Terminal Evaluation Review form, GEF Independent Evaluation Office, APR 2016

1. Project Data

Summary project data			
GEF project ID		2435	
GEF Agency project ID		PIMS: 2902	
GEF Replenishment Phase		GEF-4	
Lead GEF Agency (include all for joint projects)		UNDP	
Project name		Priority Institutional Strengthening and Capacity Development to Implement the China Biodiversity Partnership and Framework for Action	
Country/Countries		(CPR) China	
Region		Asia and the Pacific	
Focal area		Biodiversity	
Operational Program or Strategic Priorities/Objectives		SP4: Strengthening the Policy and Regulatory Framework for Mainstreaming Biodiversity SP5: Fostering Markets for Biodiversity Goods and Services	
Executing agencies involved		China Ministry of Finance (MOF) China Ministry of Environmental Protection (MEP)	
NGOs/CBOs involvement		National/International NGOs - Through consultations	
Private sector involvement		Private sector representatives - Through consultations	
CEO Endorsement (FSP) /Approval date (MSP)		November 2009	
Effectiveness date / project start		14 May 2010	
Expected date of project completion (at start)		May 2015	
Actual date of project completion		13 March 2016	
Project Financing			
		At Endorsement (US $M)	**At Completion (US $M)**
Project Preparation Grant	GEF funding	0.35	NA
	Co-financing	0.5	NA
GEF Project Grant		4.51	2.75
Co-financing	IA own	6.0	15.290
	Government	9.0	10.95
	Other multi- /bi-laterals	0.18	2.08
	Private sector	0	0
	NGOs/CSOs	3.06	4.15
Total GEF funding		4.86	2.75
Total Co-financing		18.74	32.43
Total project funding (GEF grant(s) + co-financing)		23.60	35.18
Terminal evaluation/review information			
TE completion date		November 2015	
Author of TE		Li He & James Lenoci	
TER completion date		November 25, 2016	
TER prepared by		Caroline Laroche	
TER peer review by (if GEF IEO review)		Molly Watts	

2. Summary of Project Ratings

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

3. Project Objectives

3.1 Global Environmental Objectives of the project:

The environmental problem being addressed by this project is the loss of globally significant biodiversity (PD p.8). Indeed, China is home to a significant proportion of the world's biodiversity, which, despite efforts from the Government, is being threatened. As a response, the Government of China has initiated the China Biodiversity Partnership and Framework for Action (CBPF).

3.2 Development Objectives of the project:

This project contributes to the China Biodiversity Partnership and Framework for Action CBPF's overall goal, which is "a significant reduction of the rate of biodiversity loss as a contribution to sustainable development" (PD p.8). The specific project objective is "*the development of the national policy and institutional framework, bringing it closer to international best practices"*. To meet this objective, the project works on five different outcomes:

1. Strengthened Coordination Mechanisms at the Central Level for Biodiversity Conservation
2. Strengthened Planning Systems for Biodiversity Conservation, including M&E
3. Biodiversity Mainstreamed into National Development Plans and Programs
4. Enabling Framework for Government and Market Based Payment for Environmental Services (PES)
5. Integration of Biodiversity Conservation into Climate Change Adaptation Policies and Plans [1] SEP

(PD pp.16-20)

Indeed, while the problem being addressed by this project is the loss of globally significant biodiversity in China, the project focuses on the negative impacts of this biodiversity loss on poverty and sustainable development (PD p.8). More specifically, "the project mainstreams biodiversity into priority socio-economic issues (poverty and climate change adaptation), thereby constructing positive links between conservation and sustainable development" (PD p.1).

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

There were no changes in objectives or planned activities during project 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.

4.1 **Relevance**	Rating: **Satisfactory**

The TE rates the project as relevant. Similarly, this TER rates project relevance as having been satisfactory due to its good alignment with both China's national biodiversity conservation agenda and the GEF-4 biodiversity strategy.

