
Terminal Evaluation Report

UNDP-GEF project: CBPF-MSL: Strengthening the Management Effectiveness of the Sub-System of Wetland Protected Areas for Conservation of Globally Significant Biodiversity

GEF Project ID: 4655

UNDP Project ID: 4391

Country: China

Region: Asia and the Pacific

Focal Areas (GEF-5): Biodiversity

GEF Agency: United Nations Development Programme (UNDP)

Executing Agency: National Forestry and Grasslands Administration

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Opening Page

PROJECT DETAILS:

Project Name: CBPF-MSL: Strengthening the Management Effectiveness of the Sub-system of Wetland Protected Areas for Conservation of Globally Significant Biodiversity

Project ID: GEF Project ID: 4655 UNDP PIMS ID: 4391

Country: China

Region: Asia and the Pacific

Focal Area: Biodiversity

Funding Source: GEF Trust Fund

GEF Focal Area Objectives: GEF5: BD-1, Outcome 1.1; BD-1, Outcome 1.2

Implementing Agency: United Nations Development Programme

Implementation Modality: National Implementation Modality (NIM)

Executing Agency: National Forestry and Grasslands Administration

Responsible Partners: N/A

FINANCIALS:

Project Preparation Grant: USD 70,000

GEF Project Grant: USD 2,654,771

Cofinancing Total: USD 16,800,000

GEF Agency Fees: USD 238,929

Total Cost: USD 19,524,771

PROJECT TIMELINE:

Received by GEF: 08 September 2011

Preparation Grant Approved: 20 December 2011

Concept Approved: 01 November 2011

Project Approved for Implementation: 03 July 2013

State Date: 24 September 2013

Project Closed (extended): 24 September 2019

TERMINAL EVALUATION DETAILS:

TE Timeframe: March-April 2019

Reporting Language: English

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The TE team would like to acknowledge the feedback provided by the interviewed stakeholders, including the National Project Director, Deputy Protect Director, Project Manager, Deputy Project Manager, the project management team, the UNDP country office Environment and Energy Program Manager, the UNDP country office staff, the UNDP RTA, local partners and beneficiaries, and other governmental and non-governmental stakeholders.

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Executive Summary

The project, approved under the GEF-5 replenishment cycle, is being implemented through a national implementation modality with the National Forestry and Grasslands Administration as the executing agency, supported by the UNDP as the GEF implementing agency. Basic project information and finances are summarized below in **Table 1**.

Table 1: Project summary table

Project Title:	CCBPF-MSL: Strengthening the Management Effectiveness of the Sub-system of Wetland Protected Areas for Conservation of Globally Significant Biodiversity		at endorsement	at completion*
			(USD million)	(USD million)
GEF Project ID:	4655	GEF financing, PPG grant:	70,000	70,000
UNDP Project ID:	4391	GEF financing, project grant:	2,654,771	2,261,651
Country:	China	IA own:	900,000	900,000
Region:	Asia and the Pacific	Government:	15,900,000	16,004,935
Focal Areas (GEF-5):	Biodiversity (BD)	Other:	0	0
Focal Area Objective:	BD Objective 1: Improve Sustainability of Protected Area Systems; Outcomes 1.1 and 1.2	Total co-financing:	16,800,000	16,904,935
		Total Project Cost:	19,524,771	19,236,586
Executing Agency:	National Forestry and Grasslands Administration	Prodoc Signature (date project began):	24 Sep 2013	
Other Partners Involved:	N/A	(Operational) Closing Date:	Planned:	Extended:
			24 Sep 2018	24 Sep 2019

Note: Total expenditures based upon figures through 31 March 2019.

Project Description:

The project was designed to protect China's wetlands by strengthening the management of the sub-system of wetland protected areas, improving the spatial design of the wetland PA sub-system, and bringing an additional 615,400 ha under protection. This was envisaged to contribute towards ensuring better terrestrial wetland ecosystem representation and filling ecosystem coverage gaps. The project was also developed to support mainstreaming considerations within sector practices to reduce pressures on wetland PAs. The project is a main pillar of the CBPF and Main Streams of Life (MSL) -Wetland PA System Strengthening Program. In addition, this national-level Project provides guidance and overall support to the provincial-level projects during the implementation of the entire MSL Program.

Terminal Evaluation Purpose and Methodology:

This terminal evaluation was conducted to provide conclusions and recommendations about the relevance, efficiency, effectiveness, sustainability, and impact of the project. The evaluation also aimed to identify lessons from the Project for future similar undertakings, and to propose recommendations for ensuring the sustainability of the results. The evaluation was an evidence-based assessment and relied on feedback from persons who have been involved in the design, implementation, and supervision of the project, review of available documents and records, and findings made during field visits.

Global Environmental Benefits generated:

The project has generated the following global environmental benefits:

- Expansion of the national wetland PA sub-system by approx. 2.96 million ha, which includes 1.9 million ha among PA's targeted in the child projects of the MSL program.
- Improved management effectiveness of 38 wetland nature reserves among the 5 provincial child projects covering a cumulative land area of 2.499 million ha.
- Government financing for operation of the national wetland PA sub-system has also substantially increased, from 35 USD million, or 0.71 USD/ha in 2013 to USD 130 million, or USD 2.5/ha in 2017.

Summary of Conclusions:

Conservation of wetlands in China has steadily increased in importance since the start of the project in 2013. Spurred by the publication of the 2nd national wetland survey that showed a decrease in wetland area and an escalation of threats to wetland ecosystems, the Government of China has made concerted efforts to enhance protection and raise awareness of the importance of wetland resources. Between 2013 and the end of 2017, approx. 2.96 million ha of new

wetland PA's were established, raising the percentage of total ecosystems under protection from 43.51% to 49.03%. Roughly 1.9 million ha of those new wetland PA's were among the target PA's included in the six provincial projects under the MSL program. Moreover, 600 new national level wetland parks were established and 16 Ramsar sites (3 of which were included among the MSL child projects) were declared over the period of 2013 through 2018. And, government financing for operation of wetland PA's has also substantially increased over this time period, from 35 USD million, or 0.71 USD/ha in 2013 to USD 130 million, or USD 2.5/ha in 2017.

As part of the institutional restructurings that were implemented in China in 2018, the Department of Wetland Management (DWM) was created under the National Forestry and Grassland Administration in the newly established Ministry of Natural Resources, thus elevating wetland management to a government level function, as compared to the former Office of Wetland Management which was under the now defunct State Forestry Administration. The annual budget for the DWM in 2018 was CNY 2 billion (approx. USD 300 million), which includes support for national wetland parks, wetland rehabilitation and eco-compensation programs associated with wetland ecosystems.

The project timing was opportune, providing incremental support to the Government of China in enhancing protection of wetland resources. One of the key outputs of the project was the drafting of the National Wetland Conservation and Rehabilitation Plan, which was approved in 2016 and has since prompted each of the 31 provinces in the country to develop provincial level implementation plans. In 2017, the Ministry of Land Resources approved inclusion of wetlands as a new land use category. This decision has far-reaching consequences, as wetlands were earlier covered under the default category of "undeveloped land". As part of the third national land resource survey which is scheduled to begin in 2019, wetlands will be officially included for the first time. The outcome of the land resource survey will enable local governments to more accurately delineate wetland ecosystems in their land use plans, e.g., by including wetlands as redlined areas.

GEF resources contributed the process of strengthening the enabling environment for management wetland resources. Institutional capacities were enhanced; a methodology for valuation of wetland ecosystem services was developed and is under approval as a national standard; access to wetland PA information has been improved through the development of a wetland PA information system that includes a section accessible to the public (pending approval); awareness has improved among key stakeholder groups, as measured by an end-of-project knowledge, attitudes and practices (KAP) survey; and technical guidelines have been developed and shared with governmental and non-governmental stakeholders.

Project efficiency was somewhat diminished by inconsistent financial delivery and the lack of clear pathways for mainstreaming some of the deliverables.

This national project was also responsible for coordination of the MSL program, which included six other child projects, five of which were implemented by UNDP and one by FAO. Program coordination was enhanced by the inclusive project/program steering committee, convening the meetings on a rotational basis, organizing cross visits among the child projects, holding joint training activities. There were some shortcomings in terms of program management and coordination, including insufficient quality control on the METT and other M&E tools, unclear linkages between provincial information management systems and the one developed at the national level and the lack of program level progress reports.

Evaluation Ratings:

Evaluation ratings are summarized below in **Table 2**.

Table 2: Evaluation ratings

Criteria	Rating	Comments
1. Monitoring and Evaluation (M&E)		
M&E Design	Satisfactory	The M&E plan was prepared using the standard template for UNDP-supported, GEF-financed projects and the M&E budget allocation of USD 184,000 or 6.9% of the GEF grant was proportionally adequate. Having the role of program coordination, it would have been advisable to disaggregate the M&E plan for the project and program.
M&E Implementation	Satisfactory	A part-time M&E officer was recruited and quality control procedures improved after the midterm review. The project steering committee, which also served as the program steering committee, provided an effective platform for project and program level M&E. Progress reports, including project implementation reviews (PIRs) were well written and internal ratings were realistic. The Financial Scorecard (Part II of the GEF-5 Financial Sustainability Scorecard) was commendably filled out. The project should have implemented more effective program level quality control on tracking tools and other M&E tools, including the capacity development scorecard.

