

Terminal Evaluation Validation form, GEF Independent Evaluation Office

1. Project Data

Summary project data			
GEF project ID		9834	
GEF Agency project ID		GCP/MON/016/CBT	
GEF Replenishment Phase		GEF-6	
Lead GEF Agency (include all for joint projects)		Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO)	
Project name		Strengthening Capacity in the Agricultural and Land-use Sectors for Enhanced Transparency in Implementation and Monitoring of Mongolia's Nationally Determined Contribution (NDC)	
Country/Countries		Mongolia	
Region		Asia, Middle East & Pacific	
Focal area		Climate Change	
Operational Program or Strategic Priorities/Objectives		GEF-6 Climate Change Mitigation Focal Area Strategic Framework CC3: To foster enabling conditions for mainstreaming mitigation concerns into sustainable development strategies. Outcome Indicator 3 – MRV systems for emissions reductions are in place and reporting verified data; Outcome Indicator 7 – number of countries meeting convention reporting requirements and including mitigation contributions.	
Stand alone or under a programmatic framework		Standalone	
If applicable, parent program name and GEF ID		Not applicable	
Executing agencies involved		Ministry of Environment, Green Development and Tourism (MOET), Climate Change Project Implementation Unit (CCPIU)	
NGOs/CBOs involvement		Climate Change and Development Academy through consultation; and Mongolian National Federation of Pasture Users Group through consultation and letters of agreement (LOAs).	
Private sector involvement (including micro, small and medium enterprises) ¹		Not applicable	
CEO Endorsement (FSP) /Approval (MSP) date		11/19/2018	
Effectiveness date / project start date		1/21/2019	
Expected date of project completion (at start)		1/21/2022	
Actual date of project completion		9/30/2022	
Project Financing			
		At Endorsement (US \$M)	At Completion (US \$M)
Project Preparation Grant	GEF funding	0.05	UA
	Co-financing	-	-
GEF Project Grant		0.86	0.81
Co-financing	IA own	0.06	0.06
	Government	0.10	0.09
	Other multi- /bi-laterals	0.30	0.30
	Private sector	-	-
	NGOs/CBOs	-	-
	Other	-	-

¹ Defined as all micro, small, and medium-scale profit-oriented entities, including individuals and informal entities, that earn income through the sale of goods and services rather than a salary. ([GEF IEO 2022](#))

Total GEF funding	0.91	0.81
Total Co-financing	0.46	0.45
Total project funding (GEF grant(s) + co-financing)	1.37	1.26
Terminal evaluation validation information		
TE completion date	6/30/2022	
Author of TE	Seda Kojoyan (Evaluation manager FAO OED), Ugen Norbu (lead evaluator)	
TER completion date	10/13/2023	
TER prepared by	Mariana Calderon	
TER peer review by (if GEF IEO review)	Mariana Vidal Merino	

UA = Unable to assess.

Access the form to summarize key project features here: <https://www.research.net/r/APR2023>.

2. Summary of Project Ratings

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

Note: HS = highly satisfactory, S = satisfactory, MS = moderately satisfactory, MU = moderately unsatisfactory, U = unsatisfactory, HU = highly unsatisfactory, UA = unable to assess, NA = not available.

3. Project Objectives and theory of change

3.1 Global Environmental Objectives of the project:

Not available.

3.2 Development Objectives of the project:

The country “is fully capacitated to report to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) under the Paris Agreement’s Enhanced Transparency Framework (ETF) with strengthened agricultural and land-use sector components including inventories of greenhouse gases by sources and sinks, and information necessary to track progress against priority actions identified in the Nationally Determined Contributions (NDC) for these sectors” (TE p.10).

3.3 Were there any **changes** in the Global Environmental Objectives, Development Objectives, or project activities during implementation? What are the reasons given for the change(s)?

There were no changes to the overall context and strategy of the project. There were rare instances where planned activities were not implemented. For instance, the establishment of a Measurement, Reporting and Verification (MRV) helpdesk was dropped based on an assessment of the technical needs of relevant national and subnational agencies, which indicated that the MRV helpdesk would be expensive and complex (TE p.17).

3.4 Briefly summarize project’s theory of change – describe the inputs and causal relationships through which the project will achieve its long-term impacts, key links, and key assumptions.

The TE team formulated a common theory of change (TOC) for the CBIT projects in Mongolia and Papua New Guinea as both followed a standard approach and strategy in project design (TE p.10).

