



Alatau-Balkhash Kistaubayev (first from right), UN Expert Volunteer with UNDP Kazakhstan, with project consultants on their field trip to pilot territory of Turkestan, Kazakhstan.

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UN Expert Volunteer coordinates ecosystems conservation in Kazakhstan

Alatau-Balkhash Kistaubayev, a UN Expert Volunteer from Kazakhstan, supports a project of the UN Development Programme (UNDP) for ecosystem conservation and sustainable management. His 40 years of experience in the forestry sector and communication skills help him successfully coordinate the project at local level.

The UNDP project "Conservation and sustainable management of key globally-significant ecosystems for various benefits" started in Kazakhstan in 2019. It introduces a new, conservation-centered and financially self-sufficient approach to the management of forests, climate and land integrity, particularly in the pilot biodiversity areas of Zhambyl and Turkestan.

Following an initial situation analysis, an experienced national professional was needed to link communities, institutions and beneficiaries. This is why UNDP integrated the UN Expert Volunteer modality.

“ The successful implementation of the project largely depends on competent and qualified experts, especially in the field. Therefore, the professional experience of Alatau-Balkhash, his knowledge and understanding of problematic issues of forestry in the pilot region of Turkestan is very valuable for us. It undoubtedly helps to implement measures at the local level, and to cooperate with local communities.
--Kerteshev Talgat, UNDP Project Manager for biodiversity conservation

Before joining the United Nations Volunteers (UNV) programme, Alatau-Balkhash worked in the forestry sector of southern Kazakhstan, where he started as a forester and reached the position of deputy head of the regional forestry and wildlife Inspectorate.

Alatau-Balkhash is well known and has earned respect and authority among his fellow foresters. Since retiring, he has continued to work in the field of biodiversity and forest conservation.



Pilot territories of the UNDP Project "Conservation and sustainable management of key globally-significant ecosystems for various benefits", Turkestan, Kazakhstan. ©UNV, 2020

The floodplain forests of the Syr Darya river are one of the most vulnerable forest ecosystems in Kazakhstan. The UNDP project enable the assessment of their ecological status and development of recommendations for improvement. At the local level, Alatau-Balkhash assisted Kazakhstan Ecology Development consultants in their fieldwork. Well-organized logistics and close links with pilot forestry enterprises facilitated high-quality field research and data analysis on the state of floodplain forests in a short period of time.

Alatau-Balkhash also participated in designing strategies and master plans for ecotourism in the Sairam-Ugham and Syrdarya-Turkestan nature parks. He supported research on evaluating the tourism and recreation activities of these pilot territories. Ecotourism project consultants estimated the tourist facilities and infrastructure by visiting them on horseback and experiencing local life.

A special focus on pasture sustainability required dialogue between the project team, local authorities and general populace. Together with the project's expert on pasture, Alatau-Balkhash conducted a series of meetings between the consultants and the departments of animal husbandry in the four districts of Turkestan region, as well as with 51 local community members in related villages and peasant holdings.

“ Local authorities and population need to be fully informed and aware of the UNDP project's goals and plans, to remain supportive and to be able raise questions and concerns as well. We need dialogue in order to manage the balance between traditions, socioeconomic needs and actions to sustain the biodiversity of these wonderful lands. --Alatau-Balkhash Kistaubayev, UN Expert Volunteer with UNDP Kazakhstan

As a result of the project, 20 hectares will be sowed with highly productive forage crops. Furthermore, 1,000 heads of livestock will be withdrawn to the summer seasonal pastures in Sairam-Ugam national natural park and the living conditions of the shepherd-breeder will be improved.

One of the key areas of the project is to expand protected areas. Through the LLP Kazecoproject environmental consulting company, scientific justifications were prepared for the creation of a new regional park and the expansion of the Karatau reserve. One of the main stages in the successful creation of new protected areas is to form positive opinions and get full support from the local populace.

In this regard, Alatau-Balkhash support he fieldwork, as well as meetings

and discussions with project partners, forestry enterprises, local authorities and communities. The area of the newly created park will be more than 73 thousand hectares and the area of the planned expansion of Karatau amounts to 22 thousand hectares.



UN Expert Volunteer Alatau-Balkhash Kistaubayev (standing) trains employees of the Sairam-Ugham national park. ©UNV, 2020

UN Expert Volunteer Alatau-Balkhash Kistaubayev contributed to organizing events for the employees of environmental institutions, forestry enterprises and local communities to increase capacity building. Thus, with his participation and support, UNDP trained 26 employees of pilot forest farms and protected areas on monitoring forest fires by remote zoning, 40 participants from among the protected areas, forestry enterprises and non-governmental organizations on gender issues and five local artisans who produce souvenirs.

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