Criteria	Rating	Comments
2. Implementing Agency (IA) and Lead Implementing Partner (Executing Agency - EA) Execution		
Quality of Implementation (UNDP as GEF Agency)	Satisfactory	<p>Drawing from long-standing resident operations in China and strong institutional capacity in leading biodiversity conservation projects and programs globally, UNDP as the GEF implementation agency, provided proactive support throughout the project cycle, from conceptualization to project development and throughout implementation. UNDP was included on the project steering committee and the country office supported the project with strategic guidance, procurement services and financial administration. Grant cofinancing from UNDP did not materialize, as TRAC funding has been discontinued in China as part of global UN reform. In-kind cofinancing was delivered through the UNDP-CICETE-Coca Cola Partnership on Water Governance.</p> <p>There could have been broader human development related inputs, e.g., associated with gender mainstreaming and inclusion of ethnic minorities across the program. And, there was room for improvement regarding program level reporting and quality control of the application of GEF tracking tools and other M&E tools.</p>
Quality Execution (NFGA as Executing Agency)	Satisfactory	<p>The key positions of National Project Director, Deputy Project Director, Project Manager, Deputy Project Manager and Chief Technical Advisor remained consistent throughout the duration of the implementation. Following the midterm review, a Project Assistant and part-time M&E Officer were recruited, further strengthening the quality of project execution. The project manager worked part-time and shared his time with managing the Daxing'anling project; full-sized GEF projects should have full-time project managers.</p> <p>The project/program level steering committee was effective at providing strategic guidance to the project and program, and cross-visits and joint teleconferences and other activities strengthened program coordination. Program level results, however, were not reported on a regular (e.g., annual) basis.</p>
3. Assessment of Outcomes		
Overall Quality of Project Outcomes	Satisfactory	The project has managed to satisfactorily achieve the intended project outcomes. ...
Relevance	Highly Satisfactory	<p>The importance of wetland ecosystems has been substantively elevated over the past 5-6 years. Between 2012 and the end of 2017, approx. 2.96 million ha of new wetland PA's have been established. A National Wetlands Conservation and Rehabilitation Systems Plan was approved in 2016 and each of the 31 provinces have since developed implementation plans. In 2017, the Ministry of Land Resources approved adding wetlands as a separate land use category. The timing of the GEF funding was opportune in this time and the project addressed the key barriers highlighted in the project design as hindering effective management of the national sub-system of wetland PA's.</p> <p>The project was approved under the GEF-5 replenishment cycle and was closely aligned to the GEF-5 Biodiversity Strategy, specifically Objective 1, "Improve Sustainability of Protected Area Systems", Outcome 1.1, "Improved management effectiveness of existing and new protected areas" and Outcome 1.2, "Increased revenue for protected area systems to meet total expenditures required for management."</p> <p>And, the project objective is consistent with the strategic directions outlined in the National Biodiversity Conservation Strategy and Action Plan (NBCSAP) and closely aligned with Outcome 1 of the 2011-2015 United Nations Development Assistance Framework (UNDAF) for China: "Government and other stakeholders ensure environmental sustainability, address climate change, and promote a green, low-carbon economy".</p>
Effectiveness	Satisfactory	Outcome 1: Wetland PA Sub-System Strengthened through Better Ecological Representation and Enhanced Management Capacity
		Moderately Satisfactory
		Outcome 2: External threats to Wetland PAs reduced through mainstreaming wetland PA considerations in sector planning
		Satisfactory
		Outcome 3: Increased knowledge management, lessons sharing, and awareness for wetland PAs
		Satisfactory
Efficiency	Moderately Satisfactory	<p>GEF funding addressed the key barriers highlighted in the project design, and the intended outcomes were largely achieved within the allocated budget. Moreover, governmental cofinancing exceeded amounts confirmed at project entry. Project management costs have been maintained <5% of the GEF grant. Financial delivery has been inconsistent throughout the implementation phase. Approx. 15% of the GEF project grant was unspent as of 31 March 2019. A one-year, no cost time extension was approved in 2018; extended closure date is 24 September 2019. The justification for the</p>

Criteria	Rating	Comments
		extension was partly due to 4 of the 7 child projects have closure dates later than the national project, which has a program coordination role.
4. Sustainability		
Overall likelihood that benefits will continue to be delivered after project closure	Likely	<p>There are several factors across each of the sustainability dimensions that support a rating of “likely” that benefits generated will be sustained after project closure.</p> <p>The National Wetland Conservation and Rehabilitation Plan approved in November 2016 provides an important framework, and all 31 provinces have since developed provincial level implementation plans. The 13th 5-year Plan on National Wetlands Protection, approved in November 2016, is a dedicated sector plan which is being implemented by the Department of Wetlands Management (DWM), created in 2018 as part of the governmental institutional restructurings. The 2018 budget for the DWM was CNY 2 billion (approx. USD 300 million). The institutional capacities of DWM/NFGA and FECO/MEE were strengthened over the course of the project, from 2013-2018.</p> <p>Approx. 2.96 million ha of new wetland PA’s were added to the national sub-system of wetland PA’s. And the strengthened management effectiveness and ecosystem health of the 38 wetland PA’s among the 5 child projects under the MSL program are reasonable proxies for the national sub-system of wetland PA’s.</p> <p>A few factors that diminish overall sustainability include the limited participation of the Department of Protected Areas of the NFGA and the Ministry of Ecology and Environment in the project; insufficient penalties of non-compliance infractions in wetland ecosystems; and continued development pressures on wetland resources in many parts of China.</p>
Financial dimension	Likely	
Socioeconomic dimension	Likely	
Institutional Framework and Governance dimension	Likely	
Environmental dimension	Likely	
5. Overall Project Results	Satisfactory	Global environmental benefits generated include 2.96 million ha of new coverage of unprotected wetland ecosystems. The project has strengthened the national level enabling environment for effective management of the wetland PA sub-system. ...

Recommendations:

The TE recommendations are summarized below in **Table 3**.

Table 3: Recommendations table

No.	Recommendation	Responsible Entities	Timeframe
Corrective actions for the design, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of the project			
1.	Prepare a sustainability strategy and action plan. A sustainability strategy and action plan should be developed to guide enabling stakeholders in ensuring project results are sustained after GEF funding ceases. The strategy and action plan should be based on the project theory of change, e.g., focusing on the assumptions and impact drivers for achieving long-term impacts. The plan should outline the actions requiring follow-up after project closure, assigning roles and responsibilities and identifying timeframes.	PMO	Before project closure
2.	Reassess the GEF-5 BD-1 tracking tools, including the Financial Sustainability Scorecard and summary of METT scores. The inconsistencies in the Financial Sustainability Scorecard should be resolved, and the METT scores for the 42 wetland nature reserves should be quality reviewed and the reporting updated.	PMO	Before project closure
3.	Prepare and disseminated a knowledge product summarizing the results of overseas learning exchanges. The international best practices and approaches shared during the overseas learning exchanges have not been documented. A knowledge product should be prepared and disseminated among national and provincial PA agencies and shared with project development and implementation teams of other GEF-financed projects and programs in China.	PMO	Before project closure
Actions to follow up or reinforce initial benefits from the project			
4.	Apply the METT (or similar tool) to wetland parks. Wetland parks make up a large proportion of the newly established wetland PA’s; however, METT assessments were not carried out for these types of PA’s under the project.	DWM	Within 1-2 years
5.	Finalize a standard procedure for assessing wetlands coverage. Building upon the pilot demonstration of dynamic monitoring implemented on the project, it is	NFGA, DWM	Within 1-2 years

No.	Recommendation	Responsible Entities	Timeframe
	important to finalize a standard procedure for assessing wetlands coverage in each province.		
Proposals for future directions underlining main objectives			
6.	Carry out a national level assessment of the wetland PA sub-system and develop an expansion strategy. Much of the expansion of the wetland PA sub-system has been through establishment of wetland parks, and it is uncertain how these parks are contributing towards objectives associated with biodiversity conservation and protection of ecological functions and services. The national level assessment should be used in the development of a national wetland PA sub-system expansion strategy.	NFGA, MEE	Within 5 years

A few examples of good practices and lessons learned on the project are presented below.

Good Practices:

Effective program coordination. Establishing a project/program steering committee and rotating the venue for the meetings among the provinces where the child projects were implementing was an effective way to promote cross-sharing, organizing site visits concurrently with the PSC meetings and facilitating joint training and communication activities with the child project PMOs.

Adaptive management. The project did a good job at adapting to the priorities of the national government regarding wetlands conservation and management, providing timely incremental support.

Robust information management system (big data). The national wetland PA information management is comprehensive and forward-thinking, e.g., including detailed maps that are useful for local governments and PA management administrations.

Informative comments included among the Financial Scorecard and Capacity Development Scorecards. The end-of-project assessments of the GEF-5 Financial Scorecard (Part II of the Financial Sustainability Scorecard) and the UNDP Capacity Development Scorecards contained detailed, informative comments. These M&E tools were commendably filled out and can be used as a good practice example for other project teams.

Lessons Learned:

Insufficient validation of the project strategy at project inception. The project inception is an important phase of the project, particularly for validating the project strategy, including clarification of what is expected with respect to policy reform, the project results framework, mainstreaming of the METT and EHI tools, policy expectations, etc.

Gender mainstreaming and inclusion of ethnic minorities not integrated into the project design. Gender mainstreaming and inclusion of ethnic minorities were not integrated into the project design.

Inconsistencies some tracking tool entries and insufficient quality control of M&E tools applied among the child projects. Part I of the Financial Sustainability Scorecard contains inconsistencies, e.g., regarding wetland PA coverage, and some of the METT scores for the target PA's among the child projects contain inconsistencies (e.g., for the Altai project, PIMS 4596).

Lack of a communications and knowledge management strategy. There were a number of activities on the project that were focused on communications and knowledge management, but there was a lack of a strategic approach. It would have been advisable to have developed communications and knowledge management strategy and action plan.

Limited stakeholder engagement. There were some shortcomings in terms of stakeholder engagement, including the Department of Protected Areas of the NFGA (and the predecessor of this department), the MEE and the NGO sector.

Program results not regularly reported. Considering the project had the role of program coordination, it would have been advisable to have prepared annual program level progress reports.

Limited tracking of cofinancing and coordinating with cofinancing partners. Materialized government cofinancing exceeded the confirmed sum at project entry; however, the project was not regularly tracking cofinancing contributions, including mobilized investments and contributions from other partners.

It is better to use national currency, CNY for monetary-based targets instead of USD. For monetary-based targets, such as PA operational expenditures and household income, it is better to use the currency that the expenditures and incomes are denominated in. It is useful to indicate inflation rates in monitoring reports.

Abbreviations and Acronyms

Exchange Rate, CNY:USD: **6.13678** (24 Sep 2013, at project start); **6.73123** (30 Apr 2019, at terminal evaluation)

ADB	Asian Development Bank
APR	Annual Project Report
AWP	Annual Work Plan
BD	Biodiversity
BSAP	Biodiversity Strategy and Action Plan
CAS	Chinese Academy of Sciences
CBD	Convention on Biological Diversity
CBPF	China Biodiversity Partnership and Framework for Action
CCICED	China Council for International Cooperation on Environment and Development
CDR	Combined Delivery Report
CHM	Clearing House Mechanism (under CBD)
CI	Conservation International
CITES	Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species
CNY	Chinese yuan
CPAP	Country Programme Action Plan
CTA	Chief Technical Advisor
DG	Director General
DWM	Department of Wetlands Management
EA	Executing Agency
ECBP	EU-China Biodiversity Programme
EIA	Environmental Impact Assessment
EHI	Ecosystem Health Index
EU	European Union
FAO	Food and Agriculture Organization of United Nations
GDP	Gross Domestic Product
GEF	Global Environment Facility
GIS	Geographic Information System
IA	Implementing Agency
IAS	Invasive alien species
IUCN	International Union for the Conservation of Nature
KAP	Knowledge, Attitudes, and Practices
M&E	Monitoring and evaluation
MEE	Ministry of Ecology and Environment
MEP	Ministry of Environmental Protection
METT	Management Effectiveness Tracking Tool
MNR	Ministry of Natural Resources
MoA	Ministry of Agriculture
MoF	Ministry of Finance
MoU	Memorandum of Understanding
MSL	Main streams of life (name of the GEF-financed Wetland PA System Strengthening Program)
MTEF	Medium Term Expenditure Framework
MTR	Midterm Review
NBSAP	National Biodiversity Strategy and Action Plan
NFGA	National Forestry and Grasslands Administration
NIM	National Implementation Modality
NGO	Non-Governmental Organization
NNR	National Nature Reserve
NPD	National Project Director
NR	Nature Reserve
PA	Protected Area
PMO	Project Management Office
PIMS	Project Information Management System
PIR	Project Implementation Review
PM	Project Manager

PNR	Provincial Nature Reserve
PPG	Project Preparation Grant (for GEF)
PSC	Project Steering Committee
QPR	Quarterly Progress Report
RTA	Regional Technical Advisor
SFA	State Forestry Administration
SBAA	Standard Basic Assistance Agreement
SGP	Small Grants Program (UNDP-GEF)
SMART	Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Relevant and Time-bound
SRF	Strategic Results Framework
STAR	System for Transparent Allocation of Resources (GEF)
TBD	To Be Determined
TE	Terminal Evaluation
TOR	Terms of Reference
TNC	The Nature Conservancy
TRAC	Target for Resource Assignment from the Core (UNDP)
UNCCD	United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
UNDP CO	UNDP Country Office
UNFCC	United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change
UNCBD	United Nations Convention on Biological Diversity
UNDAF	United Nations Development Assistance Framework
UNEP	United Nations Environment Programme
USD	United States Dollar
WWF	World Wide Fund for Nature

1 Introduction

1.1 Purpose of Evaluation

The objectives of the terminal evaluation (TE) are to independently assess the achievement of project results and to draw lessons that can both improve the sustainability of benefits from this project and aid in the overall enhancement of UNDP programming. The purposes of evaluations of UNDP supported, GEF financed projects also include the following:

- ✓ To promote accountability and transparency;
- ✓ To contribute to the overall assessment of results in achieving GEF strategic objectives aimed at global environmental benefit; and
- ✓ To gauge the extent of project convergence with other UN and UNDP priorities, including harmonization with other UN Development Assistance Framework (UNDAF) and UNDP Country Programme Action Plan (CPAP).