The project has been developed as part of China's national biodiversity conservation efforts, and has been led by the Government of China. Indeed, the project aims to strengthen the institutions underlying the China Biodiversity Partnership and Framework for Action, which were initiated in 2004. The Framework initially covers a 10-year period (2007-2017) and has the overall goal of "a significant reduction of the rate of biodiversity loss as a contribution to china's sustainable development" (PD p.6). To ensure its continued relevance, the CBPF "was designed to be fully consistent with China's 11th Five-Year National Socio-Economic Development Plan (2006-2010) which specifies 'developing the recycling economy, protecting the environment and speeding up the construction of a resource-saving and environmental-friendly society' as one of its core strategies. This project is aligned with this agenda."(PD p.14). The project was also done in perfect alignment with the China National Biodiversity Conservation Strategy and Action Plan 2011-2030.

Moreover, the project was developed in line with the GEF-4 Biodiversity Strategy, specifically strategic programs 4 (Strengthening the Policy and Regulatory Framework for Mainstreaming Biodiversity) and 5 (Fostering Markets for Biodiversity Goods and Services). Indeed, with the project aiming to strengthen institutions, mainstream biodiversity conservation into national development plans and enable a framework for market-based payment for environmental services, it was clearly relevant to those two GEF strategic programs.

4.2 **Effectiveness**	Rating: **Moderately Satisfactory**

The TE rates effectiveness as moderately satisfactory as the project has performed well against several outcomes, but "a series of implementation inefficiencies has held back more effective performance" (TE p.25). The 2014 PIR also rates effectiveness as moderately satisfactory, as does this TER. In the paragraphs below, we discuss the extent to which the project successfully achieved the outcomes it set out to achieve.

Overall Assessment

The TE makes it clear that the project successfully met its objective of strengthening institutional capacities for biodiversity conservation in China. According to the TE, the most noteworthy project result has been the approval of the three Biodiversity Strategy and Action Plans (BSAPs), which further developed biodiversity planning capacities and frameworks at the subnational level (TE p.viii). In addition, "the development and approval of ecological redline delineation technical guidelines, and the demonstrations completed in two provinces, are meaningful contributions to a recently adopted approach in the country, thus potentially having broad implications on a national scale" (TE P.viii).

Beyond those notable accomplishments, the project also successfully led to an increase in the capacity development scorecard score, which went from 17 to 38.9, exceeding the target of 31 set for the project. However, there was no evidence that the project led to an increase in biodiversity conservation resources available from government and private sector, which is another indicator of success that was set for the project.

Outcome 1: Strengthened Coordination Mechanisms at the Central Level for Biodiversity Conservation

Several outputs were delivered under this outcome, including a study on existing biodiversity partnerships domestically and internationally, an evaluation of the performance of projects conducted under the CBPF, media trainings and information exchange meetings.

As a result of project activities, the capacity development scorecard score for partnerships increased from 4 to 11.2, exceeding the target of 8 (TE p.26). However, at the time of the TE mission, it was unclear whether or not the CBPF Secretariat had been strengthened or whether a consolidated monitoring framework by CBPF partners being established and accepted (TE p.26).

Outcome 2: Strengthened Planning Systems for Biodiversity Conservation, including M&E

The outputs delivered under this outcome included the development of a monitoring and evaluation indicator system for tracking the progress of the China National Biodiversity Strategy and Action Plan (CNBSAP), support for the development of three provincial BSAP's, a sectoral BSAP for the General Administration of Quality Supervision, Inspection and Quarantine, as sectoral BSAP for the Ministry of Water Resources, and training courses.

As a result of project activities, the capacity development scorecard score for planning increased from 7 to 15.1, exceeding the target of 14. However, at the time of the TE mission, there was no evidence that target ministries and agencies had integrated NBSAP priority actions into their annual work plans. (TE p.27)

Outcome 3: Biodiversity Mainstreamed into National Development Plans and Programs

Outputs under this outcome included demonstrations of delineating ecological conservation redline and developing associated management guidelines in Hubei Province and Ningxia Hui Autonomous Region, as well as research on expanding participation of enterprises into the CBPF.

