

Terminal Evaluation Review form, GEF Independent Evaluation Office, APR 2017

## 1. Project Data

Summary project data			
GEF project ID		2369	
GEF Agency project ID			
GEF Replenishment Phase		GEF-4	
Lead GEF Agency (include all for joint projects)		International Fund for Agricultural Development	
Project name		PRC-GEF Partnership- Capacity and Management Support for Combating Land Degradation in Dryland Ecosystems	
Country/Countries		China	
Region		Asia	
Focal area		Biodiversity (BD), Land Degradation (LD)	
Operational Program or Strategic Priorities/Objectives		BD: SO1/SO2 & SP3/SP4; LD: SO2 & SP1/SP2	
Executing agencies involved		Ministry of Finance, Ministry of Agriculture of the People's Republic of China	
NGOs/CBOs involvement		Village committees were involved in extensive consultation process and also as beneficiaries	
Private sector involvement		None	
CEO Endorsement (FSP) /Approval date (MSP)		February 24, 2009	
Effectiveness date / project start		April 15, 2011	
Expected date of project completion (at start)		June 30, 2014	
Actual date of project completion		April 15, 2016	
Project Financing			
		At Endorsement (US \$M)	At Completion (US \$M)
Project Preparation Grant	GEF funding	0.35	0.35
	Co-financing	0.13	NA
GEF Project Grant		4.545	4.578
Co-financing	IA own	2.418	0.866
	Government	18.831	20.604
	Other multi- /bi-laterals		
	Private sector		
	NGOs/CSOs	3.733	3,512
Total GEF funding		4.895	4.578
Total Co-financing		24.982	27.068
Total project funding (GEF grant(s) + co-financing)		29.877	31.996
Terminal evaluation/review information			
TE completion date		May 30, 2016	
Author of TE		IFAD (author unspecified)	
TER completion date		February 28, 2018	
TER prepared by		Nina Hamilton	
TER peer review by (if GEF IEO review)		Molly Sohn	

## 2. Summary of Project Ratings

Criteria	Final PIR	IA Terminal Evaluation	IA Evaluation Office Review	GEF IEO Review
Project Outcomes	S	S	NA	S
Sustainability of Outcomes		ML	NA	L
M&E Design		MS	NA	MS
M&E Implementation		MS	NA	MS
Quality of Implementation		S	NA	S
Quality of Execution		S	NA	S
Quality of the Terminal Evaluation Report		MS	NA	S

## 3. Project Objectives

### 3.1 Global Environmental Objectives of the project:

The Project’s global environmental objective “is demonstrating cross-area synergies associated with the development of and implementation of site-specific integrated ecosystem management (IEM) strategies leading to: (i) increases in biodiversity conservation, (ii) partial restoration of ecosystem integrity and recovery of underlying functions and services (iii) promotion and of use of appropriate renewable energy technologies designed to reduce pressure on forest resources and Project sites.” (Request for CEO Endorsement, p.1) The IEM approach “supports the establishment of a comprehensive framework to manage natural systems across sector, and political and/or administrative boundaries” and “facilitates inter-sectoral and participatory approaches to natural resources management planning and implementation on an ecosystem scale” (Project Document p.11).

### 3.2 Development Objectives of the project:

The Project’s development objective is “to achieve a sustainable increase in productive capacity, both on and off farm, and to offer increased access to economic and social resources networks while improving the bio-physical environment in three provinces in China’s western region.” (Request for CEO endorsement p.1)

The project planned to achieve these through the following five components: (i) Planning, Policy and Institutional Strengthening; (ii) Community-based Ecological Planning and Restoration & Alternative Livelihoods; (iii) Protected Areas (PAs) and Biodiversity Conservation; (iv) Increasing Public Awareness; and (v) Project Management, M&E, and Information Dissemination. (Project Document p.19)

### 3.3 Were there any **changes** in the Global Environmental Objectives, Development Objectives, or other activities during implementation?

There were no changes in the Global Environmental Objectives, Development Objectives, or other activities during implementation.

## 4. GEF IEO assessment of Outcomes and Sustainability

Please refer to the GEF Terminal Evaluation Review Guidelines for detail on the criteria for ratings.