1.2 Evaluation Scope and Methodology

The overall approach and methodology of the TE follows the guidelines outlined in the following guidance documents:

- Guidelines for GEF Agencies in Conducting Terminal Evaluation for Full-sized Projects, Approved by the GEF IEO Director on 11th of April 2017
- UNDP Guidance for Conducting Terminal Evaluations of UNDP-supported, GEF-financed Projects, 2012

The TE was an evidence-based assessment, relying on feedback from persons who have been involved in the design, implementation, and supervision of the project, and review of available documents and findings made during field visits.

The evaluation included following activities:

- ✓ The TE mission was completed over the period 08-12 April 2019. The mission itinerary is compiled in **Annex 1**.
- ✓ As a data collection and analysis guidance tool, the evaluation matrix included as **Annex 2** was used to guide the evaluation. Evidence gathered during the evaluation was cross-checked between as many sources as practicable, to validate the findings.
- ✓ A desk review was made of available reports and other documents, listed in **Annex 3**.
- ✓ The TE team interviewed key project stakeholders, including the project manager, representatives from participating government agencies, contracted experts, local beneficiaries, as well as program manager of the UNDP country office (CO) and the UNDP Regional Technical Advisor; a list of interviewed people is included in **Annex 4**.
- ✓ The project results framework was used as an evaluation tool, in assessing attainment of the project objective and outcomes against indicators (see **Annex 5**).
- ✓ The TE team reviewed information regarding cofinancing realized throughout the duration of the project; the filled in cofinancing table is compiled in **Annex 6**.

The project was approved under the GEF-5 replenishment cycle. Tracking tools under Objective 1 of the GEF-5 Biodiversity Strategy were assessed at CEO endorsement (baseline), midterm, and project closure (terminal evaluation).

Evidence gathered during the fact-finding phase of the evaluation was cross-checked between as many sources as practicable, to validate the findings.

1.3 Structure of the Evaluation Report

The TE report starts out with a description of the project, indicating the duration, main stakeholders, and the immediate and development objectives. The findings of the evaluation are broken down into the following five sections:

- Assessment of Project Design
- Assessment of Project Results
- Assessment of Monitoring & Evaluation Systems
- Assessment of Implementation and Execution
- Other Assessments

The assessment of project design focuses on how clear and practicable the project's objectives and components were formulated, and whether project outcomes were designed according to SMART criteria:

- **S: Specific:** Outcomes must use change language, describing a specific future condition;
- **M: Measurable:** Results, whether quantitative or qualitative, must have measurable indicators, making it possible to assess whether they were achieved or not;
- **A: Achievable:** Results must be within the capacity of the partners to achieve;
- **R: Relevant:** Results must make contributions to selected priorities of the national development framework;
- **T: Time-bound:** Results are never open-ended. There should be an expected date of accomplishment.

The project design assessment covers whether capacities of the implementation partners were sufficiently considered when designing the project, and if partnership arrangements were identified and negotiated prior to project approval. An assessment of how assumptions and risks were considered in the development phase is also included.

In GEF terms, project results include direct project outputs, short- to medium-term outcomes, and longer-term impact, including global environmental benefits, replication efforts, and local effects. Project results were evaluated and rated according to effectiveness, relevance, efficiency, sustainability and progress towards impacts. Effectiveness refers to the extent to which the project objective and outcomes have been achieved or how likely it is to be achieved by project closure. The assessment of relevance looks at the extent to which the activity is suited to local and national development priorities and organizational policies, including changes over time. Relevance also considers the extent to which the project is in line with GEF operational programs and strategic priorities under which the project was funded. Efficiency is a measure of the extent to which results have been delivered with the least costly resources possible; also called cost effectiveness or efficacy. The efficiency assessment also examines compliance with respect to the incremental cost concept, i.e., the GEF funds were allocated for activities not supported under baseline conditions, with the goal of generating global environmental benefits.

Assessment of the sustainability addresses the likelihood that project results will be sustained after GEF funding ceases, with respect to financial resources, institutional frameworks and governance, socioeconomic considerations and environmental factors. Progress towards impact is an assessment of the project theory of change, i.e., how project results will lead to long term impact, according to the assumptions made and estimated intermediate states.

The assessment of project monitoring & evaluation systems includes an evaluation of the appropriateness of the M&E plan, as well as a review of how the plan was implemented, e.g., compliance with progress and financial reporting requirements, how were adaptive measures taken in line with M&E findings, and management response to the recommendations from the midterm review.

The quality of project implementation and execution is evaluated and rated. This assessment considers whether there was adequate focus on results, looks at the level of support provided, quality of risk management, and the candor and realism represented in the annual reports.

Other assessments include the need for follow-up, materialization of cofinancing, environmental and social safeguards, gender concerns, and the effectiveness of partnerships and the degree of involvement of stakeholders.

The report concludes with a set of recommendations for reinforcing and following up on initial project benefits and a discussion of good practices and lessons learned which should be considered for development and implementation of other UNDP supported, GEF financed projects.

1.4 Ethics

The evaluation was conducted in accordance with the UNEG Ethical Guidelines for Evaluators, and the TE team has signed the Evaluation Consultant Code of Conduct Agreement form (**Annex 7**).

1.5 Evaluation Ratings

The findings of the evaluation are compared against the targets set forth in the logical results framework and analyzed according to developments that occurred over the course of the project. The effectiveness and efficiency of project outcomes are rated according to the 6-point GEF scale, ranging from Highly Satisfactory (no shortcomings) to Highly Unsatisfactory (severe shortcomings). Monitoring & evaluation and execution of the implementing and executing agencies were also rated according to this scale. Relevance is evaluated to be either relevant or not relevant. Sustainability is rated according to a 4-point scale, ranging from Likely (negligible risks to the likelihood of continued benefits after the project ends) to Unlikely (severe risks that project outcomes will not be sustained). More detailed descriptions of the rating scales are compiled in **Annex 8**.

1.6 Audit Trail

As an “audit trail” of the evaluation process, review comments to the draft report are compiled along with responses from the TE team as an annex separate from the TE report. Relevant modifications to the report are incorporated into the final version of the TE report.

1.7 Limitations

The TE was carried out over the period of March-May 2019; including preparatory activities, field mission, desk review, and completion of the evaluation report, according to the guidelines outlined in the Terms of Reference (**Annex 9**). There were no limitations associated with language. The project deliverables were prepared in English and Chinese, with progress reports and work plans in English. An interpreter supported the international consultant during the TE mission, and the national consultant reviewed documents available only in Chinese.

Interviews were made with the key project stakeholders during the mission, and with most of the contractors who have been appointed by the PMO.

2 Project Description and Development Context

2.1 Project start and duration

The project identification form (PIF) was approved in September 2011, and following the project preparation phase, the project obtained endorsement by the GEF CEO on 3 July 2013. The project document was then signed by the Ministry of Finance of China and the UNDP on 25 September 2013. The project manager was hired shortly after that, in October 2013, and the inception workshop was held in November of that year. The planned closing date of the 5-year project was 24 September 2018. A one-year, no-cost time extension was granted to 24 September 2019.

Key project dates are listed below.

PIF Approval:	16 September 2011
PPG Approval Date:	20 December 2011
CEO Endorsement Date:	03 July 2013
Prodoc Signature by Ministry of Finance of China:	24 September 2013
GEF Agency Approval Date (Prodoc Signature by UNDP):	25 September 2013
Project Inception Workshop:	13 November 2013
Midterm Review:	June-August 2016
Project completion (planned):	24 September 2018
Terminal Evaluation:	March-May 2019
Project completion (extended):	24 September 2019

2.2 Problems that the project sought to address

Wetland ecosystems in China are under considerable pressure from socioeconomic development. China's first national wetland survey assessed the threats that 376 important wetlands face. The results revealed that 30% of these wetlands have already suffered or are facing excessive and unguided reclamation; 26% are polluted, 24% are witnessing excessive exploitation of biological resources, 8% have the threat of abnormal sediment deposition, and 7% face the problem of unsustainable use of water resource.

The Government of China has allocated considerable resources for ecological conservation, but there remain substantive barriers in achieving improved protected area management. The three barriers described in the project document are outlined below.

Barrier 1: Insufficient Systemic and Institutional Capacity at the National Level

Management effectiveness is hindered by weaknesses in the legal basis for PA development and management, in particular for wetland PAs. Despite the existence of many laws and regulations relating to wildlife protection and management of forests, grasslands and other natural systems, there is no comprehensive law for the establishment of wetland PAs. PAs are established under ministerial Nature Reserve Regulations only, making them vulnerable to pressure from other sectors with stronger laws.

Barrier 2: Disconnect between the Wetland PA Sub-System and Development and Sector Planning

Coordination between sector agencies is weak, resulting in overlap and harmful projects that are often damaging to wetlands and biodiversity. Furthermore, the SEA and EIA processes are weak and inconsistently applied.

Barrier 3: Insufficient Awareness, Knowledge and Access to Suitable Information

Awareness about the importance of wetlands for both biodiversity and the delivery of ecosystem services is not well established among government planners, the general public, and local communities. Even managers of wetland PAs often have poor or only partial recognition of the functional values of wetland sites. There is also a lack of knowledge-sharing platforms to store and avail information and technical "know-how" on successful wetland management cases around the country and the world.