As a result of project activities, the capacity development scorecard for mainstreaming increased from 6 to 12.6, exceeding the target of 9. The TE reports that a number of ongoing activities had not yet been completed or consolidated at the time of the TE mission (TE pp.27-28).

Outcome 4: Enabling Framework for Government and Market Based Payment for Environmental Services (PES)

Several outputs were delivered under this outcome, including studies and research activities regarding PES, support for Payment for Environmental Services legislation and implementation in Liaoning Province, and the demonstration of market based Payment for Environmental Services in the Xianju National Park.

Unfortunately, "at the time of the TE mission, there was no evidence available to the total amount of funding available for biodiversity conservation through market-based PES schemes, compared to the baseline value. There is also no evidence that a baseline figure was established. Based upon anecdotal evidence obtained during TE mission interviews, there most likely has been a doubling of market-based PES schemes since project entry in 2009. But, there are no data available to confirm this, and, hence, the TE team is unable to assess the progress made with respect to this outcome level indicator. " (TE p.28)

Outcome 5: Integration of Biodiversity Conservation into Climate Change Adaptation Policies and Plans LSEP

Under this outcome, the project team supported the Qinghai Provincial Ecological Remote Sensing Center in expanding their existing information management system, funded s survey on private sector participation in biodiversity conservation, supported training on CSR and supported the development of guidelines for addressing biodiversity conservation concerns in environmental impact assessment processes.

The 2011-2030 National BSAP's Priority Area 8 – "To improve capacities to cope with climate change" is strong evidence that national conservation policies now explicitly address adaptation to climate change" (TE p.29). In addition, the various provincial and sectoral BSAPs facilitated with project support did incorporate climate change adaptation considerations, except for the BSAP developed by the General Administration of Quality Supervision, Inspection and Quarantine. (TE p.30)

4.3 **Efficiency**	Rating: **Moderately Unsatisfactory**

The TE rates efficiency as moderately satisfactory. This TER rates efficiency as moderately unsatisfactory due to the several implementation issues that affected project delivery, the low disbursement rates and the high proportion of funds spent on travel.

As described above, the project supported several important achievements in biodiversity conservation in China. The project unfortunately suffered from several implementation inefficiencies, which ended up diminishing project impact. The TE describes how financial delivery has been low throughout the project, but started early on during the project. The TE describes how "persistent implementation efficiencies have led to woeful levels of financial delivery. Implementation problems started with the delays in commencing the project. The Ministry of Finance and UNDP approved the project in May 2010, following GEF Council approval in November 2009, but the project management team was only assembled in 2011, with the inception workshop held in April of that year. Financial delivery over the four core years of the project, from 2012 through 2015, has been low, ranging between 44% and 64%. The low delivery rates seem to be partly due to exogenous conditions, including limited availability of qualified experts for certain assignments. But, changing project managers, the inability to secure a full-time chief technical advisor, and lengthy procurement processes have added to the inefficiencies" (TE p.30). As a result, according to the TE, "there will be insufficient time to distil the results, formulate strategies for follow up work, and advocate for uptake of some of the technical guidelines and policy recommendations developed with project support." (TE p.vi)

In addition, cost effectiveness was also poor due the high proportion (12%) of funds spent on travel. This exceeds the maximum GEF-4 threshold of 5%. That being said, "the indicative budget approved in the project document had USD 722,000 in travel costs, or 16% of the total budget" (TE pp.30-31), so this is something that was planned and approved by all parties at project design.

On the upside, project efficiency has been enhanced by the fact that co-financing contributions have exceeded the amounts expected.

4.4 **Sustainability**	Rating: **Moderately Likely**

The TE rates sustainability as moderately likely, largely due to inconsistent stakeholder ownership for the China Biodiversity Partnership and Framework for Action (CBPF). This TER agrees with this assignment, and notes the good financial outlook for the CBPF going forward as well as the progress made towards institutional strengthening over the course of the project.

