under “International Strategic and Policy Context” above.
109. The countries participating in this project have highly centralized government systems that can result in barriers to cooperation between different sectoral agencies, and for participation of stakeholders in wetland management. The project approach of promoting inter-sectoral cooperation is essential in order to achieve integrated management of wetland resources. Well-designed public awareness campaigns will ensure that all relevant stakeholders are engaged in the outcome of the project. Access to communication equipment will be assured.
110. The project’s integrated approach to wetland management requires a relatively high degree of technical capacity at the outset. Current capacity within the NEAs to take on integrated approaches to wetland management, and particularly the need for community or stakeholder participation, is limited. The project will address this weakness through training and other capacity building measures at the outset (see Training Strategy in Annex L), including training in integrated wetland management at three levels of government. These measures will be strategic and designed for long term impact through measures such as training of trainers, retention of trained staff, production of training materials and establishment of institutional links.

SUSTAINABILITY

111. The limited budgets available for nature conservation in the participating countries necessitate a low input approach to site management. The project has taken the approach of building the capacity of the organizations responsible for wetland management, strengthening linkages between organizations and building a strategic basis for shared management of the resources. This approach avoids the creation of new entities and high-cost inputs that cannot be sustained in the longer term.
112. During project preparation, the NEAs selected project sites in each country. These sites were selected for their global biodiversity values and importance as part of a regional flyway network. Another consideration in site selection was the willingness of the participating governments to maintain the activities in line with management goals beyond the life of the project. The existence of a strong baseline at many project sites and their national and international designations (see Table B1 in Annex B) is evidence of national commitment.
113. A substantial proportion of the assured co-financing by governments is derived from the re-allocation of existing staff and recurrent budgets of the involved ministries and government departments to project activities. It is anticipated that project activities will help to strengthen the influence of these ministries at a national level.
114. With the support of this GEF intervention, some of the sustainable livelihood activities, such as biodiversity-friendly agricultural practices and ecotourism, will demonstrate that the alternative strategy is cost neutral. In general, the project will avoid creating systems requiring expensive maintenance and upkeep. ICF's experience with community development at another wetland in China suggests that a long-term commitment and iterative learning processes are required to achieve a long lasting impact. While this GEF project will start that process, continued support from ICF and other organizations will be required beyond the end of this project to maintain and further develop these benefits.
115. The capacity building, planning and institutional links achieved during the project period will enhance the ability of certain nature reserves to generate additional revenue through ecotourism and mechanisms for permitting resource exploitation. In addition, better coordination among the relevant agencies and more efficient site management as a result of clearer direction and increased management capacity will assist more cost-effective use of available budgets.
116. The project has adopted a strategy of gradually phasing out GEF funding for activities during the project period, with their progressive replacement by co-financing sources, especially from government sources. This approach will ease the transition to post-project operational support by host governments and other sources, and should contribute to the overall financial sustainability of project outcomes.
117. While it is anticipated that national governments will continue to cover the main recurrent operational costs for the project sites in the long term, the expansion of the flyway network

programme as a result of capacity building during the project will be able to source additional funds to strengthen management of the project sites or to support new sites.

118. The regional framework for cooperation will be strengthened through undertaking this project, such that the recurrent costs of subsequent regional coordination will be met largely from within the region as well as from international organizations with a mandate for wetland and flyway conservation. ICF, as the international executing agency, has a long-term commitment to conservation of cranes and their habitats. The organization has considerable fundraising capacity and will continue to support activities within the framework of the conservation plans that underpin this project. The Secretariats of CMS and the Ramsar Convention will also assist in mobilizing additional funds for flyway and wetland conservation in the region (for these sites in particular) during the implementation of the project and to be earmarked for Phase II and Phase I as is possible. In addition, the establishment of links with other projects and initiatives will also have a catalytic effect in terms of generating additional co-financing and spin-off activities during and after the project, beyond what is identified here.