2.3 Immediate and development objectives of the project

The role of the wetland PAs extends far beyond protection of wetland biodiversity and migratory water birds. They make an enormous contribution to the national economy and ecological and social welfare. According to the situational analysis in the project document, wetland PAs provide essential water resources to people and industries – up to 300 million people in China consume contaminated water every day and 190 million are suffering from water related illnesses each year. Wetlands provide resilience through maintenance of valuable ecosystem services to surrounding and downstream areas, through protection of soils and watersheds, and climate amelioration. Wetlands also provide various livelihood and economic opportunities through fisheries, agriculture, and tourism and associated employments. They also offer opportunities for public education, awareness and enjoyment, and living laboratories for continued biological exploration and study. As women among the local communities are more often engaged with gathering natural resources and collecting water, they are the primary beneficiaries of sustainable and quality supply of these resources. Promoting and demonstrating sustainable livelihoods to local communities were also designed to advance socioeconomic benefits and in turn reduce threats to biodiversity, securing global ecosystem and biodiversity benefits.

The project directly contributes to the goals of the Program of Work on Protected Areas of the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD). Through strengthening the wetland protected area (PA) sub-system, the GEF funding was envisaged to secure globally important wetland biodiversity and generate global environmental benefits, including enhanced management of the habitats of endangered and endemic species. In addition, the project generates very large, nation-wide socio economic benefits by incorporating sustainability dimensions into water management policies and practices, thus supporting the enhancement of water supply and quality.

The project design was aligned with several national policies and programmes, including the 12th National Five-year Plan (2011-2015) which urged environmental protection and sustainable growth by enhancing “ecological conservation and restoration”. The 13th Five-year Plan (2016-2020), currently under development, has further underscored the linkage between environmental conservation and socio-economic development. The National Biodiversity Conservation Strategy and Action Plan (NBCSAP 2011-2030) also attaches high priority to wetlands conservation and PA protection. And, the project was designed to support the State Forestry Administration (SFA) in achieving its target of adequately protecting 55% of the natural wetlands in China by the end of 2015, mitigating further loss of natural wetland areas and degradation of their functions.

The project also contributes directly to Outcome 4 of the UNDP Country Programme for 2011-2015: Low carbon and other environmentally sustainable strategies and technologies are adapted widely to meet China’s commitments and compliance with Multilateral Environmental Agreements; and Outcome 5: The vulnerability of poor communities and ecosystems to climate change is reduced.

2.4 Baseline indicators established

Baseline indicators are summarized below:

- Average score of the 41 protected areas in the six provincial projects of the MSL program: 47.
- No systematic use of the management effectiveness tracking tool (METT).
- Baseline provincial institutional capacities, as measured by the UNDP Capacity Development Scorecard, summarized below in **Table 4**.

Table 4: Baseline institutional capacity scores

Institution	Baseline Capacity Development Scorecard score (2012)
State Forestry Administration (SFA)	50%
Ministry of Environmental Protection (MEP)	55%
State Oceanic Administration (SOA)	54%

- Coverage of natural wetlands in the national PA network: Natural Lakes (53%); Coastal Wetlands (61%); Riverine Wetlands (32%); Marshes (55%); Total (50.3%). The baseline coverage of wetland PAs according to the information contained in the 2nd national wetland survey is illustrated below in **Figure 1**.

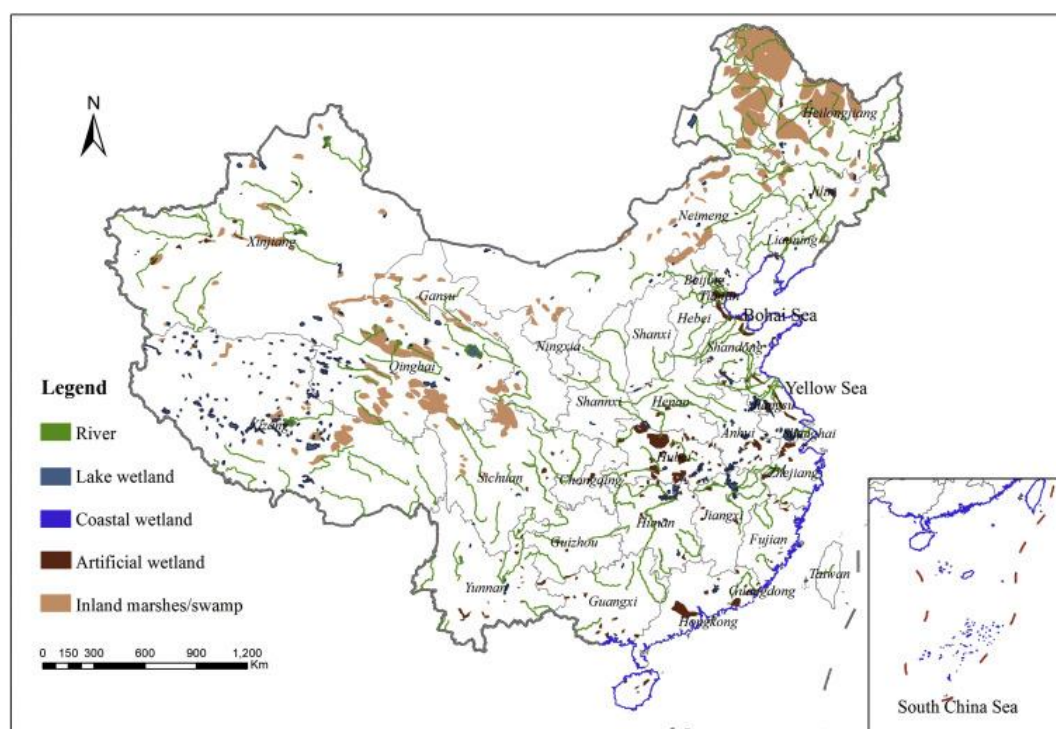


Figure 1: Map showing locations of wetlands in China based on the 2nd National Wetlands Survey¹

- The Ecosystem Health Index (EHI) was developed during the PPG phase.
- No safeguards for wetland PA's were in place.
- Baseline amount is the national budget allocation of USD 87.95 million per year for operation (USD 35,170,000) and infrastructure (USD 52,780,000).
- Financing mechanisms are mainly budget allocations. There is an eco-compensation program; however, the funding of provincial governments receive is not linked to PA management.
- The SFA lacked a comprehensive system to management wetland data at the sub-system level.
- Baseline KAP survey was commissioned through the PPG and a baseline was measured for the national level project in Beijing and for some of the provincial projects. The baseline is a score of 111.5 of 216 in Beijing (52%).

2.5 Main stakeholders

The main stakeholders relevant to the project were described in the project document, as listed below in **Table 5**.

Table 5: Project stakeholders

Stakeholder	Roles and Responsibilities
Ministry of Finance	Operational Focal Point (OFP). Coordination and implementation of GEF projects. Critical partner for financing component of the project
State Forestry Administration -SFA (including the Office of Wetland Conservation and Management - OWCM) <i>Currently: National Forestry and Grasslands Administration, and Department of Wetland Management</i>	National executing agency for the project. Responsible for forest lands, most of China's nature reserves, wildlife issues, wildlife trade (CITES), wetlands protection (Ramsar Convention), drafting of departmental level regulations especially wetlands. Responsible for ensuring effective wetland PA management and provide supervisory and technical support to PA management. Manages the vast majority of NRs (over 80% of the NR areas) and provide financial support for national NRs.
UNDP	GEF agency for the project, responsible for overall project implementation, providing technical and administrative guidance and procurement support.

¹ Source of map: Weiqing Meng. et al. 2017. Status of wetlands in China: A review of extent, degradation, issues and recommendations for improvement. Ocean & Coastal Management 146 (2017) 50-59.

Stakeholder	Roles and Responsibilities
Ministry of Environmental Protection <i>Currently: Ministry of Ecology and Environment</i>	Coordination of environmental issues, pollution and CBD implementation and reporting, execution of CBPF. Processing and coordination of drafting legislation related to environmental protection. Responsible for Regulations on Nature Reserves. Manages 21 national wetland NRs and 28 provincial wetland NRs.
National Development and Reform Commission	The national development planning agency and responsible for macroeconomic policy and management. Examines and approve major construction project. Responsible for promotion of the strategy of sustainable development; to undertake comprehensive coordination of energy saving and emission reduction. The focal agency for the UNFCCC.
Ministry of Water Resources	Responsible for water security. Important stakeholder with high interest in terms of water quality, flood control and other ecological functions. Manages 3 national wetland NRs and 8 provincial wetland NRs for water resource management.
Ministry of Agriculture <i>Currently: Ministry of Agricultural and Rural Affairs</i>	Responsible for agriculture and grasslands; manages 3 national wetland NRs and 26 provincial wetland NRs. Major stakeholder in terms of water use and sources of agricultural water pollution; responsible for freshwater fisheries. Under the project this ministry was envisaged to mainstream biodiversity and PA protection within their plans.
Legislative Affairs Office of the State Council <i>This office currently does not exist; the functions have been integrated into the National People's Congress</i>	Responsible for coordination of legislation and regulation functions under the State Council, including the regulation of nature reserve management and regulation of wetland conservation.
Ministry of Land and Resources <i>Currently Ministry of Natural Resources</i>	Responsible for protection and rational use of land and resources in particular geological resources for mining. Manage one wetland NRs
State Oceanic Administration <i>The functions of the SOA have been integrated into the Ministry of Natural Resources</i>	Responsible for marine fisheries and ecosystem management, as well as marine NR management.
Wetlands International and domestic level NGOs	Involvement in wetlands and biodiversity projects. Available for technical support, consultancies, training, and monitoring.
Chinese Academy of Sciences (CAS), several specialized and regional institutes	CAS is the National academy for natural science. Technical expertise available on hydrological, botanical and zoological aspects.

2.6 Project theory of change

The GEF alternative addressed the three primary barriers that were identified in the project design as hindering effective management of the national wetland PA sub-system and protection of globally significant biodiversity and regionally important ecological functions. The project objective was “to strengthen the sub-system of wetland protected areas to respond to existing and emerging threats to their globally significant biodiversity”. The objective was designed to be achieved through three mutually supportive outcomes:

- Outcome 1: Wetland PA Sub-System Strengthened through Better Ecological Representation and Enhanced Management Capacity
- Outcome 2: External threats to Wetland PAs reduced through mainstreaming wetland PA considerations in sector planning, and
- Outcome 3: Increased knowledge management, lessons sharing, and awareness of wetland PA's

The project aimed to strengthen the enabling environment required to facilitate strengthening of the enabling environment for effective management of the national wetland PA sub-system. The theory of change illustrated in **Figure 2** presents the intermediate states and ultimate impacts following achievement of the project outcomes. Making further progress towards impact will be contingent upon the assumptions impact drivers outlined, including continued expansion of the national PA system to further capture under-represented ecosystems, integrating conservation objectives with socioeconomic development priorities, securing PA financing and expanding incentives for encouraging local communities and the private sector to actively engage in collaborative PA management.

