The World Bank
PROGREEN Kazakhstan Resilient Landscapes Restoration Project

Project Information Document/ Identification/Concept Stage (PID)

Concept Stage | Date Prepared/Updated: 19-Jul-2022 | Report No: PIDC264795

BASIC INFORMATION

A. Basic Project Data

Project ID	Parent Project ID (if any)	Environmental and Social Risk Classification	Project Name
		Moderate	
P179008			PROGREEN Kazakhstan Resilient Landscapes Restoration Project
Region	Country	Date PID Prepared	Estimated Date of Approval
EUROPE AND CENTRAL ASIA	Kazakhstan	19-Jul-2022	
Financing Instrument	Borrower(s)	Implementing Agency	
Investment Project Financing	Ministry of Ecology, Geology, and Natural Resources, The Republic of Kazakhstan	Forestry and Wildlife Committee of the Ministry of Ecology, Geology, and Natural Resources	

PROJECT FINANCING DATA (US$, Millions)

SUMMARY

Total Project Cost	2.00
Total Financing	2.00
Financing Gap	0.00

DETAILS

Non-World Bank Group Financing

Trust Funds	2.00
Global P'ship for Sust. and Resilient Landscapes - PROGREEN	2.00

B. Introduction and Context

Country Context

Kazakhstan has been the economic success story of Central Asia, transitioning from lower-middle-income to upper-middle-income status in less than two decades. Economic success notwithstanding, at the most fundamental level, Kazakhstan needs to boost its productivity and innovation and diversify its economy by transitioning from growth driven by inputs to one driven by efficiency gains. Kazakhstan also needs to

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diversify its economic base through improving competitiveness of its non-extractive sectors, especially in agriculture and forests. Increase in productivity, innovation and diversification could depend to a great extent on how effectively Kazakhstan manages its natural capital. The country faces significant environmental challenges, especially under increased pressures from desertification, climate variability, economic growth, and population expansion. The combined effects of climate change on land degradation, desertification, decrease in agricultural productivity, water pollution and sedimentation, and increased frequency and intensity of disasters will compound existing environmental challenges and increase vulnerabilities.

Kazakhstan, the largest landlocked country in the world has a unique set of landscapes, including deserts, high mountains with diverse types of vegetation such as meadow, steppe and savanna forests. As the largest land locked country, these resources play a critical role in Kazakhstan's economy and for its people. South Kazakhstan region has unique natural landscapes included in the UNESCO Biosphere Reserve. The region has several specially protected natural areas with the status of an environmental and scientific institution designed to preserve biological and landscape diversity, use for environmental, ecological and educational, scientific, tourist and recreational purposes unique natural complexes and objects of the state nature reserve fund that have a special ecological, scientific, historical, cultural and recreational value.

Sectoral and Institutional Context

While rich in mineral resources, Kazakhstan is a forest-scarce country with only 4.7 percent of the total country area covered by forests. The existing forest area consists of 49 percent Saxaul forests, which are of high environmental importance in protecting the soil from erosion. Estimates of land degradation in Kazakhstan vary depending on definition of degradation and estimation technique, however, land degradation cost 4% of regional GDP of Central Asia (Alisher Mirzabaev et al, 2016). Land degradation is being accelerated by land productivity decline due to desertification. In Kazakhstan, approximately 4% of land has undergone desertification and another 76% of land area is at moderate to high sensitivity for desertification risk (Hu et al 2020). Several studies have proposed measures for reducing land degradation in Central Asia, amongst them are tree plantation and a sustainable use of pasture ecosystems through tree planting, conservation programs for restoring the functional integrity of steppe ecosystems, and improved grazing management practices. Nearly all forests in Kazakhstan are State-owned and managed by the regional governments, however the government has decided to increase private involvement in plantations. Regional governments manage 79 percent of the land while the Forest and Wildlife Committee (FWC) under the Ministry of Ecology, Geology and Natural Resources manages 20 percent of forests mostly in protected areas.

Kazakhstan is committed to increasing the country's forest cover from 4.7 to 5 percent by 2030 and to international efforts to combat climate change and a sustainable low carbon future. In 2018, under the Bonn Challenge, the Government expressed its intention to restore 1.5 million hectares of forests by 2030. The World Bank is assisting countries to implement those plans with a new program for Resilient Landscapes (RESILAND), which will have a technical assistance component and an investment component at the regional

and national levels. The proposed project will be part of the RESILAND umbrella program, whose objective in Central Asia is to avoid, reduce, and reverse further degradation, desertification, and deforestation of land and ecosystems in dryland areas, through the sustainable management and restoration of production landscapes, including forest and rangelands. The regional PROGREEN program is designed to support these efforts by applying incentives, building capacity, and providing knowledge to governments and communities, and enlisting local communities with the engagement of the private sector to invest in their landscapes, thus helping the governments to transition to a new plateau of sustainability.