MONITORING, EVALUATION AND DISSEMINATION

119. Monitoring of the progress in executing the components and activities will be undertaken in accordance with UNEP's internal guidelines for project monitoring and evaluation. This process will include a mid term assessment and end of project assessment undertaken by external review teams, arranged by UNEP.
120. The project and national logical framework matrices presented in Annex B provide an objective basis for the monitoring and evaluation of project activities, outputs and objectives. Overall progress will be evaluated in relation to these logframes at the Project Steering Committee meetings, and it is expected that the logframes will also form the basis for external assessments of the project. The Project Director in consultation with the International Technical Advisor will be responsible for monitoring project progress in relation to the logframes.
121. At the national level, each NPD will be responsible for overseeing the implementation of the project, supported by the NPCUs. The Project Steering Committee will monitor overall progress on an annual basis and will advise the Project Director at ICF and Task Manager at UNEP on the overall progress and any necessary adjustments to the workplan, schedule and budget that may be necessary as a consequence of unplanned contingencies. The organizational diagrams in Annex E1 show communications lines between the different units at international and national levels. TOR for project management staff are also given in Annex E.
122. ICF will oversee the technical, administrative and financial management of the project through its usual operating procedures. ICF's existing financial control system will track spending down to each line item for each partner in the project. This system will permit easy summarization of expenditures for reports, while retaining the degree of detail necessary for

control and audit purposes. An initial funding recommendation will be made to UNEP to provide funds for approximately 3-month work in advance for each partner. Future funds will be released based on compliance with goals for work performed and funds expended. Annually, ICF's Certified Public Accountant will perform an audit of the accounting and reporting of each agency and the total project. These reports will be sent to GEF for review.

123. An annual administrative review of the project will be undertaken each year by the RCU Director, and an annual technical review will be undertaken by the International Technical Advisor, supported by an annual technical review for each country. Quarterly evaluations will take place through visits between the RCU and ICF's Headquarters, involving the Project Director and RCU Director, including the completion of quarterly progress reports.
124. In addition, the RCU Director will visit each project country at least once per year to evaluate progress and review management problems through consultation with the National Project Directors and members of the National Project Coordination Units, and the International Technical Advisor will visit each country at least once and frequently twice each year in order to provide technical guidance and assistance. In addition, ICF staff will be visiting project sites to provide technical assistance, some sites on an annual basis, others every other year.
125. At the inception workshops in Year 1, work plans and scheduling of activities will be fine-tuned for each country and at the international level. Benchmarks will be established for Phase 1. At mid-term workshops in Year 3, the achievements of Phase 1 will be evaluated in relation to these benchmarks, and appropriate adjustments made to plans for Phase 2. The achievements of Phase 2 and of the overall project will be reviewed at project completion workshops in the final year of the project (see the timeline in Annex B for the timing of these workshops).
126. The site management plans will form the basis for impact oriented monitoring of changes in environmental conditions at individual project sites, through the setting of limits of acceptable change for specific parameters. During the preparation of the management plans, the baseline information that has been compiled in the site datasheets (see Annex G) will be reviewed and elaborated based on the results of surveys, studies and monitoring.
127. The Conservation Plans under the CMS MoU on the Siberian Crane, which provide a broad framework for flyway level activities, are reviewed at the biennial intergovernmental meetings convened by CMS (most recently in May 2001). The contributions of the GEF project towards implementation of these Conservation Plans will be monitored through this process. Similarly, the progress made in implementation of the *Action Plan for the Conservation of Migratory Cranes in Asia Pacific 2001 – 2005* is reviewed annually by the CWG, which reports to the Asia Pacific Migratory Waterbird Conservation Committee. The IUCN SSC *Crane Status Survey and Conservation Action Plan* also provides a framework for monitoring the impact of the project on the Siberian Crane through species and regional working groups.

128. Finally, national reports to the Convention on Biological Diversity and Ramsar Convention* will include reference to the implementation of this project and its achievements.

129. **Note: Kazakhstan is in process of ratifying this convention*

130. Dissemination of results will take place through the national project workshops; international workshops and meetings; the biennial CMS MoU meetings; national reports to COP meetings of the CBD, CMS and Ramsar Convention; the websites, newsletters and other materials produced by ICF, CMS, the flyway coordination centres and other project partners; and through public media at local, national and international levels. Technical reports will be made available by the NEAs, ICF and CMS, and site management plans will be published. The NEAs will be assisted to internalise the procedures developed for project activities such that these can be replicated for other sites. These will be reviewed during the mid term workshops at the end of Phase 1 of the project.