Financial Risks – Sustainability Likely

Government funding on biodiversity conservation in China has been substantial so far and will likely further expand with the operationalization of ecological civilization principles in the 13th 5-year plan (TE p.32). GEF is continuing to fund projects related to biodiversity in China, and co-financing for the project exceeded pledged amounts, showing donor interest in funding activities in this area. Overall, risks to continued biodiversity financing in China appear low. Adding to this, "the outcomes of this project are at the institutional and policy level. Once established and functioning, they do not need significant finances to maintain. They require commitment by the partners" (PD p.22). In sum, financial risks do not appear to threaten the project's sustainability.

Socio-Economic Risks – Sustainability Moderately Likely

According to the TE, "ecological conservation is slated to be integrated into the 13th 5-year socio-economic development plan, 2016-2020", and "ecological compensation programmes are fairly extensively mainstreamed into subnational development strategies for rural areas in China" (TE p.33). On the other hand, stakeholder ownership over the CBPF is inconsistent, which reduces the likelihood of continued support for the strengthening of the CBPF coordination mechanism following project end.

Institutional Risks – Sustainability Likely

The CBPF is set to continue after the project end. Indeed, "the CBPF will continue as the main programming vehicle after the project, and it will therefore assure the sustainability of the project's outcomes and impacts" (PD p.22). As part of the project, the Ministry of Environmental Protection's (MEP) capacity to facilitate the coordination of biodiversity conservation planning has been strengthened. Despite the inconsistent political buy-in for a CBPF coordination mechanism, it appears very likely the CBPF will remain a strong actor in biodiversity programming in China. (TE p.33)

Environmental Risks – Sustainability Likely

Given the importance and visibility of pollution issues in China, in particular due to air quality and public health concerns, attention and funding might be diverted away from biodiversity conservation. At this point, this concern described in the TE (p.33), is only hypothetical. No other environmental risks are currently affecting the likelihood of sustainability.

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?

> Materialized co-financing ($32.43 million) exceeded pledged co-financing ($18.24 million), with the largest contribution coming from the UNDP as parallel co-financing from the EU China Biodiversity program.

The amount of co-financing and the interest demonstrated by funders in financing biodiversity in China make the financial sustainability of the project more likely.

The TE does not describe the way in which the additional co-financing obtained was utilized by the project and influenced 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?

A no-cost extension was suggested as part of the midterm review conducted in Spring 2013, largely because of the time lost in the first year of implementation. A 10-month extension was approved, changing the project closure date from May 2015 to March 2016. (TE p.5)

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 TE provides a very good summary of country ownership for the project:

Country ownership was evident in the fact that the project is closely aligned with the national development priorities. And, this is further supported by the promotion of ecological civilization principle as one of the core pillars of the 13th 5-year socio-economic plan, for the period 2016-2020.

(…)

Government co-financing has exceeded the pledged amounts at project entry, and, also, there has been substantive leveraged resources mobilized, including from subnational governmental stakeholders with regarding to the provincial Biodiversity Strategy and Action Plans (BSAPs) and also central level stakeholders, including the AQSIQ in development of their sectoral BSAP.

Country ownership was also bolstered by the fact that high level officials have been keenly involved in the project, and the national project director has been consistent supporter of the project, even though there have been implementation challenges.

(TE p.31)

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.

6.1 **M&E Design at entry**	Rating: **Satisfactory**

The TE rates M&E design at entry as satisfactory. This TER also rates M&E design as satisfactory due to the completeness of its M&E plan, and the useful capacity development scorecard developed for the China Biodiversity Partnership and Framework for Action (CBPF) during the design stage.

M&E activities planned and described included the following: project inception workshop followed by inception report, project review meetings, regular monitoring, quarterly meetings with UNDP, visits to project sites by UNDP country offices, Steering Committee Review, Annual Project Report (APR), PIR (PIR), quarterly progress reports, periodic thematic reports, project terminal report, technical reports, mid-term and final evaluations. For each of those activities, the PD included details on responsible parties, budget and time frame required. The total project budget devoted to M&E activities appeared appropriate for the size of the project.

