GGGI | IMPACT AND EVALUATION UNIT

# End Project Evaluation
# Green Rehabilitation Investment Project for Karakalpakstan Republic to address impacts of the Aral Sea Crisis

## Executive Summary

February 2025

| Project and evaluation data | |
|---|---|
| **Project ID** | ROA02 |
| **Country** | Uzbekistan |
| **Programmatic Solutions** | PS1. Green Investment<br>PS2. Climate Action<br>PS3. Climate Resilient Agriculture |
| **Project Gender and Poverty Markers** | 1+P |
| **Project duration** | June 2021 – June 2025 (48 months) |
| **Project budget** | US$ 5.9 million |
| **Funding type** | Project earmarked and core |
| **Resource partners** | Korea International Cooperation Agency (KOICA) |
| **Project manager** | Aaron Russell: July 2021 - September 2022; August 2023 - October 2023<br>Jinha Kim: October 2022 - August 2023<br>Gi Un Kim: October 2023 - October 2024<br>Oyunchimeg Amartuvshin: October 2024 –June 2025 |
| **Program manager** | Aaron Russell, Uzbekistan Country Representative (until December 2024)<br>Seung Yeon Lee, Uzbekistan Country Representative, Directorate for Green Growth Implementation (from January 2025) |
| **Portfolio manager** | Jason Lee, Asia Deputy Director, Directorate for Green Growth Implementation |
| **Evaluation type** | End project evaluation |
| **Evaluation timing** | September 2024 - February 2025 |
| **Name of evaluator** | Risk Frontiers in consortium with Juru, led by Fiona Lord |
| **Evaluation budget** | US$ 54,910 |
| **Evaluation manager** | Suyoung Park, Project Development and Partnership Specialist, Uzbekistan Program, with the support of Katelyn Jison Yoo, Consultant, Impact and Evaluation Unit |
| **Evaluation oversight** | Gerard O'Donoghue, Assistant Director-General and OIC Head of Impact and Evaluation |

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# Executive summary

**GGGI implemented the Aral Sea Green Rehabilitation Investment Program (GRIP) Project (the 'Project') from July 2021 to December 2024 in Uzbekistan, and it has been extended to mid-2025, with USD 5.6 million from KOICA, and USD 0.3 million from GGGI.** The Project targeted the green rehabilitation of the Aral Sea region in the Republic of Karakalpakstan through the delivery of policy advice, capacity building, developing and piloting climate-smart agri-business models, and through mobilization of green financing for climate-smart agriculture (CSA) and sustainability measures more broadly. This independent evaluation of the Project was undertaken jointly by the firms Risk Frontiers and Juru, between September 2024 and February 2025, and was implemented through 36 stakeholder interviews, 6 Focus Group Discussions (FGD) comprising 72 participants in total, and a survey of 194 participants in the Project's capacity building program, alongside a review of 140 project documents.

**The evaluation found that all of the Project's outputs were achieved and there were some significant benefits gained through the implementation of the Project.** These included the following project highlights:

- Under Outcome 1, GGGI delivered strategic research and policy engagement providing policy recommendations on the need for climate-smart agricultural reforms and a broader range of measures for food security and managing water scarcity

- Under Outcomes 1 and 4, GGGI enabled green investment mobilization of ~1 billion USD for climate-smart agriculture through Sustainability/Green Bonds and designed a Green Finance Facility with local financial institutions

- Under Outcome 2, GGGI delivered capacity building for approximately 17,000 participants on resilience to climate change and disaster risks, tailored to the specific agricultural context of the Republic of Karakalpakstan and a media campaign that reached 280 million viewers

- Under Outcome 3, GGGI piloted climate resilient agri-business models through partnerships with farmers/agri-businesses.

**There were some significant challenges faced by GGGI and its partners in implementing the Project.** These challenges included starting up the Project during the COVID-19 pandemic, a changing political/policy environment, and administrative challenges associated with establishing an office in Uzbekistan. Furthermore, there were some perceived underpinning barriers to increasing the uptake of climate-smart agricultural practices, such as some farmer/agri-business beneficiaries having limited familiarity with the technologies and practices being introduced by the Project, and negative impressions of the technologies being deployed because of previous poor-quality implementation. Nevertheless, GGGI had a strong partnership with the local authorities and ministries, especially within the Republic of Karakalpakstan, and worked with several government agencies to implement the Project, including through providing strategic policy advice and evidence-based research, inclusive technical advisory consultations, and piloting of implementation measures.