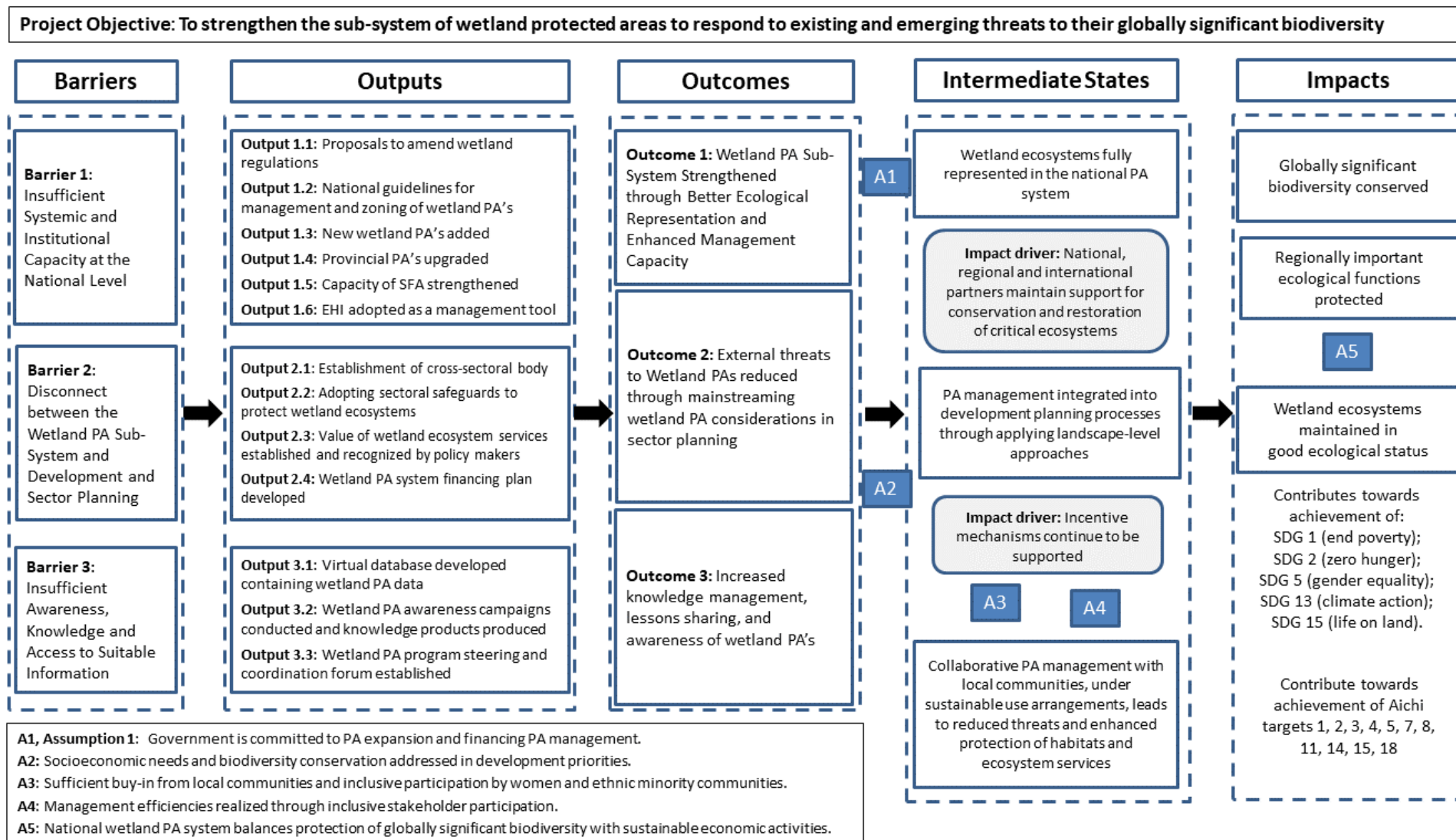


Figure 2: Theory of change diagram

3 Assessment of Project Design

The project was designed under Objective 1 of the GEF-5 Biodiversity Strategy: “*Improve Sustainability of Protected Area Systems*”, and specifically Outcomes 1.1 and 1.2 as described below:

Expected Outcomes and Indicators of Objective 1 of the GEF-5 Biodiversity Strategy

Outcome 1.1: Improved management effectiveness of existing and new protected areas.

Indicator 1.1: Protected area management effectiveness score as recorded by Management Effectiveness Tracking Tool

Outcome 1.2: Increased revenue for protected area systems to meet total expenditures required for management.

Indicator 1.2: Funding gap for management of protected area systems as recorded by protected area financing scorecards.

Core Outputs

Output 1: New protected areas (number) and coverage (hectares) of unprotected ecosystems.

Output 2: New protected areas (number) and coverage (hectares) of unprotected threatened species (number).

Output 3: Sustainable financing plans (number)

Considering that the project is promoting mainstreaming biodiversity among the key production sectors nationally, in the opinion of the MTR team, the project is also relevant according to Objective 2 of the GEF-5 Biodiversity Strategy, which is defined as “*Mainstream Biodiversity Conservation and Sustainable Use into Production Landscapes, Seascapes and Sectors*”. The objectives stated in the project document and the CEO Endorsement Request do not mention Objective 2 of the GEF-5 Biodiversity Strategy.

The project strategy was formulated according to the systemic, institutional, and financial barriers identified in the project document that are impeding effective management of wetland PAs in China. This is a logical approach.

Barrier 1, defined as “*Insufficient Systemic and Institutional Capacity at the National Level*” was addressed through Outcome 1, “*Wetland PA Sub-System Strengthened through Better Ecological Representation and Enhanced Management Capacity*”. The outputs and activities under Outcome 1 were sensibly formulated, in the opinion of the MTR team. There could have been more emphasis placed on advocacy built into the design of this outcome, as well as with other components of the project, in order to better highlight the added value of a GEF financed project.

Outcome 2, defined as “*External threats to Wetland PAs reduced through mainstreaming wetland PA considerations in sector planning*” was designed in response to Barrier 2, “*Disconnect between the Wetland PA Sub-System and Development and Sector Planning*”. Again, the project outcome is directly aligned with this barrier. The scope of the outcome, however, seems a bit beyond the reach of a 5-year project with less than USD 3 million in GEF funding. As discussed in the following section on the strategic results framework, achieving policy and planning reform in other line ministries, some of which are much larger than the SFA, is a bit unrealistic. Project stakeholders have realized this during implementation, and the focus of Outcome 2 has shifted towards developing guidelines approved by the SFA that will be applicable to other sectors.

Outcome 3, defined as “*Increased knowledge management, lessons sharing, and awareness for wetland PAs*” was designed in response to Barrier 3, “*Insufficient Awareness, Knowledge and Access to Suitable Information*”. The outputs under Outcome 3 were reasonably formulated, given the circumstances at the time the project was prepared, in 2011-2012. Due to both internal and external factors, the knowledge management strategy has changed. For example, social media has become an integral part of the lives of the general public and this information technology platform now represents the most efficient way to reach a broad audience.

3.1 Analysis of project results framework

The strategic results framework for the project was assessed against “SMART” criteria, whether the indicators and targets were sufficiently specific, measurable, achievable, relevant, and time-bound.

Project Objective:

The SMART assessment for the indicators under the project objective is presented below in **Table 6**.

Table 6: SMART analysis of project results framework (Project Objective)

Indicator	End-of-Project target	SMART analysis				
		S	M	A	R	T
1. GEF Management Effectiveness Tracking Tool (METT) scores of the six Provincial Projects of the MSL Program	Average of the 42 protected areas in the six project provinces METT increasing to a score of 64	Y	Y	Y	?	Y

Indicator	End-of-Project target	SMART analysis				
		S	M	A	R	T
2. Level of adoption of the GEF Management Effectiveness Tracking Tool (METT) at the wetland PA sub-system level	At the end of the project, 20% of the country's wetland PAs will have adopted the use of the METT as a regular monitoring tool	Y	Y	N	Y	Y
3. UNDP Capacity Assessment Scorecard for selected agencies involved or impacting upon wetland management	An Increase of 25 percentage point for each Agency, i.e., SFA to 75%, MEP to 80%, SOA to 79%, others	Y	Y	?	N	Y
SMART: Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Relevant, Time-Bound Green: SMART criteria compliant; Yellow: questionable SMART criteria compliant; Red: not compliant with SMART criteria						

Indicator No. 1 is relevant at the MSL Programme level, but not necessarily for the national project. The national project has somewhat of an oversight role with respect to the individual provincial level projects, but the project does not have any direct influence over the level of management effectiveness achieved at the site level by the provincial projects. The MTR team also feels that the application of the median METT score among the 41 protected areas is more appropriate than the average, which can be much more skewed as a result of low or high outliers.

The achievability of the end-of-project target for Indicator No. 2, i.e., 20% of the country's wetland PAs adopting the METT as a regular monitoring tool, is questionable and unrealistic for this project. Facilitating a decision by the SFA to adopt the METT as a tool would have been a more meaningful target, considering the project is running only for 5 years, and in practice this would facilitate uptake of the METT across up to 100% of wetland PAs.

The project has had limited activities aimed at strengthening the capacity of other line agencies, including the Ministry of Environmental Protection (MEP) and the State Oceanic Administration (SOA), with respect to conservation and management of wetlands. Assigning an objective level indicator that aims to increase the capacities of these other, major agencies seems less relevant and possibly also unachievable.

Outcome 1:

The SMART assessment for the indicators under Outcome No. 1 is presented below in **Table 7**.

Table 7: SMART analysis of project results framework (Outcome 1)

Indicator	End-of-Project target	SMART analysis				
		S	M	A	R	T
1.1: Coverage of natural wetlands in the national PA network increased from the baseline of 50.3% to 52% by adding an extra 615,400 hectares under protection contributing towards the collective programmatic expansion target of 55%. Revision after midterm review: Coverage of natural wetlands in the national PA network increased from the baseline of 45.33% - protection of natural wetlands (43.51% - baseline year 2013 conservation rate) to 48%.	Natural Lakes (58%) Coastal Wetlands (67%) Riverine Wetlands (35%) Marshes (61%) TOTAL (55%)	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y
1.2: Ecosystem Health Index (EHI) monitoring systems for monitoring wetland health fine-tuned and in place for the entire sub-system, with a focus to reduce threats	Fine-tuning and wide adoption of EHI at the sub-system wetland PA level.	N	?	Y	Y	Y
SMART: Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Relevant, Time-Bound Green: SMART criteria compliant; Yellow: questionable SMART criteria compliant; Red: not compliant with SMART criteria						

The phrasing of Indicator No. 1.1 was revised after the midterm review, to more accurately reflect the figures presented in the 2nd national wetland survey report.

Wide adoption of the EHI at the wetland PA sub-system is not sufficiently specific, and consequently does not lend itself to be easily measured. The interviewed PMO staff members and representatives of the contractors working on "fine-tuning" the EHI were also largely uncertain what the end goal of this indicator. If the goal is to have NFGA/DWM issue an agency level decision to adopt the EHI across the wetland PA system, then this would be achievable. The phrasing of the target for this indicator should be more clearly phrased.

Outcome 2:

The SMART assessment for the indicators under Outcome No. 2 is presented below in **Table 8**.