Relevance can receive either a Satisfactory or Unsatisfactory rating. For Effectiveness and Cost efficiency, a six point rating scale is used (Highly Satisfactory to Highly Unsatisfactory), or Unable to Assess. Sustainability ratings are assessed on a four-point scale: Likely=no or negligible risk; Moderately Likely=low risk; Moderately Unlikely=substantial risks; Unlikely=high risk. In assessing a Sustainability rating please note if, and to what degree, sustainability of project outcomes is threatened by financial, sociopolitical, institutional/governance, or environmental factors.

Please justify ratings in the space below each box.

<b>4.1 Relevance</b>	Rating: Satisfactory
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The TE rates relevance as **Highly Satisfactory**, and this TER rates relevance as **Satisfactory** (binary scale). The objectives are directly relevant to China’s international commitments and national initiatives around biodiversity conservation and land degradation. These include the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD), the PR China’s Biodiversity Action Plan (1994), the Convention to Combat Desertification (CCD), and the PR China’s National Action Plan to Combat Desertification (NAPCD), among other relevant national plans and frameworks for action.

The project is highly relevant to two GEF focal areas, Biodiversity Conservation (particularly, Strategic Objective 1, to catalyze the sustainability of PA systems; and Strategic Objective 2, to mainstream biodiversity in production landscapes and sectors) and Land Degradation (Strategic Objective 2, up-scaling sustainable land management investments that generate mutual benefits for the global environment and local livelihoods). The project was also designed under the umbrella of the People’s Republic of China (PRC)-GEF Programmatic Approach to Integrated Ecosystem Management in the dryland ecosystems in Western China, which included several GEF-funded projects in the region.

<b>4.2 Effectiveness</b>	Rating: Highly Satisfactory
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The TE rates effectiveness as **Highly Satisfactory**, and this TER also rates effectiveness as **Highly Satisfactory**. The design and implementation of the Project activities, through participatory approaches in the design phase, were effective in achieving the Project goal, objectives, outcomes and outputs.

Overall, the project achieved its Global Environmental Objectives and planned results, including: (i) The trend in biodiversity loss was halted in all Project areas; (ii) Vegetation cover in the Project area in Shanxi was improved from 80% to 83% by 2015; (iii) Erosion in grasslands was reduced by 22%-75% across provinces; (iv) Desertification was reduced in Ningxia by 4.9% by 2015; and (v) Land productivity improved by 7.7% (TE, p. 17), all of which met the targets established at entry (Annex 1, Project Document). Reports from the Provincial statistics office report a 16.1%-66% reduction in poverty across the provinces from 2011 to 2015 (TE, p. 18). This cannot be directly attributable to the Project, but rather the Project is likely a contributing factor to improved livelihoods across the region.

The key achievements by component are below:

**1. Planning, Policy and Institutional Strengthening:**

The expected outcome under this component was to “promote improved planning and policy formulation in support of biodiversity conservation and mainstreaming of biodiversity principles in local/provincial policy frameworks and processes” (Project Document, p. 20). The project

demonstrated successful achievement of this outcome and expected results by meeting the following targets: (i) IEM plans were endorsed by provincial authorities in all three provinces; (ii) IEM principles and recommended actions were incorporated into Provincial regulations; and (iii) IEM principles and recommended actions provided inputs to the 12th Five Year Development Plans in counties across the three provinces (TE, p. 18).

## **2. Community-based Ecological Planning and Restoration & Alternative Livelihoods:**

The expected outcomes under this component were “(i) widespread inclusion of ecological principles in the village planning process; and (ii) adoption and up scaling of validated alternative livelihood options designed to reduce poverty and pressure on biodiversity resources in and adjacent to existing PAs” (Project Document, p. 21). The project demonstrated achievement of these outcomes, successfully meeting their expected results, by meeting targets for the following indicators: (i) zero biodiversity loss in the project area; (ii) successful native tree reforestation; (iii) villages outside IEM Project sites adopted Village Development and Environmental Plans (VDEPs); and (iv) illegal harvesting of medicinal herbs, fuelwood, and grazing were significantly reduced (TE, p. 17-18).

## **3. Protected Areas and Biodiversity Conservation:**

The expected outcomes under this component were “(i) increased protection of biodiversity and sustainability of protected areas and strengthening of the PA system nationally and (ii) partial restoration of ecological “goods and services” provided by the ecosystems in proximity to the respective PAs” (Project Document, p. 23). The project satisfactorily met its output targets, including establishing 3 new PA management plans and training Nature Reserve staff on Integrated Ecosystem Management. The project demonstrated achievement of targeted outcomes, successfully meeting their expected results, with the following indicators: (i) PA management effectiveness increased by 20-51% across the three PAs (measured by management effectiveness tracking tool score; compared to a targeted 20-30% increase) (ii) one PA was upgraded to a National Nature Reserve; (iii) natural grasslands were restored; and (iv) Erosion in grasslands was reduced by 22%-75% across the three provinces.