As part of this exercise, the following barriers were identified (TE p.10):

- Barrier 1. Inadequate institutional arrangement and capacity: commitments to international climate/environment agreements are not institutionalized beyond the nationally designated authority; limited resources, incentives and accountability for measurement, reporting and verification (MRV) among non-NDA agencies; limited awareness of the availability and means of

access to information and data; and ad hoc coordination and sharing of information between agencies.

- Barrier 2. Inadequate technical capacity: insufficient capacity in terms of tools and training for country-specific ETF reporting and climate adaptation reporting; inadequate coordination of knowledge management and knowledge retention; and lack of technological hardware and information technology system to support data management, such as GHG inventory data.
- Barrier 3. Funding and human resources constraints: MRV activities are largely dependent on project-based funding; and staff turnover due to breaks between projects, insufficient funding and career movements.

To address institutional and technical barriers (barriers 1 and 2), the project consisted of three components that were related to the following outcomes (TE p. 8, 10 and 13):

- Component 1: Enhanced institutional arrangements to coordinate preparation of ETF reports for the Agriculture, Forestry and Other Land Use (AFOLU) sector.
 - Outcome 1.1: Institutional arrangements enhanced for coordinating information and data from the agriculture and land-use sectors into ETF processes and reports.
 - Outcome 1.2: Inter-sectoral, national, and international engagement strengthened regarding ETF-related processes.
- Component 2: Strengthened capacity to measure emissions, removals, and emission reduction activities from the agriculture and land-use sectors.
 - Outcome 2.1: Strengthened capacity to measure GHG emissions, removals, and emission reduction activities from agricultural and land-use sectors.
- Component 3: Strengthened capacity to measure climate change impacts, vulnerabilities, and adaptation-related activities in the agriculture and land-use sectors.
 - Outcome 3.1: Strengthened capacity to measure climate-change impacts, vulnerabilities, and adaptation related activities in the agricultural and land-use sectors.

These outcomes were targeted at reaching the project objective mentioned in section 3.2. Ultimately, the project would achieve the following impacts: improved global and national responses to the threat of climate change; and enhanced information, knowledge and transparency for climate change mitigation and adaptation (TE p.13).

According to the TE, the financial and human resources constraints (barrier 3) were beyond the project scope and were considered as assumptions and risks at project design (TE p.10). The following assumptions were made: sufficient political support to enact reporting guidance from the National Climate-change Monitoring Framework (NCCMF); capacities are maintained and attrition is kept to a minimum; stakeholders have sufficient intrinsic and extrinsic motivations to engage; global CBIT projects facilitate engagement with regional and global counterparts; stakeholders assured of sufficient, reliable support for their obligations under the protocols; staff turnover will not undercut capacity development; and post-project funding will support operation and maintenance (TE p.13).

4. GEF IEO assessment of Outcomes and Sustainability

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

The outcome ratings (relevance, effectiveness, efficiency, and overall outcome rating) are on a six-point scale: Highly Satisfactory to Highly Unsatisfactory. The sustainability rating is on a four-point scale: Likely to Unlikely.

Please justify the ratings in the space below each box.

4.1 Relevance	HS
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Considering that the project aligned with GEF’s focal areas, international instruments, FAO’s strategy, country priorities and beneficiaries’ needs, this validation concurs with the *Highly Satisfactory* rating that the TE provided to project relevance (TE p.15 and 40).

The project was consistent with GEF’s Climate Change focal area, particularly to Objective 3: to foster enabling conditions for mainstreaming mitigation concerns into sustainable development strategies. It also contributed to GEF’s Climate Change Mitigation Results Framework Outcome Indicator 3: MRV systems for emissions reductions are in place and reporting verified data; and Outcome Indicator 7: number of countries meeting convention reporting requirements and including mitigation contributions (TE p.15).

The project was anchored in Article 13 of the Paris Agreement, which established the ETF for reporting and reviewing national actions to reduce emissions and adapt to climate change in keeping with the plans and targets set in the NDC (TE p.8). Also, it aligned with SDG 13: take urgent action to combat climate change and its impacts, and specifically contributes to SDG 13 Target 13.3: improve education, awareness raising and human and institutional capacity on climate change mitigation, adaptation, impact reduction and early warning (TE p.15).

The project related to FAO’s Strategic Objective 2: increase and improve provision of goods and services from agriculture, forestry and fisheries in a sustainable manner. Within this strategic objective, the project contributed to Outcome 2.3: stakeholders endorse/adopt international (including regional) instruments and support related governance mechanisms for sustainable agricultural production systems; and Output 2.3.1: capacities of institutions are strengthened to implement policies and international instruments that foster sustainable production and address climate change and environmental degradation. Also linked to the aforesaid Strategic Objective, the project contributed to Outcome 2.4: countries made decisions based on evidence for sustainable agriculture, fisheries and forestry while addressing climate change and environmental degradation; and Output 2.4.2: capacities of institutions are strengthened to collect, analyze and report data for decision-making on sustainable production, climate change and environmental degradation, including relevant SDGs (TE p.15).