Table 8: SMART analysis of project results framework (Outcome 2)

Indicator	End-of-Project target	SMART analysis				
		S	M	A	R	T
2.1: Safeguards from sector practices for MOA, MOWR, MLWR, and MEP in place and in use.	Safeguards in the form of standards and procedures in place for each sector, and used centrally by SFA to avoid threats from external sectors.	N	?	?	Y	Y

Indicator	End-of-Project target	SMART analysis				
		S	M	A	R	T
Revision after midterm review: The national standards for wetland restoration and management in place and in use.						
2.2: Increased national financing for wetland PA management (funds and number of mechanisms) as recorded in the financial sustainability scorecard	Budget allocations for PA management operation increased by 50% over the baseline from national level sources (any sources, to be developed during implementation); and new sustainable financing mechanisms for PAs established and operational including earmarking of eco-compensation program funding for wetland PA management.	Y	Y	N	Y	Y
SMART: Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Relevant, Time-Bound Green: SMART criteria compliant; Yellow: questionable SMART criteria compliant; Red: not compliant with SMART criteria						

The term “safeguard” used in the original version of Indicator No. 2.1 is not sufficiently specific; the meaning of this term in this context was unclear to the MTR team and also to the interviewed PMO staff members. Achieving of standards and/or procedures for each sector, e.g., water resources, agriculture, land resources, etc., is also not particularly achievable, as the project does not have activities designed to facilitate or even advocate for such regulatory or procedural sector reforms. The phrasing of this indicator was revised after the midterm review.

Achieving new sustainable financing mechanisms, within the budgetary and time constraints of the project, as recorded in Indicator No. 2.2 is also unlikely. Realizing new financing mechanisms requires extensive and time-consuming governmental consultation, and beyond the scope of this project.

Outcome 3:

The SMART assessment for the indicators under Outcome No. 3 is presented below in **Table 9**.

Table 9: SMART analysis of project results framework (Outcome 3)

Indicator	End-of-Project target	SMART analysis				
		S	M	A	R	T
3.1: Improved data sharing platform regularly updated, as indicated by use levels of data providers and data users including their usefulness.	Data sharing platform in use in the form of a virtual database, containing basic wetland PA data from all the PA agencies providing necessary information for wetland PA managers for their management decision making	Y	Y	?	Y	Y
3.2: Public and government have better understanding and better access to information about wetland issues, indicated by results of the KAP surveys.	30% improvement in KAP survey results (i.e., a score of 173 or 82%).	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y
3.3: Magnitude and coverage of lessons disseminated.	Programmatic monitoring system in place as per the Program Framework and program level reporting is in place. Lessons documented and shared widely. Wetland PA Program Steering and Coordination Forum established	Y	?	Y	?	Y
SMART: Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Relevant, Time-Bound Green: SMART criteria compliant; Yellow: questionable SMART criteria compliant; Red: not compliant with SMART criteria						

The activities originally planned under Indicator No. 3.1 have been revised over the course of the project through adaptive management, responding to the current needs of the DWM with respect to information management. The DWM has separately developed a wetland data management system, and has requested the project to support development of an information management system that is accessible to the general public. It would be advisable to revise the indicator and end-of-project target accordingly.

Application of a Knowledge, Attitudes, and Practices (KAP) survey is a quantitative, objective way to measure public awareness. It would have been advisable to disaggregate this indicator by gender.

Indicator No. 3.3 is firstly not particularly measurable, for all aspects of the end-of-project target. For instance, “lessons documented and shared widely” is fairly open to interpretation. Establishment of a Wetland PA Coordination Forum does not seem relevant, considering that the national Ramsar Coordination Committee partly fulfils this role, and there does not seem to be any interest or progress in establishing a separate forum.

3.2 Assumptions and risks

The project risks identified at the project development phase are listed below in **Table 10**, along with an evaluation of whether the risks materialized during implementation and if they remain valid at project closure.

Table 10: Project risks

Risk	Risk Rating in ProDoc	Validity of the identified risk at project closure
SFA (NFGA) does not have sufficient reach or ability to influence effective management at project sites.	Low	This risk has been subsequently mitigated, as SFA was restructured as the National Forestry and Grasslands Administration, under the newly created Ministry of Natural Resources.
After 2013, China will mainstream people's livelihood-related issues into the agenda of the government. This may reduce the focus and budget for wetland conservation.	Low	Over the course of the past 5 years, since 2013, the Government of China has proactively promoted the principle of ecological civilization, aiming to balance socioeconomic development with ecological protection.
Mainstreaming wetland PAs into sectoral policies will be hindered by a lack of incentives for other sectors that may be incompatible with larger hydro-power, water diversion, land conversion or other major development programs.	Medium	Management of all types of PA's has been consolidated under the NFGA. Moreover, the National Wetland Conservation and Rehabilitation Systems Plan approved in 2016 provides a framework for mainstreaming wetland protection, and each of the 31 provinces have since development implementation plans accordingly.
Mega projects such as dam construction and water diversion schemes override wetland biodiversity conservation efforts.	Medium	This risk remains relevant but it is mitigated through increased awareness.
Legislative revision process and mainstreaming in the 13 th Five-Year Plan takes too long or does not materialize for the project to produce envisaged impacts.	Medium	Wetland conservation was integrated into the 13 th 5-year plan (2016-2020), and a dedicated 13 th 5-year plan was developed for wetland protection.
Severity of climate change impacts including water level change and increased incidence and extended duration of extreme weather (e.g., floods and drought) undermines conservation efforts.	Medium	This risk remains relevant. An increase of 2.94 million ha to the national sub-system of wetland PA's enhances the resilience of wetland ecosystems and the communities depending on wetland ecosystem goods and services. Moreover, demonstration of good practice in community collaborative PA management further strengthens resilience.

3.3 Lessons learned and linkages with other projects

The project built upon the achievements and lessons learned of other projects, including the UNDP-GEF Wetlands Project (UNDP #520) which ran from 1999-2009; the WB-GEF Nature Reserve Management Project (1995-2000), the ADB Wetlands project.

The EU-China Biodiversity Programme (ECBP) was under implementation at the time when the project was developed. The ECBP included several pilots throughout the country on mainstreaming and demonstrating biodiversity conservation initiatives. Many of the lessons learned on the ECBP were reportedly integrated into the project design.

3.4 Planned stakeholder participation

The project document includes a tabulated stakeholder analysis, which outlines the general roles and responsibilities of the listed stakeholders. The list is extensive and provides a reasonable level detail for many of the stakeholders. The project document also includes a stakeholder involvement plan, which provides descriptions of the stakeholder engagement mechanisms proposed by the project, such as the CBPF-MSL program steering and coordination forum, the project steering committee and the project management office. The stakeholder involvement plan also describes the proposed approaches for achieving long-term stakeholder participation, e.g., through capacity building, communication, knowledge sharing, etc.

3.5 Replication approach

The replication approach is outlined in the Sustainability and Replicability section of the project document. The national project had a specific program coordination role that includes promotion of lessons learned and good practices across the child projects and elsewhere among the national wetland PA sub-system. The replication approach in the project design included the following aspects:

- Strengthened capacities of enabling institutions and individual leaders.
- Application of the methodology on valuation of wetland ecosystem services.

- National level standards and safeguards.
- Enhanced access to knowledge-sharing platforms, e.g., through the national PA wetland information management system.
- Site-level interventions (at the program level) can be upscaled and replicated across the wetland PA sub-system.
- Implementation of PA management tools, such as the METT and EHI.

3.6 UNDP comparative advantage

The UNDP comparative advantage as the GEF agency was based on their extensive experience working in China, with in-country operations in Beijing, their favorable standing among national and provincial stakeholders and their institutional expertise in supporting biodiversity conservation projects. Protected areas remain one of the key focal areas of UNDP's Ecosystems and Biodiversity team. UNDP has delivered extensive and continuous in-country support to the Chinese government and other partners in strengthening institutional and individual capacities with respect to biodiversity conservation, and the multitude of aspects centered on human development, including gender and social inclusion.

The in-house specialists within the Energy and Environment team at the UNDP Country Office supported the project during the preparation and implementation phase, and senior management in the CO provided strategic guidance. The UNDP Regional Technical Advisor provided high level advisory services, e.g., through sharing best practices and lessons learned from the large portfolio of GEF biodiversity projects supported by UNDP.

3.7 Management arrangements

The 5-year duration project is being run under a national implementation modality (NIM), with the State Forestry Administration (now the National Forestry and Grasslands Administration - NFGA) as the national implementing partner, or executing agency. UNDP is the GEF agency for the project, providing technical and administrative support to the SFA and operating in line with the Standard Basic Assistance Agreement between UNDP and the Government of China.

NFGA is responsible for the execution of the project, providing support and inputs to the implementation of project activities, recruitment of project staff, and contracting of consultants and service providers, under the advice and involvement of UNDP as required by the contracting arrangements. The NFGA reports to the Project Steering Committee (PSC), which provides comprehensive guidance for project implementation, support and supervision, coordination and solving major issues in project implementation process to ensure the smooth implementation of the project.

The PSC is a joint body serving the MSL Program as well as the national project, and was established by the SFA's General Administrative Office through its Document No. [2013]45 (Annex 4) on 12 November 2013.

The PSC comprises DG level representatives from UNDP China, FAO China, NFGA's International Cooperation Department, five provincial forestry departments (Anhui, Hubei, Jiangxi, Hainan and Xinjiang), and Heilongjiang/Inner Mongolia Forestry Management Administrations.

The day-to-day administration of the project is carried out by the "national" Project Management Office (PMO). The PMO is a joint office, supporting the implementation of both the national level project and the Daxing'anling project, and is financed from the GEF and national cofinancing budgets. The Director General of the Department of Wetlands Management is the National Project Director (NPD) of project, and the Deputy President of the Academy of Forest Inventory and Planning of the NFGA serves as the Deputy NPD. The composition of the PMO indicated in the project design included the following staff members: Project Manager, Deputy Project Manager, Chief Technical Advisor, Communication Officer/Translator, and Administrative Assistant.

4 Assessment of Project Results

4.1 Outputs

Output 1.1: Detailed proposals to amend regulations related to national wetland PA management in order to enhance conservation and management of the sub-system	TE assessment:
Output 1.2: National guidelines for management and zoning of different types of wetland PAs developed, including regulations for conservation of wetland ecosystems and wildlife, especially for waterbirds, providing tailored approach to address specific threats and protect unique wetland dynamics and biodiversity	Delivered

Key Achievements:

- Outputs 1.1 and 1.2 were addressed in one technical assistance consultancy, procured to a team of PA management experts. Deliverable includes recommendations for improvements to protected area regulations, including changes in zoning methodologies. On 23 January 2018, the Sixth Meeting of the Central Committee for Comprehensive and Deepening Reform deliberated and adopted the Guiding Opinions on the Establishment of Natural Protected Areas System with National Parks as the main body, Nature Reserves as the basis and various types of Ecological Parks (i.e., wetland parks, forest parks) as supplements.

Issues/Challenges:

- Follow up is required to further advocate and facilitate uptake of the regulatory recommendations.