The strategic results framework presented in the PD (pp.36-40) is complete, with all outputs and outcomes being accompanied by baseline values, targets, means of verification and assumptions. Indicators appear to meet the SMART criteria. While no targets capture the real environmental impact of the project, this is unrealistic to capture such change over the short project implementation timeframe.

A capacity development indicator scorecard for the CBPF has been developed, "based on the global capacity development indicator scorecard prepared by UNDP and used for monitoring and evaluating capacity development interventions. The scorecard has been modified in order to apply optimally to the CBPF" (PD p.43). It aims to measure such things as the state of the biodiversity conservation agenda, the extent to which biodiversity conservation institutions are effectively managed, and the commitment to biodiversity conservation. This appears to be a very good tool to measure the extent to which the project is succeeded at developing a strong national and institutional framework for biodiversity conservation.

6.2 **M&E Implementation**	Rating: **Moderately Satisfactory**

The TE rates M&E implementation for the project as satisfactory due to the resources devoted to M&E and the implementation of the full M&E plan. This TER only rates it as moderately satisfactory due to lacking evidence that M&E information was used for adaptive management, and to the methodological weakness of the capacity development scorecard on which much of the M&E evidence was based.

M&E implementation for the project was overseen by a full-time M&E coordinator who, according to the TE, "enhanced overall quality of M&E implementation" (TE p.vi). As a result of the resources devoted to M&E, project reporting was very good: "Project implementation reviews (PIRs) were completed on an annual basis, reflecting the progress made by the end of June of the respective year long period. The evaluation team found the PIRs to be sufficient with respect to detail, and input was provided by the

national project coordinator, the UNDP programme manager, the national project manager, and the UNDP-GEF regional technical advisor. The project management team has also produced quarterly and annual progress reports. These reports addressed more activity level issues, and were good project management tools for documenting issues and adaptive measures implemented." (TE p.16)

On the other hand, the TE reports no real evidence of adaptive management done on the basis of M&E evidence beyond a few adjustments that were made as a response of the midterm evaluation. This might have much to do with the fact that the project steering committee (PSC) was not as active and involved in the project as was envisioned. For instance, "there was no PSC meeting in calendar year 2014, a time when there was a change in project manager and the pace of work increased substantially due to low delivery in previous years" (TE p.20).

Finally, the TE is critical of the way in which data for the capacity development scorecard was collected: "the project management team implemented a longitudinal design, in which the same people were surveyed over time (…) In the opinion of the TE team, there was insufficient time between surveys, which were made annually between 2012 and 2014, and thus, this methodology was not particularly reliable, as the surveyed people can recall previous answers, and thus, there is an inherent bias. A cross-section design, surveying different people in the same population at inception, midterm, and at closure, would have been a more suitable approach." (TE p.20)

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.

7.1 **Quality of Project Implementation**	Rating: **Moderately Satisfactory**

The implementing agency for this project was the UNDP. The TE rates UNDP's quality of implementation as satisfactory. This TER instead rates it as moderately satisfactory due to the project implementation modalities not being fully conducive to stakeholder involvement.

The UNDP was selected as the project implementation agency due to its experience working on biodiversity projects in China and around the world, as well as their favorable standing with the Government of China (TE p.vi).

The project designed by UNDP was generally strong, but the level of stakeholder involvement expected throughout the project was never realized. According to the TE, "a joint implementation modality might have been a more constructive approach to garner meaningful stakeholder involvement, and also might

have opened up other entry points for collaboration between MEP-FECO and the other CBPF partners" (TE p.43). During project implementation, UNDP should have more actively tried to keep the project on track regarding stakeholder involvement.

