Reporting Agency: UNDP

Country: Armenia

STANDARD PROGRESS REPORT

No. and title: “Elimination of Obsolete Pesticide Stockpiles and Addressing POPs Contaminated Sites within a Sound Chemicals Management Framework in Armenia”

UNDP/GEF 00091031

Reporting period: 01.07.16 - 31.12.16

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| **I. PURPOSE** |
| **The objective of the project** is to protect human health and the environment globally as well as locally through elimination of POPs and obsolete pesticide (OP) stockpiles, and addressing associated contaminated sites within a sound chemicals management framework. The project is directed jointly by the Ministry of Nature Protection and the Ministry of Territorial Administration and Emergency Situations in partnership with the Ministry of Agriculture. It will meet this objective by eliminating a large POPs pesticide burial site that represents the major POPs stockpile and waste legacy for the country. In total, approximately 7,100 tons of POPs waste in the form of heavily contaminated soil, 1,050 tons of POPs pesticides and other obsolete pesticides will be recovered, secured and ultimately treated and destroyed in an environmentally sound fashion. A further 12,700 tons of less severely POPs contaminated soil will be securely contained. Additionally the project will provide critically needed hazardous waste infrastructure and national technical capability for the ongoing management of POPs and other chemical hazardous wastes as well as supporting the strengthening of institutional and regulatory capacity within an overall chemicals management framework.  The Project contributes to UNDAF Outcome 7 and CP Outcome 13, CPAP Output 1.3. |
| **II.RESOURCES** |
| Total: 4,700,000.00 USD (GEF) is allocated for the full size project implementation in 2015-2019. |
| **III.RESULTS** |

***Component 1: Capture and Containment of Obsolete Pesticide Stockpiles and Wastes***

* The RFP/ToR for provision of services on detailed design, technical definition of works and supporting assessments for the elimination/recovery of hazardous waste from the Nubarashen POPs/OPs burial site, was developed, approved by the Project Management Board and UNDP management team, and announced on March 14, 2016. Through this tender the Project intended to select a consulting company with international environmental and local civil engineering/design expertise for Nubarashen site assessment and modeling/design of works for POPs/OP hazardous waste excavation, packaging, transportation and final destruction, as well as for assessment and modeling of the highly contaminated soil remediation. This planned activity was preceded by the issue of Yerevan City Mayor’s Decree and masterplan (dated 27.06.2016) on provision of land by Yerevan Municipality for the use of the burial site area and its surrounding locations for access and infrastructure development, aimed at implementation of excavation and clean-up works at Nubarashen burial site during the whole Project.

Due deadline (May 16, 2016), 5 eligible bids were received, and after evaluation of the proposals the summarized evaluation scores were presented to the UNDP Regional Hub for final review and approval. During the review process, some inconsistencies were noticed in the RFP and ToR, and the evaluation panel found expedient to cancel the RFP 008/2016. The tender package for Nubarashen burial site clean-up design/assessment was revised and updated in November-December, and the RFP have been re-announced on 29.12.2016.