## **4. Increasing Public Awareness:**

The expected outcomes under this component were “increased public awareness and support for conservation of biodiversity, land degradation control and ecosystem protection in and around project supported PAs” (Project Document, p. 23). The project demonstrated achievement of these outcomes, successfully meeting their expected results, with the following indicators: (i) more than 50% increase in participation of villagers at annual provincial events, and (ii) 20-30% increase in average scores by participants in knowledge quizzes across all 3 provinces.

The project was also highly effective at reaching potentially marginalized segments of the population, with women comprising an estimated 48% of beneficiaries, and ethnic minorities comprising 49%.

4.3 <b>Efficiency</b>	Rating: Moderately Satisfactory
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The TE rates efficiency as **Satisfactory**, however this TER rates efficiency as **Moderately Satisfactory** due to a major delay and funding shortfall, even though these were overcome before the expected end date.

Although there was anticipated to be “significant cost-efficiencies gained through the ‘blending’ of the GEF FSP with the two [existing IFAD] programs” (Project Document, p. 25), significant delays experienced during the inception of the project, due to the transition from GEF-3 to GEF-4 and delayed approval by the government, resulted in the IFAD programs being completed before the GEF project began. As a result, the GEF project became an independent project and there was a major shortfall of funding, which was compensated for by government co-financing (TE, p. 2). The funding gap was filled, and the major outcomes were achieved by the expected project completion date at the start (2016). However, the delay resulted in the loss of the major cost-efficiency that was at the core of this project.

4.4 <b>Sustainability</b>	Rating: Likely
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The TE rates project sustainability as **Likely**, noting that there are negligible socio-political, financial, institutional framework and governance risks, with environmental sustainability considered Moderately Likely due to risk of extreme weather events and long-term climate change. This TER also rates sustainability as **Likely**, but noting additional risks from the design phase that were not addressed or mentioned in the TE.

#### **Financial Resources Sustainability**

The TE rates financial resources as **Likely**, and this TER maintains that rating. The government and beneficiaries at the provincial and village level have demonstrated strong commitment to the project’s objectives by exceeding co-financing targets to meet a shortfall of \$1.55 million left by IFAD (TE, p. 19). Furthermore, improved PA and National Nature Reserves (NNR) management was institutionalized into the State Forestry Administration through their endorsement of new master plans and management plans, ensuring “medium to long term financing through the State planning and budgeting system” (TE, p. 19). Furthermore, the World Bank and other multilateral institutions adopted this project’s IEM approach in other dryland ecosystem projects in the same region, boosting the likelihood that there will continue to be financial support to replicate and/or scale up this approach (TE, p. 19).

#### **Sociopolitical Sustainability**

The TE rates sociopolitical sustainability as **Likely**, however given the inadequate evidence this TER rates sociopolitical sustainability as **Moderately Likely**. The TE notes that Government “interests, commitments and support” are high in the project region, and the government’s commitments at the national and international level support the project’s objectives. However, the issue of lack of land ownership, which the Project Document noted plays a key role in “non-sustainable land use practices and poor stewardship of the natural resource endowment,” is not acknowledged in the project implementation or evaluation (Project Document, p. 27). Land tenure reform is beyond the scope of the project, however the TE fails to acknowledge this as a continued risk to the long-term viability of sustainable land use practices.

#### **Institutional Framework and Governance Sustainability**

The TE rates institutional framework and governance sustainability as **Likely**, and this TER maintains the same rating. The project developed high levels of commitment at the Province, County, Town and Village levels through multi-stakeholder processes that were highly transparent and participatory (TE, p.

20). Continued commitment of the government at international and national scales, effective institutionalization of improved PA management, and the generation of knowledge and lessons learned (Master Plans, Management Plans, Biodiversity Monitoring Plans, Village Development and Environment Plans, and M&E Plans) all further ensure long-term sustainability of the Project results (TE, p. 19-20). Furthermore, the technical experts, policy decision makers, farmers, farmer association representatives, and communities trained in IEM approaches through this project will ensure the approach can continue to be integrated into local planning processes (TE, p. 19).