Relationship to CPF

The proposed project is aligned with and directly contributes to the Country Partnership Framework FY20-25 (CPF), which was discussed by the World Bank Board on December 12, 2019, namely, project objectives are a part of the focus Area 3 (Securing Sustainable, Resilient, and Low Carbon Growth), and Objective 7 of Preserving and Restoring Natural Capital. Particularly, "Weak institutions for environmental and forestry planning, management, and coordination" was cited as an institutional constraint to be addressed. In line with the CPF, a proposed PROGREEN TF engagement will support capacity building in the Forestry and Wildlife Committee as well as community-centric approach for landscape restoration in targeted degraded landscapes while reinforcing forestry sector planning.

C. Project Development Objective(s)

Proposed Development Objective(s)

To pilot agroforestry practices using a community-centered approach and to build government capacity for management of protected areas using an integrated landscape approach.

Key Results

1. Capacity of the forestry organizations in protected areas in South Kazakhstan for biodiversity conservation and monitoring improved.
2. Agro-forestry practices on territories adjacent to protected areas piloted.
3. Unique collection of plants at the national arboretum in Kazakh Scientific Research Institute of Forestry preserved.

D. Preliminary Description

Activities/Components

The project will be closely linked to the existing GEF Kazakhstan Resilient Landscapes Restoration (Resiland) Project and use existing implementation arrangements. The project objective is aligned with the objective of the GEF Resiland project and is expected to enhance GEF Resiland project results by mirroring ongoing activities in the selected farms near protected areas as well as expanding Forestry and Wildlife Committee (FWC) capacity building activities.

The project will have following components:

Environmental Rehabilitation and Biodiversity Preservation - activities will support capacity building for the forestry organizations in the Aksu Zhabagly and Karatau State Natural Reserves in South Kazakhstan by improving eco-tourism and biodiversity conservation and monitoring infrastructure, and promote restoration and preservation of the unique collection of plants and revival of arboretum at the Kazakh Scientific Research Institute of Forestry.

Piloting community – centered approach on dryland agroforestry and landscape restoration - activities will include grants for selected farms to pilot agro-forestry practices in areas adjacent to the protected territories.

Project coordination and monitoring - some funds will be allocated to support existing Project Implementation Unit.

Environmental and Social Standards Relevance

E. Relevant Standards

ESS Standards		Relevance
ESS 1	Assessment and Management of Environmental and Social Risks and Impacts	Relevant
ESS 10	Stakeholder Engagement and Information Disclosure	Relevant
ESS 2	Labor and Working Conditions	Relevant
ESS 3	Resource Efficiency and Pollution Prevention and Management	Relevant
ESS 4	Community Health and Safety	Relevant
ESS 5	Land Acquisition, Restrictions on Land Use and Involuntary Resettlement	Not Currently Relevant
ESS 6	Biodiversity Conservation and Sustainable Management of Living Natural Resources	Relevant
ESS 7	Indigenous Peoples/Sub-Saharan African Historically Underserved Traditional Local Communities	Not Currently Relevant

ESS 8	Cultural Heritage	Relevant
ESS 9	Financial Intermediaries	Not Currently Relevant

Legal Operational Policies

Safeguard Policies	Triggered	Explanation (Optional)
Projects on International Waterways OP 7.50	No	
Projects in Disputed Areas OP 7.60	No	

Summary of Screening of Environmental and Social Risks and Impacts

The environmental and social risks are both rated moderate, for an overall environment and social risk of moderate. The project will be implemented in several pilot areas in Kyzylorda Region within the Aral Sea Basin and in Zhambyl Region in the south of the country where both agriculture land and State forests exist, allowing the piloting of PPP in ?model farms?. The project is expected to result in improvements to the natural environment through the planned pilot activities as well as follow-on activities. While there is the possibility of pilot activities involving vulnerable groups or being conducted near protected areas or critical habitats, no negative long-term environmental impacts are expected. While none of the pilot landscape activities are expected to be carried out within protected areas or critical habitats, some minor upgrading and rehabilitation activities at existing tourism facilities may take place in designated protected areas, but not critical habitats. The ESMF contains guidelines and selection criteria to prevent any negative effects to protected areas or critical habitats.

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Borrower/Client/Recipient

Borrower : Ministry of Ecology, Geology, and Natural Resources, The Republic of Kazakhstan

Implementing Agencies

Implementing   Forestry and Wildlife Committee of the Ministry of Ecology, Geology, and Natural Resources

Agency :			
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