Regarding country priorities, the project directly supported the implementation of the Green Development Policy 2014–2030, which is the primary basis for the country’s NDC. In addition, the project aligned with the following national policies: Sustainable Development Vision 2030, the National

Action Program on Climate Change (2011–2021), the National Agriculture Development Policy (2010–2021), the State Policy on Forestry (2016–2030), Recommendations of the Environmental Performance Review (2017), and Recommendations of the National Report on the Rangeland Health of Mongolia (2015) (TE p.16-17).

Questionnaire surveys conducted as a part of the evaluation revealed that more than 90 percent of recipients of training and technical support in Mongolia found the project support to be “relevant” or highly relevant” to their organizational roles and individual capacity development needs (TE p.17).

4.2 Coherence	S
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The TE does not provide a rating for overall coherence. Alternatively, it provides a *Satisfactory* rating for complementarity with existing interventions, as well as a *Satisfactory* rating for project design and readiness (TE p.40). This validation assesses that the project showed both internal and external coherence; therefore, it provides a *Satisfactory* rating for this criterion.

According to the TE, the project was well designed with clearly defined expected results (TE p.40). Its components reflected the existing delineation in institutional coordination between reporting, measurement, and verification: Component 1 covered activities related to reporting functions, such as information-sharing and stakeholder coordination. Component 2 covered activities related to measurement and verification for climate-change mitigation. Component 3 covered activities related to measurement for climate-change adaptation. Thus, Components 2 and 3 focused on what data were collected, how, and by whom, whereas Component 1 focused on how that data was shared, analyzed, and reported. Component 1 also facilitated the operationalization of Mongolia’s reporting commitments under the Paris Agreement (ProDoc p.30).

The project focused on the agricultural and land-use sub-sectors, so it was expected to coordinate most closely with projects in the AFOLU sector. Likewise, the project planned to coordinate with climate-related projects in other sectors. In this regard, these were the ongoing GEF projects in Mongolia with which the projects would coordinate: Ensuring Sustainability and Resilience (ENSURE) of Green Landscapes in Mongolia (9389); Land Degradation Offset and Mitigation in Western Mongolia (5700); and Mainstreaming Biodiversity Conservation, SFM and Carbon Sink Enhancement into Mongolia’s Productive Forest Landscapes (4744). The project was also expected to coordinate closely with the CBIT Global Coordination Platform (9675), FAO’s Global Capacity-building Towards Enhanced Transparency in the AFOLU Sector (9864), and FAO’s other national CBIT projects in Cambodia (9837) and Papua New Guinea (9833). In addition to the aforementioned GEF projects, the project would also coordinate with the following internationally supported projects: UN-REDD National Program; Green Gold supported by the Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation; MERIT funded by Global Affairs Canada; Climate Policy Capacity Development implemented by GIZ; Biodiversity and CCA implemented by MET, GIZ and KfW; Project for Capacity Development to Establish a National Greenhouse Gas Inventory Cycle of Continuous Improvement supported by JICA; and the evolving ADB’s portfolio (ProDoc p.55-59).

The TE corroborated that project management teams pursued linkages and complementarity between the national CBIT projects, the Global CBIT-AFOLU project and the CBIT-Forest project, leading to

effective use of project resources for mutual benefits. For instance, representatives from Cambodia and Mongolia participated in the ETF event at COP26 co-organized by the Global CBIT-AFOLU project. Through such international event, national ETF practitioners contributed to global dialogue and knowledge based on country experience while also receiving knowledge and insights from ETF practitioners in other countries (TE p.36). The Mongolia project team, together with national partners, reviewed the BTR roadmap tool developed by the Global CBIT-AFOLU project and provided feedback on the practicality of the tool. The BTR roadmap tool was considered by the experts at the Climate Change Research and Cooperation Center in Mongolia for the planning of the BTR formulation. The Mongolia CBIT project received technical support and guidance from the Global CBIT-AFOLU project in the estimation of enteric fermentation emission factor and adaptation monitoring, where in-country expertise was lacking (TE p.37).

4.3 Effectiveness	s
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The TE provides a *Satisfactory* rating to the overall assessment of project results (TE p.40). This validation concurs.