**The evaluation found that the Project had high relevance and directly responded to the priorities of many of its stakeholders.** It was found to respond to the priorities of senior levels of government (as evidenced by the large number of Memorandums of Understanding (MOUs) that GGGI had with different ministries), aligned with and complemented the work of other development partners (as evidenced by MOUs that GGGI had with the United Nations Resident Coordinator Office (UN-RCO), Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit (GIZ), Deutsche Sparkassenstiftung fur Internationale Kooperation (DSIK)), and responded to the needs of beneficiaries. Government stakeholders and development partners also emphasized throughout the evaluation process that GGGI has a high level of visibility in Uzbekistan and is strategically aligned with the Government's focus on climate resilience and green growth, and should therefore expand its engagement across other sectors, and deepen its connections with the central government, especially with the Ministry of Economy and Finance. GGGI's expertise in delivering policy dialogue and technical consultations, under Outcome 1, was perceived as a key strength.

**In a short timeframe, under Outcome 2, GGGI was able to roll out a large-scale capacity building program, primarily targeting youth and awareness raising on climate change and disaster risk reduction, while also implementing a capacity building program for agricultural stakeholders**. The evaluation data showed that the capacity building program had improved awareness and increased knowledge. GGGI also targeted specific capacity building activities to the priorities of women in the Republic of Karakalpakstan, focusing on agriculture and health aspects of resilience, as well as supporting a smaller-scale training program for women with disabilities, and training for unemployed people in agri-business development at the local Technical Vocational Training ("MONO") center. GGGI also supplemented this capacity building program with a media awareness campaign that has reached more than 280 million viewers to date across social media, television and radio.

**There were some sustainability risks identified by the evaluation team, as some of the Project activities were delayed or were yet to be completed** (with a project extension agreed until mid-2025 to enable their completion). Under Outcome 3, two of the seven pilot farm sites were yet to have completed their commissioning. Concerns were raised about the sustainability of these pilot projects in the evaluation due to the need for ongoing engagement with the Project beneficiaries to support their effective use of the infrastructure installed and adapt their farming practices. Ongoing monitoring is needed to evaluate the impact of these pilots and learn the lessons from them for scaling up this kind of investment. There were also concerns raised in the evaluation that the pilots could not be replicated due to their affordability and the technical skills needed, however, there are government subsidies available to support their replication and the GGGI team has been made aware of 31 local farmers and enterprises that have replicated these pilots. Continued GGGI engagement within the sector was perceived as necessary by most evaluation participants, to support replication and monitoring of these projects and to document their benefits, including through supporting access to green finance (e.g., through the partnerships and products established with the Sanoat Qurilish Bank and Agrobank) and awareness raising about Climate-Smart Agriculture practices. Similarly, there were concerns about the sustainability of the Business Development Platform (see: https://greenaral.uz/en/about) that was developed under the Project. At time of the evaluation, registered users of the Business Development Platform were ~1600, well below the 4000 users initially envisioned. Furthermore, a sustainability plan for how this platform would have ongoing financing was yet to be agreed.

**The Project had strong project governance, but would benefit from an increased investment in Monitoring and project administration/management support.** The Project did not have a clear Monitoring and Evaluation (M&E) plan, especially for monitoring indicators in the Project's logical framework at an outcome level, making it difficult to evaluate the Project's performance based on these indicators. Enhanced Monitoring and Evaluation practices would support accountability, but could also improve organizational effectiveness and enhance learning, enabling greater adaptation of implementation methods, based on Monitoring and Evaluation insights. On the other hand, the evaluation found that informal feedback sought and provided to GGGI had enabled GGGI to adapt its implementation methods, especially in design and implementation of its capacity building modules. As this was the first project for GGGI in Uzbekistan, GGGI faced some challenges with recruitment and setting up the Project's organizational structure, and some positions under the project design were not permanently filled (e.g., Monitoring and Evaluation position). A relatively high turnover rate of staff was also perceived as resulting in some lack of continuity in some activities. On the other hand, the Project Steering Committee was perceived to be well supported and provided an effective oversight platform to facilitate decision-making and track progress with the Project's implementation, mitigate risks, and provide advice.

**Overall, the Project had a clear strategic alignment with the green growth priorities of the Government of Uzbekistan, by focusing on the green rehabilitation and resilience of the Aral Sea region and responded comprehensively to this priority through a multi-pronged approach.** GGGI's Project has been well received by stakeholders, and it is anticipated that it should continue to be implemented and be scaled-up. To achieve sector-wide sustainability, the rehabilitation of the agricultural sector and resilience of the Aral Sea region needs to remain a priority for the government at national and sub-national levels, and whole-of-government policy and investment reform will be needed, aligned to the areas identified by the recommendations by GGGI and the United Nations Aral Sea Trust Fund, in its 'White paper: Policy recommendations on sustainable landscapes, climate smart agriculture, and forestry development in the Aral Sea region for human well-being'[1].

[1] https://www.greenpolicyplatform.org/sites/default/files/downloads/resource/WhitePaper_EN_digital.pdf.

**ABOUT THE GLOBAL GREEN GROWTH INSTITUTE**

The Global Green Growth Institute was founded to support and promote a model of economic growth known as “green growth”, which targets key aspects of economic performance such as poverty reduction, job creation, social inclusion, and environmental sustainability.

The Global Green Growth Institute

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