The TE also notes that the institutional framework developed by this project for interagency cooperation will be maintained as part of the Project Phase-out/Exit Strategy, specifically by sustaining key experts for “building a pool of experienced local experts that may be mobilized for providing guidance for future biodiversity conservation in dryland ecosystems in other provinces” (TE, p.19). However, there is no evidence that this strategy has been implemented.

### **Environmental**

The TE rates environmental sustainability as **Likely**, however the TE executive summary notes that it is only moderately likely. This TER rates environmental sustainability as **Moderately Likely**. At both the point of project design and completion, extreme climatic events and long term global/local climate changes are mentioned as risks to the long-term achievement of livelihood development goals (Project Document, p. 28; TE, p. 20). Although climate change vulnerability and risk assessment were incorporated into farmer training (MTR, p. 18), there is no evidence that this was institutionalized into the Village Development and Environmental Plans (VDEPs) as planned at the project design phase (Project Document, p. 28). For this reason, climate is still considered to be a moderate risk.

## **5. Processes and factors affecting attainment of project outcomes**

5.1 Co-financing. To what extent was the reported co-financing essential to the achievement of GEF objectives? If there was a difference in the level of expected co-financing and actual co-financing, then what were the reasons for it? Did the extent of materialization of co-financing affect project’s outcomes and/or sustainability? If so, in what ways and through what causal linkages?

The project co-financing exceeded its targets, particularly from the government in order to meet a shortfall of \$1.55 million left by IFAD (TE, p. 19). The supplementary co-financing by the Government and Beneficiaries was essential for the achievement of all outputs and outcomes before the expected end date. Furthermore, the demonstrated commitment by the government and beneficiaries strengthens the sustainability of project outcomes.

5.2 Project extensions and/or delays. If there were delays in project implementation and completion, then what were the reasons for it? Did the delay affect the project’s outcomes and/or sustainability? If so, in what ways and through what causal linkages?

As previously mentioned, significant delays were experienced during the inception of the project due to the transition from GEF-3 to GEF-4 and delayed approval by the government, resulting in a start-up delay of approximately 2 years. As a result, the IFAD programs this project had planned to “blend” with were completed before the GEF project began, leaving it as an independent project. Because of this there was a major shortfall of funding from IFAD, which was compensated for by government co-financing (TE, p. 2). The major outcomes were still achieved by the expected project completion date as a result of increased government co-financing (TE, p. 25).

5.3 Country ownership. Assess the extent to which country ownership has affected project outcomes and sustainability? Describe the ways in which it affected outcomes and sustainability, highlighting the causal links:

The commitment of the country ownership was demonstrated by the government’s overall high level of co-financing and the commitment to supplement co-financing when there was a funding shortfall from IFAD. Furthermore, in collaboration with the project, the government has replicated the Integrated Ecosystem Management (IEM) and participatory approaches into other national programs addressing land degradation and biodiversity conservation in arid and semi-arid ecosystems (TE, p. 17), demonstrating broader adoption as a result of strong country ownership. The previously mentioned institutionalization of improved PA management, through endorsement by the State Forest Authority, also demonstrates country ownership and improved the sustainability of project outcomes.

## 6. Assessment of project’s Monitoring and Evaluation system

Ratings are assessed on a six point scale: Highly Satisfactory=no shortcomings in this M&E component; Satisfactory=minor shortcomings in this M&E component; Moderately Satisfactory=moderate shortcomings in this M&E component; Moderately Unsatisfactory=significant shortcomings in this M&E component; Unsatisfactory=major shortcomings in this M&E component; Highly Unsatisfactory=there were no project M&E systems.

Please justify ratings in the space below each box.

<b>6.1 M&amp;E Design at entry</b>	Rating: <b>Moderately Satisfactory</b>
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The TE rates M&E design as **Moderately Satisfactory**, and this TER provides the same rating. The M&E plan was well designed and adequately funded, with a detailed participatory approach, clear reporting timeline, and logical framework that closely aligned with project goals, objectives and outcomes. The Project Document identifies verifiable indicators and means of verification; however, the project would have benefited from SMART indicators for solid quantitative assessment of both biodiversity and livelihood outcomes (TE, p. 29; MTR, p. 31). The TE notes that clearer logframe indicators may have also prevented differences in interpretation across the project team, though the TE and PIRs do not provide any examples of misinterpretation (TE, p. 22, see below).