The evaluation found the project was effective overall (TE p.70). Regarding Component 1, the project was successful in strengthening institutional capacity in terms of establishing lead coordinating agencies and stakeholder engagement mechanisms (TE p.40). The Climate Change Project Implementation Unit was upgraded to the Climate Change Research and Cooperation Centre (CCRCC) and was vested with the legal authority and mandate to implement and coordinate activities under Article 13 of the Paris Agreement. The National Climate Change Committee was redesignated as the National Committee for Climate Change and Combatting Desertification, and was reinvigorated as the highest intersectoral authority to provide decisions on matters concerning climate-change policies. To improve coordination between different institutions for data sharing and analysis in the AFOLU sector in the country, data flow and data providers for Tier 1 reporting were identified and assessed as a part of the stakeholder coordination mapping exercise (TE p. 18). The project also delivered training on strengthening understanding for improved institutional arrangement and coordination at national and subnational levels. The ETF readiness assessment done in Mongolia in 2015 was updated in 2022, and in-depth expert recommendations for further enhancement were given according to the main sections of the ETF assessment (TE p.19).

On Component 2, the project achieved its objective on enhancing the technical capacity for GHG inventory and MRV of national mitigation actions (TE p.40). The capacity for land use, land-use change and forestry (LULUCF) assessment was strengthened at the subnational level through hands-on training of local specialists from all the provinces in the use of Collect Earth and the subsequent application of the tool by the trained specialists in carrying out a nationwide LULUCF assessment. The technical capacity of Mongolian professionals in the AFOLU sector at central and subnational levels was also strengthened. The updated guideline for Mongolia's Unified Land Territory classification was approved, paving the way for improved coherence and consistency in land use and land-use change data to compute GHG emissions and removals in keeping with IPCC guidelines and standards (TE p.20). There

are now much improved data, knowledge, tools and systems for the measurement of climate-change mitigation in Mongolia as a result of a series of technical studies and exercises with the support of the CBIT project. Two-thirds of the training events conducted by the CBIT project in Mongolia were related to GHG inventory and MRV for GHG emission management and mitigation actions. Furthermore, the project provided several new pieces of equipment to relevant institutions at the central and subnational levels to upgrade technology for MRV work and enable enhanced MRV (TE. 21).

On Component 3, the project performance was satisfactory (TE p.40). The project carried out a gap analysis of adaptation M&R systems, reviewed international good practices, and developed the M&E framework and BTR preparation plan for adaptation measures of the AFOLU sector. Also, the project provided national stakeholders with equipment and software for adaptation data collection, analysis and archiving in line with established guidelines. Furthermore, a series of assessments were carried out to inform adaptation planning and monitoring (TE p.23).

With regards of the CBIT tracking tool, the project exceeded its end targets. The TE acknowledges that although ratings from this tool give a general indication of progress, they are subjective as they are based on the self-assessment of the project management team. Therefore, they should be complemented with additional information (TE p.24).

4.4 Efficiency	MS
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The TE provides a *Satisfactory* rating to project efficiency (TE p.24 and 40). However, this validation considers it was *Moderately Satisfactory* as around 40 percent of the financial delivery as well as pending outputs were carried over the final year, which hampered results consolidation and planning for post-project continuity.

Considering that the project resources were modest, the TE found that implementation was achieved through a cost-effective approach, building on FAO’s in-house knowledge and resources for ETF related activities (TE p.24).

The project had a long and slow inception phase involving negotiations with intended project partners, recruitment of project personnel, and the operationalization of project implementation arrangements. The project inception workshop took place six months after the official project start date. The recruitment of project management staff started with the recruitment of the National Project Management Officer in April 2019 and was completed with the recruitment of the Technical Officer and Administrative and Finance Officer in August 2019. Both positions were re-recruited in 2020 as the two staff left their jobs. This delayed the contractual process for LOAs with project partners. By the time the first LOA became operational, the project was well into its second year (TE p.25).

The project was also delayed because of the COVID-19 pandemic, which affected field visits, workshops, training, and the capacity of LOAs partners to produce deliverables according to previously agreed timelines. As a project extension was approved, the project closed in September 2022 instead of closing in January 2022 (PIR 2022 p.2).

A review of Project Implementation Reports (PIRs) shows that the cumulative delivery of project outputs as of June 2021 was 64.6 percent. Also at that time, the six project outputs that were to be achieved by that date remained marginally 50 percent unaccomplished and were carried over to the final year. The last PIR draft, dated June 2022, showed that the project was on track to fully achieving most of the output targets and partially achieving the remaining targets by the end of the project period. However, this left the project with little time to consolidate project results and plan effectively for post-project sustainability (TE p.26).