* Project’s Civil Engineer and the International Consultant have drafted the ToR package for the selection of a Company to design the civil works at Hrazdan/Kotayk hazardous chemical waste management/storage facility. The draft ToR has been shared with the respective staff members of the RA Ministry of Emergency Situations (MES) for review and comments. After series of discussions held between the Project team and the MES representatives, the ToR and scope of the foreseen reconstruction works to be designed, have been approved. The tender package including RFP and ToR for provision of services on the design of construction works and operational planning for the development of a hazardous chemical waste (HCW) storage and management facility as a national center, was developed, approved by the Ministry of Emergency Situations (MES) and UNDP management staff, and the tender for selection of a qualified company was announced on August 30, 2016 with a deadline for proposal submission 26 September (extended to 7 October). The scheduled pre-bid site visit to Kotayk storage and orientation workshop was held on 19 September at UN Conference Hall, with participation of 4 interested potential bidders/design companies. Following the pre-bid workshop, an open letter signed by 11 Environmental NGOs and alliances to the new Prime Minister was published online (<http://www.tert.am/am/news/2016/10/04/eco/2152787>). Upon the initiative of the Project Management Board (PMB) co-chair, Mr. Khachik Hakobyan, a public debate was held on 11.10.16 at MNP, with the participation of all signatory NGOs of the open letter to the Prime Minister (<http://www.mnp.am/?aid=5604>). As a result, it was decided that the issue of transportation of 7,100 tons of highly contaminated soil to Kotayk HCW Management Facility for clean-up should be removed from the ToR of the Kotayk HCW storage facility design RFP/ToR, which was then fixed by the 07.11.16 PMB II meeting protocol. Due to the public demand for changes in the ToR and the high cost of financial proposals (exceeding the budgeted limit) from 2 technically eligible bidders, the RFP 044/2016 was cancelled. The RFP/ToR was revised/updated accordingly and re-announced on 20.12.2016.
* The Project/UNDP achieved agreements with the Municipality of Yerevan and Ministry of Emergency Situations on signing of bilateral Statements of Intent (SoI), to fix the committed responsibilities and the estimated budgets to be allocated for works in Nubarashen burial site and Kotayk HW storage facility, and respective activities of sides in accordance with the designed works. The Project developed a unified SoI for its earliest possible signing by the parties. However, both SoIs were not signed by the parties during this reporting period, since certain clarifications on the scope and budgets to be reflected in the SoIs is expected from the respective consulting/designer companies.

***Component 3: Institutional and Regulatory Capacity strengthening for Sound Chemicals Management and Contaminated Sites***

* A proposal was submitted to UNDP/Czech Trust Fund (CTF) and accepted for co-financing of a short-term international expert under the Expert-on-Demand (EoD) call for 2016-17, to provide consultancy/training on international technical/safety requirements with respect to hazardous chemical waste storage facilities. The proposal was accepted and a short-term International Consultant was selected. On November 23-24 a training-seminar "On urban-development, environmental and health requirements/norms related to the design, subsequent operation and maintenance of the projected hazardous chemical waste management and storage facility in the Republic of Armenia" was conducted by Czech International Consultant Jiri Tylcer, co-financed by the UNDP/Czech Trust Fund. Over 30 participants (50% women), representing private design/consulting companies, MES/MNP relevant staff, industry, public authorities, local universities, other project stakeholders and CSOs, attended the training-seminar and received certificates. All the training materials and supplementary/reference documents were delivered to the participants electronically. According the filled-in evaluation forms, the majority of participants gave high scores and positive acknowledgments, with constructive recommendations for the second round of the training to be held in Spring 2017.
* Project’s Regulatory/Legal Experts/Consultants on Hazardous Waste (HW) provided technical support in review and analysis of local regulatory and institutional frameworks providing and enforcing technical recommendations/guidelines for POPs/chemicals waste handling, transportation, storage, disposal and management requirements. Namely, unified bilateral Statements of Intent (SoI) with the Municipality of Yerevan and Ministry of Emergency Situations were drafted; relevant RoA legislation and international regulations on activities related to hazardous waste handling, neutralization, storage, transportation and disposal were reviewed and listed; legal reviews are prepared on: RoA Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) and expert examination procedures, and RoA licensing order of activities dealing with hazardous waste handling, neutralization, storage, transportation and disposal, etc.