<b>6.2 M&amp;E Implementation</b>	Rating: <b>Moderately Satisfactory</b>
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The TE rates M&E implementation as **Moderately Satisfactory**, and this TER provides the same rating. Although the M&E plan was well designed, implementation varied between the three Provinces with not all provinces carrying out a Mid Term Evaluation (TE, p. 23). An additional weakness of M&E implementation was the misinterpretation of indicators across the project team, for which the TE recommends a “joint M&E framework building and capacity building exercise by all engaged project provinces” for future cross-provincial projects (TE, p. 21).

However, each province did diligently record the project achievements against output and outcome indicators (TE, p. 21) and the team completed most of the standard M&E reports, with annual PIRs reporting a detailed assessment of the status of project indicators (TE, p. 23).

## 7. Assessment of project implementation and execution

Quality of Implementation includes the quality of project design, as well as the quality of supervision and assistance provided by implementing agency(s) to execution agencies throughout project implementation. Quality of Execution covers the effectiveness of the executing agency(s) in performing its roles and responsibilities. In both instances, the focus is upon factors that are largely within the control of the respective implementing and executing agency(s). A six point rating scale is used (Highly Satisfactory to Highly Unsatisfactory), or Unable to Assess.

Please justify ratings in the space below each box.

<b>7.1 Quality of Project Implementation</b>	Rating: Satisfactory
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The project's implementing agency was IFAD. The TE does not provide a separate rating for project implementation but notes a "positive impression of IFAD's role in the Project" (TE, p. 24). This TER rates project implementation as **Satisfactory**.

IFAD provided strong guidance on Project direction, sustainability and compliance with fiduciary standards, as well as support to the Project design process, with a dedicated officer appointed in IFAD to coordinate administrative and financial support to the Project (TE, p. 24-25). In the end, the IFAD-GEF's Integrated Ecosystem Management Approach has proven effective in encouraging vertical and horizontal integration within and beyond the immediate natural resources management sectors, despite the project design complexity. IFAD's experience and country program in China played a crucial role, as they are familiar with the institutional and administrative systems and issues in the region. IFAD's specific experience with poverty alleviation, mainstreaming biodiversity in productive landscapes, integrated ecosystem management, and participatory approaches working with authorities and communities also facilitated project implementation (TE, p. 25).

<b>7.2 Quality of Project Execution</b>	Rating: Satisfactory
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The project's executing agency was the Ministry of Finance, which delegated responsibilities to Provincial Departments of Finance. The TE does not provide a separate rating for project execution, but rates Component 5's (Project Management) outputs as **Satisfactory**, which mostly pertains to executing agency responsibilities. This TER also rates project execution as **Satisfactory**.

Despite initial delays during inception, there was consistent progress towards project outputs and outcomes from the Mid Term Review (2014) onwards, so that major outputs and outcomes were achieved by the end date in April 2016 (TE, p. 15). The executing agency and Provincial and County Project Management Offices' (PPMOs and CPMOs) successful project execution was facilitated by their past experience in coordinating technical and financial delivery in prior IFAD projects. The agency successfully established mechanisms for effective cooperation among all involved offices and government agencies, which also facilitated strong project ownership at multiple levels and remained effective throughout the project with likelihood of continuing beyond project closure (TE, p. 15).

## 8. Assessment of Project Impacts



**Note - In instances where information on any impact related topic is not provided in the terminal evaluations, the reviewer should indicate in the relevant sections below that this is indeed the case and identify the information gaps. When providing information on topics related to impact, please cite the page number of the terminal evaluation from where the information is sourced.**

8.1 Environmental Change. Describe the changes in environmental stress and environmental status that occurred by the end of the project. Include both quantitative and qualitative changes documented, sources of information for these changes, and how project activities contributed to or hindered these changes. Also include how contextual factors have contributed to or hindered these changes.

The TE claims that biodiversity loss was halted in project areas across the three provinces, though the TE does not state specifically how this was measured. The project led to increased vegetation cover (increased 3% in 4 years, evidence only provided for one province), improved land productivity (7.7% increase in corn yield in one project area), natural grassland restored (234,000 mu), reduced erosion on grassland sites (22%-75% reduction), and reduced area of desertification (reduced by 4.9% in one province) (TE, p. 32). Improved PA management, restoration activities, and implementation of alternative livelihood options contributed to these environmental impacts.