4.5 Outcome	s
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The TE rates the overall performance of this CBIT project as *Satisfactory* (TE p. 39-40). This validation concurs as the project was relevant, coherent and effective, with some weaknesses in terms of efficiency.

The project contributed to an enhanced understanding of ETF requirements and improved data, knowledge and tools to implement ETF. The project strengthened institutional arrangements for ETF activities and the quality of MRV systems to track results related to low GHG development and GHG emission mitigation (TE p.31).

The project design recognized the need to consider gender as a key issue associated with differential climate-related impacts or vulnerabilities, and how such issues might be reflected in adaptation-related measuring and reporting. It also incorporated the need for gender-disaggregated reporting of capacity-development activities. Accordingly, training reports provided gender-disaggregated data. Also, a basic gender analysis was conducted at the formulation stage. It covered possible gender mainstreaming activities and the development of gender-responsive publications and training materials. The analysis also covered the risks of the hindrance of gender mainstreaming during implementation, with the proposed corrective measure to address the issue through clear communication on gender equality as one of the key elements in tracking the progress of adaptation actions. In general, the participation of women was encouraged in the capacity development activities and working groups (TE p.38). According to the TE, the participation of women in training activities was high in Mongolia at 57 percent, which could be explained by a large representation in the ETF-responsible agencies within the AFOLU sector and a high adult female literacy rate (98.58 percent compared to the adult male literacy rate of 98.18 percent) (TE p.39).

The project, by design and in scope, did not have direct bearing on indigenous peoples, rural employment, and environmental and social safeguards. These cross-cutting considerations did not apply because the project was essentially a technical assistance with no physical investments or direct interactions with local communities in any specific location. However, project activities had indirect effects on the management of natural resources, which are closely associated with the traditional lifestyles of various communities (e.g., semi-transhumant herders; forest-dependent communities). Therefore, stakeholder engagement proactively ensured the involvement of relevant CSOs and NGOs (PIR 2020 p.34).

4.6 Sustainability	ML
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The TE rated the sustainability of project results as *Moderately Likely* because of the short duration of the project, staff shortage and turnover, as well as over-reliance on project funding (TE p.40 and 71). This validation concurs.

Institutional and governance sustainability

Updated methodologies were integrated into the national MRV systems. For instance, the approval of Mongolia's updated Unified Land Territory classification in accordance with the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) guidelines suggests that the new classification will remain the basis for future land use and land-use change assessment in keeping with ETF requirements (TE p.30).

The project engaged post-project responsible agencies to promote ownership and sustainability of project activities. For example, the members of the Project Steering Committee (PSC) and technical working committees in Mongolia were largely drawn from institutions with post-project responsibility for ETF (TE p.29).

Training recipients have shared and transferred the learning received. The questionnaire survey revealed that 71 percent of the respondents in Mongolia shared their training learning with colleagues while working together, but also through training workshops and by sharing training materials and tools. (TE p.30).

In contrast, staff shortage and turnover are major sustainability issues. Although in Mongolia there was a strong focus on delivery of training to build the technical capacity of individuals, many of the trained staff left their jobs (TE p.28).

Financial sustainability

There is an overdependence on project financing for ETF capacity. For example, the procurement list of the CBIT project in Mongolia showed that even basic and inexpensive equipment such as a thermometer, handheld scale and an SD card were bought by the project (TE p.29).

Environmental sustainability

Not a relevant issue in the project context (TE p.40).

Other

Short duration is another factor affecting the sustainability of project results. While three years were adequate for the project to deliver the planned capacity-building activities, consolidation of the capacity results and internalization of institutional arrangements require extended time. Inception delays constrained the time available for project implementation, which in turn affected the time required for the consolidation of project results and preparation for a smooth transition to the post-project phase in close communication with project stakeholders (TE p.29).

5. Processes and factors affecting attainment of project outcomes

Before describing the factors, you may choose to summarize reported outcomes and sustainability here: <https://www.research.net/r/APR2023>.

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, 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 mobilized USD 446,036 (97 percent) of the total co-financing of USD 460,000. The remaining co-financing was expected to be realized in the remaining project period. The Ministry of Environment and Tourism contributed with USD 100,000 in kind for staff time, office space, meeting services and supplies, and vehicle and office overheads; the REDD+ program with USD 300,000 in kind; and FAO with USD 60,000 in kind for office space and project support not covered by GEF fees (TE p.34).

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?