Output 1.3: New wetlands added to the PA system to contribute towards the 55% target and to improve resilience through all forms of protection areas	TE assessment
	Delivered

Key Achievements:

- By the end of 2017, protection of wetland ecosystems reached 49.03% of the 800 million mu (53.33 million ha) total wetland area; equating to 26.15 million ha of wetland PA's.
- During the timeframe of 2013 to 2018, there were 600 new national level wetland parks established, increasing from 298 in 2013 to 898 in 2018 (see **Figure 3**).

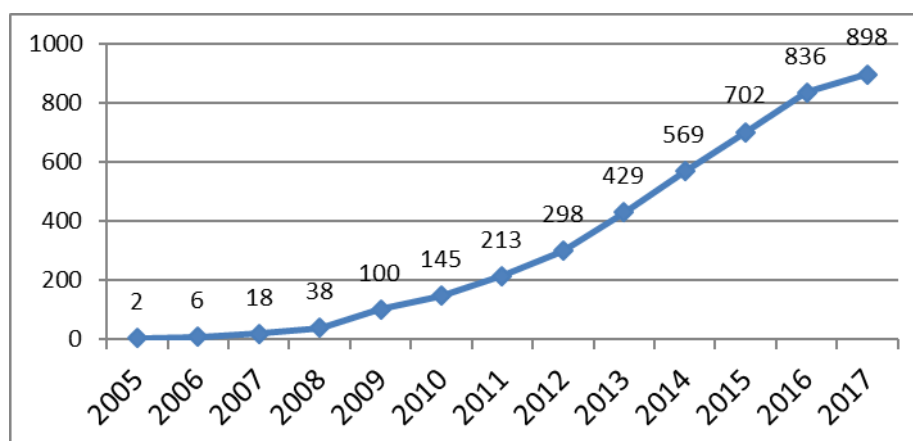


Figure 3: Number of national level wetland parks in China, 2005-2018²

- 16 new Ramsar sites declared in China during the time period of 2013-2018, including 3 among the 6 provincial MSL projects, and 6 Chinese cities designated as World Wetland Cities in 2018.

Issues/Challenges:

- The biodiversity values, connectivity and management effectiveness not well documented for wetland parks, which make up a large proportion of the newly established wetland PA's.

Output 1.4: Protection status of wetland PA's strengthened through "upgrading" of at least 20 sites from the Provincial NR's level to the National NR's level	TE assessment
	Delivered

² Source: Department of Wetland Management, April 2019

Key Achievements:

- 25 wetland PA's were upgraded from provincial to national level over the period of 2013-2018 (see **Table 11**), including 3 among the 6 provincial projects under the MSL program.

Table 11: Wetland PA's updated from provincial to national level, 2013-2018³

No.	Name of PA	Province	Year Approved	Number of Approval Document
1	Taikuanhe National Nature Reserve	Shanxi	2018	National level (2018) 41
2	Toudao Songhua River Upper Reaches National Nature Reserve	Jilin	2018	National level (2018) 41
3	Xilinha National Nature Reserve	Heilongjiang	2018	National level (2018) 41
4	Dashahe National Nature Reserve	Guizhou	2018	National level (2018) 41
5	Yuanchi Wetland National Nature Reserve	Jilin	2018	National level (2018) 9
6	Nanmoqi Wetland National Nature Reserve	Sichuan	2018	National level (2018) 9
7	Hongjiannao National Nature Reserve	Shanxi	2018	National level (2018) 9
8	Heixiazhi Island National Nature Reserve	Heilongjiang	2017	National level (2017) 64
9	Baihe National Nature Reserve	Sichuan	2017	National level (2017) 64
10	Yongchong Wetland National Nature Reserve in Mapan	Tibet	2017	National level (2017) 64
11	Altay Kekesu Wetland National Nature Reserve	Xinjiang	2017	National level (2017) 64
12	Tongshihu National Nature Reserve	Jilin	2016	National level (2016) 33
13	Arctic Village National Nature Reserve	Heilongjiang	2016	National level (2016) 33
14	Gongbiela River National Nature Reserve	Heilongjiang	2016	National level (2016) 33
15	Huaqiu Salamander Duck National Nature Reserve in Bishui	Heilongjiang	2016	National level (2016) 33
16	Cuibe Wetland National Nature Reserve	Heilongjiang	2016	National level (2016) 33
17	Medica Wetland National Nature Reserve	Tibet	2016	National level (2016) 33
18	Bila River National Nature Reserve	Inner Mongolia	2014	National level (2014) 61
19	Qinglonghe National Nature Reserve	Liaoning	2014	National level (2014) 61
20	Honghu National Nature Reserve	Hubei	2014	National level (2014) 61
21	Sanhuanpao National Nature Reserve	Heilongjiang	2013	National level (2013) 48
22	Wuyuer River National Nature Reserve	Heilongjiang	2013	National level (2013) 48
23	Minjiang Estuary Wetland National Nature Reserve	Fujian	2013	National level (2013) 48
24	Mingshui National Nature Reserve	Heilongjiang	2013	National level (2013) 111
25	Yellow River Shouqu National Nature Reserve	Gansu	2013	National level (2013) 111

Issues/Challenges:

- Unclear reporting among some of the child projects, differentiating between upgrades and newly established PA's.

Output 1.5: Supervisory capacity of the SFA at the national level for planning and monitoring of wetlands PAs and Ramsar Sites strengthened through strategic training activities	TE assessment
	Delivered

Key Achievements:

- Through a technical assistance contract, experts at the Institute of Geographic Science and Natural Resources Research, CAS carried out a training needs assessment on wetland conservation and management. Based on the results of this needs assessment, the following 10 training modules were developed and delivered through several training sessions, reaching a total of more than 500 people according to incomplete statistics, including the trainings organized by provincial projects and other GEF projects.
 - Wetland monitoring and field investigation techniques and methods;
 - Wetland restoration and habitat reconstruction techniques and models;
 - Wetland protection propaganda and natural education;
 - Theoretical basic knowledge of wetland biodiversity conservation;
 - Application of new technologies in wetland protection;

³ Information provided by the PMO and confirmed through search on the government approvals website (<http://www.gov.cn>).

6. Declaration, implementation and management of wetland protection projects;
 7. Waterfowl field identification and investigation methods;
 8. Wetland protection area patrol, law enforcement procedures and techniques;
 9. Wetland sustainable use model;
 10. Wetland monitoring and investigation report preparation.
- The project supported 2 training Ramsar Convention training events, one in October 2016 and the other in October 2017. Topics included demonstration of the METT and presentation of methodologies for valuation of wetland ecosystem services.
 - Through a technical assistance contract with Wetlands International, the overseas learning exchanges were organized:
 - 22-28 Sep 2015, learning exchange to the United Kingdom, five participants from China.
 - Nov 2016, learning exchange to Brazil, 6 participants from China.
 - Dec 2016, learning exchange to New Zealand and Australia, 6 participants from China.
 - Aug 2016-Jan 2017, fellowship learning exchange to USA, two participants from China.
 - December 2017 to May 2018, fellowship learning exchange to Malaysia, two participants from China.
 - A compilation of protected area staff qualification criteria was prepared through a technical assistance agreement with the National Highland Wetland Research Center at the Southwest Forestry University. The recommended criteria have not yet been approved or piloted.

Issues/Challenges:

- It is unclear how the training program developed will be mainstreamed into the regular capacity development process of the DWM or other institutions.
- It is unclear how the protected area staff qualification criteria will be institutionalized.
- Limited documentation and dissemination of the results of the overseas learning exchanges

Output 1.6: The Ecosystem Health Index (EHI) tested, fine-tuned, and adopted as a management tool to monitor wetland biodiversity health.	TE assessment
	Partially delivered

Key Achievements:

- The EHI tool that was developed during the project development phase was applied among the 6 provincial projects under the MSL program, providing practical guidance to wetland PA managers on using a rapid test to assess ecosystem health.
- Through a technical assistance consultancy, the EHI tool was revised to be less subjective than the original EHI. The revised EHI was piloted at a few sites, but not across all 6 of the child projects.

Issues/Challenges:

- The EHI was not adopted as a regular management tool among the wetland PA's under the MSL program or across the broader national wetland PA sub-system, and there is no clear pathway for mainstreaming the EHI after project closure.

Output 2.1: Establishment of a cross-sectoral body to improve coordination with sectors impacting wetland management including agriculture, environmental protection, mining, and land and water resources (including water diversion schemes and the post Three-Gorges Dam Plan).	TE assessment:
	Mostly delivered

Key Achievements:

- The project/program steering committee (PSC) provided an effective coordination mechanism for the project and for the program.
- Project information was shared with the National Ramsar Coordination Committee.

Issues/Challenges:

- A new cross-sectoral coordination body was not established because it was considered unlikely to maintain after project closure. The focus was on working with existing coordination bodies. This adaptive management measure was a reasonable response.
- The project document makes reference to the National Wetland Science and Technical Committee; there was no evidence that this committee was engaged during project implementation.

Output 2.2: Adoption and application of a system for safeguarding wetland PAs from sector practices developed, covering the SFA, MEP, SOA, MOA, and MWR, and including setting up of standards for infrastructure development and operation, and the issuance of official guidelines for fisheries, aquaculture and agriculture in and around wetland PAs	TE assessment:
	Mostly delivered

Key Achievements:

- Through a technical assistance consultancy, the project facilitated drafting of the National Wetland Conservation and Rehabilitation System Plan, which was approved in November 2016 by the SFA.
- Project resources supported a pilot on Wetland Dynamic Monitoring in Ningxia Autonomous Region through a technical assistance consultancy with the company Zhonglin International Co., Ltd. This output of this pilot provides valuable lessons for standardizing the technical approach for assessing wetland areas, including a combination of remote sensing based techniques with ground-truthing.
- Other guidelines were developed under this output, including: Guideline on conducting fishing, aquaculture farming in wetland PAs and surrounding areas; and Guideline on pollution control for lakes, rivers, pools and ponds in China.

Issues/Challenges:

- The consolidation of PA management to the NFGA as part of the 2018 governmental institutional restructurings mitigated some of the risks associated with having PA's previously managed by several different ministries.
- There are no clear pathways for mainstreaming some of the developed guidelines, including the guideline on pollution control for wetland ecosystems.

Output 2.3: Value of wetland ecosystem services established and fully recognized by policy makers, in the 13th Five-Year Plan and subsidiary sector plans covering the SFA, MEP, SOA, MOA, and MWR (Annex 3)	TE assessment:
	Mostly delivered

Key Achievements:

- The project supported development of a methodology for valuation of wetland ecosystem services. A draft standard has been reviewed by an expert group and then submitted to the standard department of the NFGA in November 2018. Approval of the standard is expected in June 2019.
- Section 3.3 of the 13th 5-year Plan on Wetland Management, approved by the SFA in 2016, addresses implementation of effective eco-compensation programs for wetland ecosystems.

Issues/Challenges:

- After the standard is approved, it will be important to implement a proactive advocacy campaign among national and provincial level stakeholders. This would increase the likelihood that the methodology of valuing wetland ecosystem services will be mainstreamed across the relevant sectors.