***Component 4: Project Management, Monitoring and Evaluation***

* Upon the initiative of the Project Management Board (PMB) co-chair, Mr. Khachik Hakobyan, a public debate was held on 11.10.16 at MNP, with the participation of all signatory NGOs of the open letter to the Prime Minister (<http://www.mnp.am/?aid=5604>). As a result, it was decided that the issue of transportation of 7,100 tons of highly contaminated soil to Kotayk HCW Management Facility for clean-up  should be removed for the ToR of the Kotayk HCW storage facility design RFP/ToR, which was then fixed by the 07.11.16 PMB II meeting protocol. In conclusion, the PMB decided to convene several PBM meetings per year (if needed) for discussing emerging issues, recommended more active public involvement in the design phase to consider their concerns by the subcontractor.
* A new International Consultant (LTA) was recruited for: reviewing some technical aspects of the cancelled RFP/ToR for Nubarashen POPs/OPs burial site clean-up design/assessment; advising on the Project work plan 2017 and capacity assessment of the state monitoring laboratories under the MNP.
* Within the scope of networking and participation in international events on POPs and chemicals, the Project was presented in the EU Parliament Conference on Management of agro-chemicals: Elimination of "black spots" and creation of "white spots", held in Brussels on 29 September, 2016 organized by the Green/European Free Alliance (Green/EFA) and funded by FAO. The meeting was organized in order to take stock of common challenges and common solutions that the European Union and the Eastern neighbours are facing in the implementation of the Stockholm Convention on Persistent Organic Pollutants, an area where joint learning can help different sides/parties to progress. As an outcome of the conference, the Project received information on up-to-date soil clean-up/remediation technologies, which was reflected the revised ToR for Nubarashen burial site clean-up design/assessment. In addition, a brief letter was developed on the project status, potential development projections and sent to European Parliament Members for their awareness and possible actions for supplemental support from the EU.
* On 10-11 December, 2016, the Project, had working meetings with the Project Regional Technical Advisor (RTA) in Tbilisi. Critical issues on Project’s implementation were discussed and clarified. On December 12, the Project team had a meeting with Ms. Irma Gurgulia (the deputy head of the chemicals and waste management department), the Ministry of Environment and Natural Resources Protection of Georgia, to learn what main problems they have faced when cleaning the Iagluja POPs hazardous waste burial site. At the same time the issue of transiting of the POPs waste excavated from Armenia Nubarashen burial site through Georgia territory was touched. Sides agreed to organize another experience exchange group visit to Armenia.
* A public seminar was organized in April and conducted by Mrs. Zhdanovich, President of “Belarusian Environmental Movement” NGO, presenting the case “Elimination of POPs/OPs in Belarus”. As follow-up Mrs. Zhdanovich revisited Armenia in August. Among the relevant issues discussed, she presented the success factors the similar project implemented in Belarus, among which the phased pilot and full-scale implementation approach for elimination about 2000 tons of obsolete POPs pesticides. This cooperation continued via electronic communication on specific technologies for soil decontamination applied in the Belarus project.
* The re-conducted and updated social and environmental screening (SESP) report was finally approved and signed by the UNDP/CO QA Assessor and QA Approver in August 2016.
* In this reporting period, the Project submitted 2 GEF QPRs, provided input to UNDP/CO ROAR 2016, including the QA Report.
* Gender marker for the project was reviewed and upgraded from GEN1 to GEN2. Targeted efforts resulted in a composition of 4 women and 3 men project team, 6 women and 7 men composition of Project Advisory Committee, 15 women and 14 men participation in the engineering-environmental, health and safety oriented 2-days training seminar conducted through co-funding of the UNDP/Czech Trust fund.
* The Project Work/Activity Plan Y2017 has been revised and updated, subject for PMB’s final review and approval.
* The Project budget revision was processed to adjust the total budget for Y2015 to the actual expenditures in 2015 as per CDR, to adjust the total budget for Y2016 to the actual expenditures in 2016 by decreasing the budget for Y2016 and respectively reallocating to the budget for Y2017. The Y2017 budget amounts planned for the project core activities were reallocated through the next years, in compliance with shifted activities.

***Implementation concerns/issues:***

* Cancellation of the procurement process (RFP 008/2016) for selection of a consulting company for provision of services on detailed design, technical definition of works and supporting assessments for the elimination/recovery of hazardous waste from the Nubarashen POPs/OPs burial site, caused postponement of the planned on-site/field activities in 2017.
* A more active networking (e.g. South-South Cooperation) and involvement in project-related international events, more effective inter-agency cooperation is required to ensure knowledge management, timely provision of necessary information and determination of co-funding commitments.
* Procurement of the Project vehicle is crucial for the frequent site visits and field activities.

**IV. FUTURE WORK PLAN**

The works in the Y2017 will proceed according to revised Project Work/Activity Plan, with an attempt to realize the planned activities productively to the best extend possible taking into consideration all the facts reflected in the report.

**V. FINANCIAL IMPLEMENTATION**

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| **Initial Amount (as per approved regional budget) for 2016** | **Actual Expenditures (as of 26 December, 2016)** | **Revised Amount for 2016** | **Expected Delivery Rate by the end of 2016 (as per the revised budget)** |
| 543,001.00 USD | 115,122.71 USD | 126,390.53 USD | 91% |