The first PIR noted that implementation progress was slow and that it required increased monitoring and support regarding implementation of LOAs and quality of deliverables (PIR 2020 p.25). The project had a long and slow inception phase involving negotiations with intended project partners, recruitment of project personnel, and the operationalization of project implementation arrangements. The project inception workshop took place six months after the official project start date. The recruitment of project management staff was slow, and turnover was present during the first implementation year. This delayed the contractual process for LOAs (TE p.25).

Furthermore, the COVID-19 pandemic caused delays in conducting field visits, organizing workshops and trainings, as well as in the capacity of LOAs partners to produce deliverables according to previously agreed timelines. The PMU requested to extend the project duration for 5 more months (PIR 2021 p.16). The last PIR indicated that the project extension was approved, and instead of closing in January 2022 the project closed in September of the same year (PIR 2022 p.2).

5.3 Stakeholder ownership. Assess the extent to which stakeholder ownership has affected project outcomes and sustainability. Describe the ways in which it affected outcomes and sustainability, highlighting the causal links.

The project engaged with a wide number of stakeholders in keeping with the spread of ETF-related responsibilities, functions and expertise across multiple agencies, within and outside the government system. For instance, the project collaborated with 15 different agencies in the government, academia and civil society through LOAs to carry out technical studies, assess and improve data collection and analysis methods, establish data coordination mechanisms and processes, and strengthen the MRV framework. These partnerships were highly instrumental in enabling the project to accomplish planned project activities (TE p.35-36). Also, the PSC meetings took place as planned and were well coordinated (TE p.32).

The final PIR noted that the project liaised very well with government counterparts and other relevant stakeholders (PIR 2022 p.24).

6. Assessment of project's Monitoring and Evaluation system

Ratings are assessed on a six point scale: Highly Satisfactory to Highly Unsatisfactory.

Please justify ratings in the space below each box.

6.1 M&E Design at entry	S
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The TE does not mention a separate rating for M&E design at entry; it only provides a *Satisfactory* rating for the overall quality of M&E (TE p.40). Based on evidence found in project documentation and considering that the TE does not mention any salient weaknesses in the M&E plan or results matrix, this validation provides a *Satisfactory* rating to this criterion.

According to the ProDoc, effective M&E would be accomplished through (i) regular monitoring and reporting and (ii) a terminal evaluation. FAO's GEF Coordination Unit would provide annual PIRs to the GEF Secretariat (ProDoc p.68). Project performance would be assessed based on the delivery of outputs and achievement of project outcomes and objective as defined in the results matrix. As part of the M&E plan, the following reports would be prepared: Project Inception Report, Annual work-plans and budgets, Biannual Project Progress Reports for FAO, Annual PIRs for GEF, Technical reports, Co-financing reports, and a Terminal Report (ProDoc p.69).

Although no independent Mid-Term Review would be undertaken at the end of the second year, a similar exercise was planned to be conducted during the annual supervision mission. Findings and recommendations of this review would be instrumental in bringing improvement into the overall project design and execution strategy for the remaining period of the project's term. A Final Evaluation was planned to be initiated six months prior to the project completion date. The budget holder, in consultation with the PMU, FAO Project Technical Task Force, FAO Office of Evaluation (OED), and with concurrence of the PSC, would launch the independent evaluation of the project. FAO OED, in consultation with project stakeholders, would be responsible for organizing and backstopping the Final Evaluation, including finalizing the ToR, selecting and backstopping the team and Quality Assurance of the final report (ProDoc p.70-71).

6.2 M&E Implementation	S
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Evidence presented in the TE and other project documents allows this validation to give a *Satisfactory* rating to M&E Implementation.

The project was adequately monitored using the results matrix/framework and CBIT tracking tool. The results matrix/framework was the main tool for monitoring and reporting project progress. Reporting was done on a half-yearly and annual basis through periodic project progress reports and PIRs. PIRs were completed by the project manager/coordinator, endorsed by the budget holder, and reviewed by the lead technical officer and the GEF liaison officer at FAO. Supervisory missions were not undertaken

due to COVID-19 pandemic restrictions as well as budgetary limitations. However, the lead technical officer and the GEF liaison officer at FAO held virtual meetings with the PMU at least twice a year to keep track of the project progress, and when needed, provided guidance/backstopping. The GEF-CBIT tracking tool was also used for monitoring; it was updated at mid-term and project completion to reflect progress against the CBIT indicators (TE p.33). In this regard, the TE noted that although the CBIT tracking tool gave a general indication of project progress, ratings were subjective and based on self-assessment by the project management team, and thus required a detailed assessment to draw information that could be used in combination with the scores (TE p.24).