That being said, the UNDP was actively involved in the project throughout implementation, and the UNDP-GEF regional technical advisory for biodiversity was praised for having been "proactively engaged in the process, providing valuable guidance at design phase and throughout the implementation timeframe" (TE p.21)

7.2 **Quality of Project Execution**	Rating: **Moderately Satisfactory**

The executing agency for this project was the Foreign Economic Cooperation Office (FECO) of the Ministry of Environmental Protection (MEP), which was the executing agency on behalf of the Ministry of Finance (MOF). The TE rates the MEP's quality of execution for this project as moderately satisfactory as it was not able to overcome important implementation inefficiencies that plagued the project and caused delays. For this reason, this TER also rates it as moderately satisfactory.

As mentioned in the efficiency section above, the project suffered from several implementation inefficiencies that diminished project impact. Financial delivery has been low throughout the project, and implantation delays were experienced in the early stages. While some of the delivery issues were due to exogenous conditions, some were due to the executing agency- such as changing project managers, the inability to secure a full-time chief technical advisor and lengthy procurement processes. As a result of those inefficiencies, "there will be insufficient time to distil the results, formulate strategies for follow up work, and advocate for uptake of some of the technical guidelines and policy recommendations developed with project support." (TE p.vi)

Despite those issues, FECO-MEP have overall been very active in the execution of the project: "the national project director and the director of the Division IV of FECO have been consistently actively involved in the project, providing high level support and guidance" (TE p.21). FECO-MEP also successfully coordinated administrative, procurement and office management for the project. It also displayed good adaptive management throughout the project, for example when it "responded to the Government initiative on delineating ecological redlines in each province, an effort that is aiming at consolidating the various types of protected areas in China. " (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.

Environmental change from an institutional strengthening project typically take quite a while to materialize, surely more than the 5 years during which this project was implemented. In addition, "project contributions with respect to environmental status improvement and stress reduction have been indirect, through enhanced ecosystem management as a result of provincial BSAPs" (TE P.viii), making capturing environmental change even more difficult.

While there is no verifiable environmental change to report, the project carried out activities that will surely have a positive impact on the environment:

- Pilot redline delineation was carried out in Hubei Province, for a terrestrial ecosystem covering approximately 18.6 million hectares, and Ningxia Hui Autonomous Region, for a terrestrial ecosystem covering approximately 6.6 million hectare.
- The provincial Biodiversity Strategy and Action Plan (BSAP)s supported by the project in Guangxi, Hainan, and Jilin Provinces, have indirectly led to enhanced management of the protected areas under provincial management: 1,452,941 ha, 2,735,320 ha, and 2,303,900 ha, respectively.

(TE p.viii)

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.

Not verifiable socioeconomic change has been recorded as part of this project.

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 focused on institutional strengthening and had a very strong capacity building component. Indeed, all project components could be described in terms of capacity building, be

it at the individual, organizational, institutional or sectoral level. For example, the project provided technical support for the development of the Guangxi Province Biodiversity Strategy and Action Plan and strengthened the MEP's ability to engage with stakeholders on biodiversity issues.

The TE reports that the "institutional capacities of MEP-FECO have been substantively strengthened over the course of the project. FECO has been designated the implementing agency for the CBD Secretariat, for example. From 2015, FECO has been tasked on behalf of MEP to administer China's membership in the Global Partnership for Business and Biodiversity. And, FECO has qualified as a GEF implementing agency, and has been appointed as lead implementing partner for a new GEF programme in GEF VI." (TE p.v)

b) Governance

The project strengthened cross-sectoral and inter- departmental cooperation. For example, "the three provinces where provincial BSAPs were developed with project support have strengthened their cross-sectoral collaboration structures" (TE p.v).

The project also "promoted the mainstreaming of biodiversity into planning, policies programs, demonstrations, technical guidelines, and national standards. These mainstreaming efforts have not only targeted the top-level institutional design, but also at different sectors both at central and local levels". (TE p.v)

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 were reported as part of the project.

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.

The TE (pp.34-35) reports that scale up is being considered for some of the project's activities, including expanding the payment for ecosystem services scheme that was developed in Liaoning Province and the Hubei Province ecological redline delineation. Other project components, such as the study of payment for watershed services in the Chishui River Basin, have resulted in the development of new GEF projects.