8.2 Socioeconomic change. Describe any changes in human well-being (income, education, health, community relationships, etc.) that occurred by the end of the project. Include both quantitative and qualitative changes documented, sources of information for these changes, and how project activities contributed to or hindered these changes. Also include how contextual factors have contributed to or hindered these changes.

The TE notes a “positive impression of livelihood results at Project sites” through interviews with beneficiaries, however data limitations did not allow a “solid quantitative assessment about impact of the introduced alternative livelihoods on improvement of biodiversity conservation and PA management” (TE, p. 10-11). There was a 16.1%-66% reduction in poverty across the provinces from 2011 to 2015 (TE, p. 18, figure provided by Provincial statistics office). This is only indicative, as the reduced poverty cannot be attributed to this project alone.

8.3 Capacity and governance changes. Describe notable changes in capacities and governance that can lead to large-scale action (both mass and legislative) bringing about positive environmental change. “Capacities” include awareness, knowledge, skills, infrastructure, and environmental monitoring systems, among others. “Governance” refers to decision-making processes, structures and systems, including access to and use of information, and thus would include laws, administrative bodies, trust-building and conflict resolution processes, information-sharing systems, etc. Indicate how project activities contributed to/ hindered these changes, as well as how contextual factors have influenced these changes.

a) Capacities

The project generated knowledge and lessons learned through Master Plans, Management Plans, Biodiversity Monitoring Plans, Village Development and Environment Plans, and M&E Plans (TE, p. 19). The project also trained policy decision makers (707), farmers (20,123), and agriculture technicians (650) in Integrated Ecosystem Management (TE, p. 19).

## b) Governance

The mechanisms established by this project for effective cooperation among all involved offices and government agencies, if successfully sustained beyond project closure, can significantly facilitate further cross-sectoral collaboration to jointly address biodiversity conservation, land degradation, and poverty. Furthermore, the project was instrumental in improving the government's sectoral planning by changing it from top-down approach to a participatory, community-based and multi-sector integration-based approach (TE, p. 20).

8.4 Unintended impacts. Describe any impacts not targeted by the project, whether positive or negative, affecting either ecological or social aspects. Indicate the factors that contributed to these unintended impacts occurring.

No unintended impacts of the project are reported affecting either ecological or social aspects.

8.5 Adoption of GEF initiatives at scale. Identify any initiatives (e.g. technologies, approaches, financing instruments, implementing bodies, legal frameworks, information systems) that have been mainstreamed, replicated and/or scaled up by government and other stakeholders by project end. Include the extent to which this broader adoption has taken place, e.g. if plans and resources have been established but no actual adoption has taken place, or if market change and large-scale environmental benefits have begun to occur. Indicate how project activities and other contextual factors contributed to these taking place. If broader adoption has not taken place as expected, indicate which factors (both project-related and contextual) have hindered this from happening.

In collaboration with project staff, the Integrated Ecosystem Management and participatory approaches were replicated in other programs addressing degraded lands and impacts on biodiversity conservation in arid and semi-arid ecosystems including: (i) IFAD-PRC's Jiangxi Integrated Agricultural Development Project; (ii) IFAD-PRC's Qinghai Poverty Alleviation Program; (iii) IFAD-PRC's Xinjiang Integrated Agricultural Development Project; (iv) The World Bank-PRC/s Gansu Demonstration Project on Poverty Alleviation by Industry Development; (v) ADB-PRC's Gansu Agricultural Development Project; (vi) ADB-PRC's Shanxi Agricultural Development Project; and (vi) the establishment of the Gucheng Wetland National Park in Yuangu County, Shanxi (TE, p. 20). It is not clear from the TE whether these have yet been operationalized/ implemented.

Furthermore, many of the planning tools and management plans for improved PA management have been institutionalized into the State Forest Authority, ensuring this approach will continue to be adopted at a large scale (TE, p. 21).

## 9. Lessons and recommendations

9.1 Briefly describe the key lessons, good practices, or approaches mentioned in the terminal evaluation report that could have application for other GEF projects.

The TE reports the follow key lessons learned:

**IEM approach to achieving long-term success:** The IEM approach was highly relevant to biodiversity conservation in dryland ecosystems in China. The Project has successfully demonstrated that the IEM principles and recommended actions can positively influence the ways in which people use natural resources and how they benefit from the improved ecosystem services. The Project made efforts to ensure that principles and recommended actions of the IEM approach were fully reinforced by line agencies in planning and programming, so as to avoid reversion to sector-based approaches.