According to the last PIR, the project was strong on planning and monitoring, which resulted in successfully managed financial and human resources (PIR 2022 p.24). At the end of 2021, the PMU evaluated the logical framework based on the progress made from 2019 to 2021. Out of 11 output level indicators, 7 were fully achievable within the remaining project period, and 4 were partly achievable due to the government endorsement process. The PMU took several measures to strengthen the achievement of those 4 indicators (PIR 2022 p.22).

7. Assessment of project implementation and execution

Quality of Implementation rating is based on the assessment of the performance of GEF Agency(s). Quality of Execution rating is based on performance of the executing agency(s). 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	s
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The TE did not explicitly assessed quality of project implementation. However, this validation considers it was *Satisfactory* as available evidence suggests that FAO’s team identified and addressed emerging concerns in a timely manner to ensure that project implementation was on track.

FAO Mongolia addressed staff turnover challenges during the first implementation years (PIR 2020 p.23). Although supervisory missions could not be undertaken because of COVID-19 and budgetary limitations, the lead technical officer and the GEF liaison officer at FAO held virtual meetings with the PMU at least twice a year to keep track of the project progress, and when needed, provided guidance/backstopping (TE p.33).

7.2 Quality of Project Execution	s
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The TE rated the quality of project management and execution as *Satisfactory* (TE p.40). This validation concurs considering that staff weaknesses in the PMU during the first implementation years were addressed and that the executing entity met expectations upon project completion.

According to the 2020 PIR, implementation progress and capacity building were hindered in the first implementation year by the turnover of the technical officer and administration and financial officer

(AFO) at the PMU. In response, FAO Mongolia recruited new officers. Also, during that time, the CCPIU's ineligibility for services procurement delayed baseline LOAs. Discussions for reaching common agreements on eligible services providers took much time (PIR 2020 p.23).

The second PIR notes that, despite COVID-19 lockdown measures as well as the departure of the National Project Coordinator, the PMU quickly reorganized the team structure and made a strong implementation progress (PIR 2021 p.23).

Evidence suggests that staff challenges faced during the first implementation years were addressed. The TE highlighted that the CBIT project in Mongolia had a larger project management team than in Cambodia or Papua New Guinea, with three full-time positions (national project manager, technical officer and administration and finance officer). While the TE acknowledges that it is difficult to directly relate project management arrangement and the quality of project execution, it mentions that a well-staffed PMU in Mongolia was a contributing factor for effective project management. This was supported by the quality and availability of project documentation as well as views conveyed by the project partners during stakeholder interviews. In this regard, project stakeholders expressed satisfaction with the project management and coordination stakeholders (TE p.32).

8. Lessons and recommendations

8.1 Briefly describe the key lessons, good practices, or approaches mentioned in the terminal evaluation report, including how they could have application for other GEF projects. Lessons must be based on project experience.

Lessons learned (TE p.49-50):

Lesson 1. The COVID-19 pandemic has provided the projects with the experience and insights for a composite approach to future training, combining virtual and in-person training with due consideration of their comparative strengths and weaknesses.

Lesson 2. Country case studies can be effectively used as tools for training and knowledge sharing.

Lesson 3. The academic and research institutions have a very crucial role in ETF and related capacity building.

Lesson 4. Broad partnerships and effective stakeholder engagement are key to successful ETF capacity building and implementation as ETF expertise and mandates cut across several sectors.

Lesson 5. Knowledge management can enhance the sustainability of project results, but it needs to go beyond communication, advocacy and information sharing.

Lesson 6. Good internet connectivity is crucial to ETF capacity building and successful implementation of ETF tools.

Lesson 7. Technical assistance projects of the like of CBIT projects intrinsically experience challenges in eliciting national buy-in and establishing active partnership during the implementation phase.

8.2 Briefly describe the recommendations given in the terminal evaluation.

Recommendations (TE p.43-47):

Recommendation 1. Future CBIT projects should consider mechanisms and strategies to institutionalize individual learnings and internalize knowledge and practices within and between the ETF-responsible institutions. To the attention of: FAO OCB, FAO Regional Office, FAO Country Office, GEF.

Recommendation 2. Future CBIT projects should devise knowledge management plans that go beyond communication and information sharing and encompass a detailed analysis of good practices, lessons and mechanisms for institutionalization of knowledge. It will also be useful to include knowledge, attitudes and practices (KAP) surveys in future CBIT knowledge management strategies/plans. To the attention of: FAO OCB, FAO Regional Office, GEF.

Recommendation 3. Develop a broader collection of country case studies on good ETF practices and lessons learned from different countries across regions, integrate them into training courses and materials, and share them in global, regional and national CBIT workshops. To the attention of: FAO OCB, FAO Regional Office, FAO Country Office.