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 report presents the following recommendations and lessons learned:

1. Persistent implementation inefficiencies diminish the likelihood that project results will be sustained

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- **Lesson Learned**: As part of regular work programming, the procurement demands associated with delivering the planned set of activities should be highlighted as a critical risk, and appropriate risk mitigation measures implemented as early as possible.

- **Lesson Learned**: Short-term contract modalities are unattractive for many professionals in China, rendering the recruitment of project managers and project based experts difficult.

3. A functioning, self-financing CBPF Secretariat has not been realized as envisaged at project entry

- **Lesson Learned**: The 5-year duration of the project might have too short for achieving a fully functioning and self-financing CBPF coordination mechanism.

5. Unrealized technical assistance

- **Lesson Learned**: For a project with high-level strategic focus like this one, a full-time chief technical advisor should be allocated in the indicative implementation budget, and not connected to cofinancing contributions.

6. Stakeholder involvement not sufficiently representative of CBPF partners

- **Lesson Learned**: A joint implementation modality for such a project, aimed at strengthening a multi-stakeholder partnership framework, might have been a more constructive approach to garner meaningful stakeholder involvement.

8. Insufficient assessment and codification of knowledge and communication of results

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- **Lesson Learned**: It would be advisable to develop some type of learning mechanism for disseminating lessons learned and best practices among the collective knowledge base of GEF

financed projects, and make it accessible to project management teams and the local professional community supporting GEF projects.

9. The replication strategy in the project design was relatively weak and upscaling opportunities have not been capitalized upon

- **Lesson Learned**: Replication strategies should be integrated into the design of pilot and demonstration activities.
    - SEP

11. The representativeness of capacity development scorecard results is limited due to the methodology used SEP

- **Lesson Learned**: It is important to minimize potential bias in designing the statistical methodology used to complete a survey-based tracking tool such as the capacity development scorecard. SEP

9.2 Briefly describe the recommendations given in the terminal evaluation.

1. Persistent implementation inefficiencies diminish the likelihood that project results will be sustained

- **Recommendation**: A sustainability plan should be developed, that clearly identifies activities that will require follow-up action after project closure, and roles and responsibilities assigned for ensuring sustainability of project outcomes.

- **Recommendation (future directions)**: Based upon the difficulties in recruiting experts for certain project assignments and the need to disseminate knowledge among the professional community with respect to some of the technical guidelines produced over the course of the project, a capacity needs assessment should be made among the professional community and a plan developed to design and deliver trainings on key topics, including market-based payment for ecosystem services, integrating climate change impacts to biodiversity into EIA and SEA processes, valuation of ecosystem services, etc.

2. Inconsistent partner buy-in regarding the role of the CBPF coordination mechanism

- **Recommendation**: The concept regarding the CBPF coordination mechanism was developed back in 2006-2007, and informed in part by a partner survey completed in December 2006. Considering the changes in China since that time, the role and function of a CBPF coordination mechanism should be reassessed. An updated CBPF partner survey should be carried out by an independent consultant or organization, one that is not a member of the CBPF, in order to

assess the current expectations from the partners regarding the role and function of a CBPF Secretariat or other form of a coordination mechanism, and the willingness to cofinance the operation of such a body.

- **Recommendation**: Based upon the survey results, an updated the operational plan of the CBPF coordination mechanism should be prepared, including, but not limited to, the following:
    - Objectives
    - Roles and Responsibilities
    - Annual operation plan
    - Financing plan
    - Monitoring and evaluation plan

3. A functioning, self-financing CBPF Secretariat has not been realized as envisaged at project entry

- **Recommendation (future directions)**: Consider continuing to support the CBPF coordination mechanism, for example, over the next one or two GEF funding cycles, allowing more time for the mechanism to gain traction among a more developed biodiversity governance system in China as compared to the situation at project entry in 2009.
- **Recommendation (future directions):** Advocate for a clear role of the CBPF coordination mechanism in the design of GEF financed projects, including participation in monitoring and evaluation, knowledge management, and capacity building aspects.