**Institutional capacity building for establishing an enabling environment:** For the IEM approach to be effective, cooperating and collaborating institutions and sectors had to be supported by IEM knowledge and skills for policymaking, planning, and joint management of the environment and natural resources. Joint and effective management of ecosystems and natural resources required improved capacities of cooperating and collaborating institutions that combined top-down and bottom-up approaches.

**Importance of Public Awareness Building:** Strong awareness among stakeholders, especially the public, on the state of the environment and natural resources is important for gaining support for government plans and strategies for land degradation control and for overall ecosystem and natural resource management in general.

**Importance of a database system and information-sharing mechanism:** For information sharing to be effective and useful, the “institutional value” of data should be recognized and access to data should be made available for all government agencies in a timely and practical manner.

9.2 Briefly describe the recommendations given in the terminal evaluation.

**Inclusion of policy dialogue engagement in the Project Design:** Strengthen the scope of policy work and rationale in the Project document, making clearer linkage to relevant IFAD’s and government programs/policies. Adopt an integrated and multi-sectoral approach to policy making and planning to ensure that the challenges and bottlenecks of project implementation are addressed in a comprehensive and inter-sectoral manner.

**Greater community involvement in natural resources management and ecosystem management:** Develop VDEPs as part of a planning exercise and mobilize the enthusiasm of rural communities and private sector to address environment-related problems. This facilitates finding practical and realistic solutions to address the environment and poverty challenges at its roots.

**Project M&E indicators and system:** For future conservation-related Projects, develop SMART indicators at the outcome and output levels to provide a solid quantitative assessment about impact of the restoration on improvement of biodiversity richness. Ensure that indicators are not ambiguous and not too difficult in measuring harmonization of environment and economic benefit.

**Sharing of IEM knowledge products and programmatic approach experience:** Develop a knowledge management strategy which specifies the target audience and distribution level per product as well as linkages among products. Enhance the GIS database management systems established in each Province by clarifying and harmonizing data for analysis at the project level (beyond the provincial level) and

connect it to patrolling, fire prevention, biodiversity monitoring. In addition, user Manuals for practical users of the GIS/database should be provided to make on-going post-Project use of the GIS/database. Explore an institutionally and financially practical way to share experiences and knowledge from IFAD funded Projects in China and policy recommendations for strengthened exchange and experiences sharing between IFAD funded Projects in China and in other developing countries.

## 10. Quality of the Terminal Evaluation Report

A six-point rating scale is used for each sub-criteria and overall rating of the terminal evaluation report (Highly Satisfactory to Highly Unsatisfactory)

To what extent does the report contain an assessment of relevant outcomes and impacts of the project and the achievement of the objectives?	The relevant outputs are thoroughly assessed, and effectiveness is assessed in aggregate. Many environmental impact indicators are unclear and difficult to interpret.	<b>MS</b>
To what extent is the report internally consistent, the evidence presented complete and convincing, and ratings well substantiated?	Although ratings for environmental and sociopolitical sustainability were inflated, the report provided substantial convincing evidence to back up the project's achievements.	<b>S</b>
To what extent does the report properly assess project sustainability and/or project exit strategy?	The report provides a detailed assessment of financial resource and institutional sustainability, however key risks from the Project Document regarding sociopolitical and environmental sustainability are not addressed in the TE. There is little to no mention of an exit strategy.	<b>MS</b>
To what extent are the lessons learned supported by the evidence presented and are they comprehensive?	The lessons learned are comprehensive and supported by evidence.	<b>S</b>
Does the report include the actual project costs (total and per activity) and actual co-financing used?	The report includes actual project costs (total and per activity) as well as a detailed breakdown of actual co-financing.	<b>HS</b>
Assess the quality of the report's evaluation of project M&E systems:	The TE provides detail on the challenges and weaknesses of the M&E system, however the IFAD IEO noted that the TE lacks a summary of strengths to merit the MS rating. This section would benefit from restructuring, as notes on implementation were reported in the M&E Plan section.	<b>MS</b>
<b>Overall TE Rating</b>		<b>S</b>

## 11. Note any additional sources of information used in the preparation of the terminal evaluation report (excluding PIRs, TEs, and PADs).

No additional sources were used in the preparation of this TER.