Recommendation 4. CBIT projects need to address the functional capacity for ETF at managerial and institutional leadership levels to foster the use of strengthened institutional arrangements and technical capacity of mid-level professionals and practitioners. *To the attention of: FAO OCB, FAO Regional Office, GEF.*

Recommendation 5. Develop and pursue a hybrid training approach, combining virtual and in-person modalities of training, depending on training needs, in future capacity building projects. To the attention of: FAO OCB, FAO Regional Office.

Recommendation 6. All CBIT projects and GEF enabling activities for NC/BUR/BTR preparation should seek to synchronize in terms of time frame and process to bring about immediate hands-on benefits. To the attention of: FAO OCB, GEF.

Recommendation 7. Assess the lessons and outcomes of collaboration with academic and research institutions and engagement with youth in ETF capacity building. Based on the findings, further strengthen engagements with them in future projects, building on the experience of the Mongolia CBIT and Global CBIT-AFOLU projects. To the attention of: FAO OCB, FAO Regional Office, FAO Country Office.

Recommendation 8. Explore and develop sustainable financing mechanisms for ETF, including financial incentives that reward national emission reductions informed by data derived in accordance with ETF standards. To the attention of: FAO OCB, FAO Regional Office, GEF.

Recommendation 9. Promote cost-effective tools and methods of data collection, sharing, analysis and reporting. To the attention of: FAO OCB, FAO Regional Office, FAO Country Office.

Recommendation 10. Consider a programmatic approach for future CBIT projects under the GEF-8 cycle. To the attention of: FAO OCB, FAO Regional Office, GEF.

9. Quality of the Terminal Evaluation Report

Before rating the quality of the terminal evaluation, click here to summarize your observations on the sub-criteria: <https://www.research.net/r/APR2023>.

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/indicators of terminal evaluation quality	GEF IEO COMMENTS	Rating
1. Timeliness: terminal evaluation report was carried out and submitted on time?	The terminal evaluation was conducted and submitted on time.	HS
2. General information: Provides general information on the project and evaluation as per the requirement?	The report provided most general information required on the project and evaluation. It missed some key project milestones and does not mention GEF global environmental objective.	MS
3. Stakeholder involvement: the report was prepared in consultation with – and with feedback from - key stakeholders?	The TE sought and incorporated the participation of key stakeholders. Methods used were the following: semi-structured interviews, focus groups discussions, and questionnaire surveys.	S
4. Theory of change: provides solid account of the project’s theory of change?	The report includes a solid account of the theory of change.	HS
5. Methodology: Provides an informative and transparent account of the methodology?	The report presents an informative and transparent account of the methodology.	HS
6. Outcome: Provides a clear and candid account of the achievement of project outcomes?	The TE assesses project relevance, effectiveness, and efficiency. Factors affecting outcome achievement or efficiency in the use of resources could have been discussed more in depth.	S
7. Sustainability: Presents realistic assessment of sustainability?	The report identifies some risks that may affect sustainability and indicates its overall likelihood. However, it does not mention the likelihood of risks materializing nor the likely effects if key risks materialize.	MS

8. M&E: Presents sound assessment of the quality of the M&E system?	The TE does not assess quality of M&E design at entry. It does not discuss the use of information from the M&E system either.	MU
9. Finance: Reports on utilization of GEF funding and materialization of co-financing?	The TE reports on utilization of GEF resources. It also mentions co-financing sources and materialization. However, it does not discuss contributions of co-financing to project results.	S
10. Implementation: Presents a candid account of project implementation and Agency performance?	The report does not provide account of GEF Agency performance. It does not discuss challenges on implementation and execution with sufficient depth.	MU
11. Safeguards: Provides information on application of environmental and social safeguards, and conduct and use of gender analysis?	The TE reports on conduct of gender analysis and on the implementation of some of the actions specified in it. It also explains why social and environmental safeguards did not apply to this project.	HS
12. Lessons and recommendations are supported by the project experience and are relevant to future programming?	The TE presents lessons based on project experience. It mentions recommendations and specifies what needs to be done and who should be the action taker of each recommendation.	HS
13. Ratings: Ratings are well-substantiated by evidence, realistic and convincing?	Where available, ratings are well supported by evidence. However, the TE does not assess all the required criteria.	MS
14. Report presentation: The report was well-written, logically organized, and consistent?	The report is well written in English, easy to read and well-organized. Summary table on project ratings is not always consistent with what is described in the document.	S
Overall quality of the report		S

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