4. The concept of a common monitoring framework among CBPF partners has not been advocated

- **Recommendation**: As part of the recommended updated survey, CBPF partners should be asked what their expectations are with respect to a common monitoring framework, and the results consolidated into the operational plan for the CBPF coordination mechanism.

5. Unrealized technical assistance

- **Recommendation (future directions)**: It might be advisable to consider setting up a roster of pre-qualified national and international experts, making procurement more efficient and enabling project management teams more guidance in selecting external support services.

6. Unclear follow-up with respect to policy recommendations developed under the project

A number of important policy recommendations have been developed under the project, but the follow up actions are not documented.

- **Recommendation**: It would be advisable to develop a "road map" for advancing the policy recommendations formulated under the project, in order to better guide governmental level stakeholders with advocating for further support toward eventual adoption of policies, and also to provide CBPF partners and the broader donor community with funding and advocacy opportunities.

7. Insufficient assessment and codification of knowledge and communication of results

- **Recommendation**: Use remaining time and budget on documenting results, focusing on how the various outputs contributing to the intended project outcomes, and consolidating these into informative knowledge products.

- **Recommendation**: Establish foundational links between the CBPF coordination mechanism and the national CBD clearinghouse mechanism, which, as of 2015, FECO is responsible to maintain, and also the MEP Information Centre.

8. The replication strategy in the project design was relatively weak and upscaling opportunities have not been capitalized upon

- **Recommendation**: Identify opportunities for upscaling and replication from the activities supported by the project, and share these with CBPF partners and the broader donor community.

9. Insufficient monitoring on some of the project objective and outcome level indicators
Recommendation: Quantitative monitoring data should be provided for as many of the outcome indicators as practicable, including but not limited to the following:

- Objective, Indicator 2: Biodiversity conservation resources available from government and private sector. Baseline figures are unclear and no monitoring data are available to assess progress.
- Outcome 2, Indicator 2: Extent of use of NBSAP in sectoral work. The annual work plans of some of the key line ministries and agencies, including the MOA, SFA, SOA, etc., could be reviewed for this information.
- Outcome 4, Indicator 1: Amount of funding for biodiversity conservation from all types of market-based PES schemes. Monitoring toward the indicator of 10 market-based PES schemes in at least 2 sectors has not been carried out.
- Outcome 5, Indicators 1 and 2: Adaptation of national and provincial sectoral conservation plans with respect to incorporating adaptation to climate change. According to interviewed stakeholders during the TE mission, several sectors have incorporated climate change aspects into conservation plans and policies.

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)

Criteria	GEF IEO comments	Rating
To what extent does the report contain an assessment of relevant outcomes and impacts of the project and the achievement of the objectives?	All relevant outcomes are assessed, and project achievements against all indicators are described. The project's impact and overall achievement of its objective is thoroughly discussed and evidenced.	**HS**
To what extent is the report internally consistent, the evidence presented complete and convincing, and ratings well substantiated?	All available M&E evidence appears to have been reviewed and used as part of the report. All ratings are well substantiated and clearly explained.	**S**
To what extent does the report properly assess project sustainability and/or project exit strategy?	Sustainability is discussed, but some key points under each aspect of sustainability are only presented as bullets, without an accompanying discussion.	**MS**
To what extent are the lessons learned supported by the evidence presented and are they comprehensive?	The lessons learned/recommendations section is very detailed, supported by the evidence provided in the report, and appears comprehensive.	**S**
Does the report include the actual project costs (total and per activity) and actual co-financing used?	Actual total project costs, project costs per activity, and actual co-financing figures were provided.	**S**
Assess the quality of the report's evaluation of project M&E systems:	The TE provides a detailed assessment of the project's M&E design and implementation, analyzing the strengths and weaknesses of the framework, and describing the M&E activities that took place.	**S**
Overall TE Rating		**S**

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

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