Output 2.4: A wetland PA system financing plan developed, defining management needs of wetland PAs, identifying current funding level and optimal level of financing, financing options and the steps required to achieve financial sustainability.	TE assessment:
	Partly delivered

Key Achievements:

- Through a technical assistance consultancy, PA financing options were analyzed and recommendations made strengthen and diversity financing for management of wetland PA's.

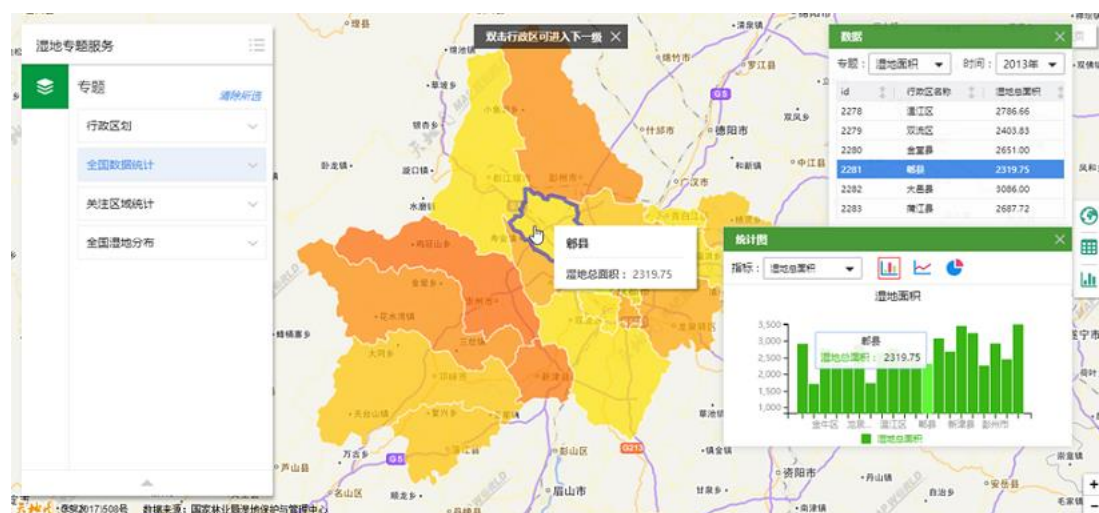
Issues/Challenges:

- The main deliverable under this output is more of a study report, rather than a wetland PA system financing plan.

Output 3.1: A virtual database in place, containing basic wetland PA data) from all the PA agencies, developed and adapted for web access, providing necessary information for wetland PA managers for their management decision making (annex 4).	TE assessment:
	Mostly delivered

Key Achievements:

- Project resources were allocated in support of the development of a wetland PA information management system. A screenshot of the system under development by the Xinhua University is shown below in **Figure 4**.

**Figure 4: Screenshot of wetland PA information management system**

- The contributions from the project focused on promoting public access to part of the information on the system. Approval is pending from the data security authority for granting public access.

Issues/Challenges:

- There is a reasonably high likelihood that public access approval will not be granted by project closure in September 2019. It will be necessary to ensure a champion is identified to actively advocate for the approval after closure.

Output 3.2: Wetland PA awareness campaigns conducted and enhanced, with clear linkages between wetland conservation issues and the national water security issue, at national and local level including the preparation of a handbook for decision makers, publications, media coverage, blogs and outdoor events	TE assessment:
	Delivered

Key Achievements:

- The project organized several awareness campaigns, maintained a project website and produced and disseminated knowledge products. A representative sampling of the deliverables under this output is listed below.
 - Organized an international wetlands conference in Haikou, December 2017.
 - CCTV7 documentary film on alternative livelihoods in wetland PA's.
 - Helped organize the national contingent participating in the 13th COP of the Ramsar Convention in Dubai, 2018.
 - Project website and linkage to the website of the DWM (Wetlands China)
 - Brochures and awareness publications.
 - Convened a roundtable workshop in 2017, which was reported in column in the publication China Green Times.
 - Case study and lessons learned publication, issued in 2019, with 1,000 copies (to be printed and disseminated).

Output 3.3: A “Wetland PA Program Steering and Coordination Forum” established, including a mechanism of coordination and reporting mechanisms to the CBPF Steering Committee	TE assessment:
	Delivered

Key Achievements:

- The project/program steering committee convened 5 times between November 2013 and March 2018. Consistent participation among high level officials on the project and UNDP.
- Cross visits, usually concurrent with the PSC meetings, organized to share experiences among the child projects.
- Frequent joint training and communication events, such as WeChat teleconferences organized among the child projects.

Issues/Challenges:

- Program level progress was not regularly reported. (lesson learned)

4.2 Outcomes**4.2.1 Effectiveness**

Effectiveness was evaluated by assessing achievement of the project objective and outcomes according to the agreed performance metrics included in the project results framework and the GEF-5 focal area targets. The project contributions towards the biodiversity strategy for GEF-5 are presented below in **Table 12**.

Table 12: Project contributions towards the biodiversity strategy for GEF-5

Focal Area Outcomes and Indicators	Focal Area Outputs	Project contributions
BD-1, Outcome 1.1: Improved management effectiveness of existing and new protected areas Indicator 1.1: Protected area management effectiveness score as recorded by Management Effectiveness Tracking Tool. BD-1, Outcome 1.2: Increased revenue for protected area systems to meet total expenditures required for management Indicator 1.2: Funding gap for management of protected area systems as recorded by protected area financing scorecards.	Output 1. New protected areas (number) and coverage (hectares) of unprotected ecosystems. Output 2. New protected areas (number) and coverage (hectares) of unprotected threatened species (number). Output 3: Sustainable financing plans (number).	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Expansion of the national wetland PA sub-system by approx. 2.96 million ha, which includes 1.9 million ha among PA's targeted in the child projects of the MSL program. • Improved management effectiveness of 38 wetland nature reserves among 5 of the provincial child projects covering a cumulative land area of 2.499 million ha. • Government financing for operation of the national wetland PA sub-system has also substantially increased, from 35 USD million, or 0.71 USD/ha in 2013 to USD 130 million, or USD 2.5/ha in 2017

Project objective: To strengthen the sub-system of wetland protected areas to respond to existing and emerging threats to their globally significant biodiversity

Achievement of the project objective is rated as: Satisfactory

Achievement of the project objective is rated as **satisfactory**, as outlined below in **Table 13** and the ensuing discussion.

Table 13: Evaluation of achievement of project objective

Indicator	Baseline	End-of-Project target	Status at TE	TE Assessment
1. GEF Management Effectiveness Tracking Tool (METT) scores of the six Provincial Projects of the MSL Program	Average score of the 41 protected areas in the six provincial projects of the MSL Program is 47	Average of the 41 protected areas in the six project provinces METT increasing to a score of 64	Self-assessment: Avg. METT = 66.9 for 42 PA's. Comment: some inconsistencies in scoring, e.g., for the Altai project.	Achieved (pending final review after reassessment of METT)
2. Level of adoption of the GEF Management Effectiveness Tracking Tool (METT) at the wetland PA sub-system level	Currently no systematic use of the METT	At the end of the project, 20% of the country's wetland PAs will have adopted the use of the METT as a regular monitoring tool	METT used at PA's among the MSL child projects, but not adopted as a regular management tool. Extensive METT trainings were delivered, including for Ramsar sites.	Partly achieved

Indicator	Baseline	End-of-Project target	Status at TE	TE Assessment
3. UNDP Capacity Assessment Scorecard for selected agencies involved or impacting upon wetland management	SFA (50%) MEP (55%) SOA (54%) Additional agencies to be added at Project Inception	An Increase of 25 percentage point for each Agency, i.e., SFA to 75%, MEP to 80%, SOA to 79%, others	NFGA: 77% (Feb 2019) MEE: 80% (Feb 2019)	Achieved
Year:	2012	Sep 2019	Apr 2019	Apr 2019

Key evidence reviewed:

- GEF-5 BD-1 tracking tool, end-of-project assessment, 11 February 2019
- Capacity development scorecard, end-of-project assessment, February 2019

The end-of-project assessment of the GEF-5 BD-1 tracking tool contains a compilation of METT scores from the target wetland PA's on the six provincial child projects. The average METT score among the 42 PA's was 66.9, exceeding the end target of 64. The TE team observed some inconsistencies in the METT scores for the Altai project (PIMS 4596), and the final assessment of achievement of this indicator is predicated on the PMO making a quality review of all 42 METT scores.

The TE team observed that the 42 wetland PA's included in the METT assessment summary are nature reserves; wetland parks were not included. Considering that wetland parks make up the majority of the number new wetland PA's, it will be important to address management effectiveness of this emerging type of PA. (Lesson learned)

With regarding to Indicator No. 2, there was no evidence that the METT has been adopted, or is planned to be adopted, as a mainstreamed management tool. The DWM is engaged in assessing the Ramsar sites using the Ramsar assessment tool, but these efforts seem confined to Ramsar sites.

The end-of-project Capacity Development Scorecard assessments indicated overall scores of 77% for the NFGA and 80% for the MEE, exceeding and reaching the 75% and 80% end targets, respectively. An assessment was not made for the State Oceanic Administration (SOA) because this institution was moved under the NFGA as part of the 2018 governmental institutional restructurings.

It is important to point out that the capacity development assessment for the NFGA was for the DWM and the one for the MEE was for the Foreign Economic Cooperation Office (FECO) of the ministry. The Department of Protected Areas, the Department of National Parks and the SOA were not included in the NFGA assessment. And, it is unclear what role FECO has in terms of wetlands management. (Lesson learned)

Outcome 1: Wetland PA Sub-System Strengthened through Better Ecological Representation and Enhanced Management Capacity

Achievement of Outcome 1 is rated as: Moderately Satisfactory

Achievement of the Outcome 1 is rated as **moderately satisfactory**, as outlined below in **Table 14** and the ensuing discussion.

Table 14: Evaluation of achievement of Outcome 1

Indicator	Baseline	End-of-Project target	Status at TE	TE Assessment
4. Coverage of natural wetlands in the national PA network increased from the baseline of 45.33% - protection of natural wetlands (43.51% - baseline year 2013 conservation rate) to 48%	Natural Lakes (53%) Coastal Wetlands (61%) Riverine Wetlands (32%) Marshes (55%) TOTAL (50.3%)	Natural Lakes (58%) Coastal Wetlands (67%) Riverine Wetlands (35%) Marshes (61%) TOTAL (55%)	End of 2017: 49.03% (to be confirmed) Comment: Scope of indicator is different than what is being reported.	Achieved
5. Ecosystem Health Index (EHI) monitoring systems for monitoring wetland health fine-tuned and in place for the entire sub-system, with a focus to reduce threats	Currently no use. The EHI has been developed during the PPG stage but will be fine-tuned based on implementation experience emerging from the provincial projects and other existing indexes (e.g., the WEEIS)	Fine-tuning and wide adoption of EHI at the sub-system wetland PA level.	The EHI was successfully used on the wetland PA's included among the 5 UNDP-supported MSL projects, providing PA managers with a rapid assessment of ecosystem health. Proposed revision to the EHI made, but not adopted and there is no	Not achieved

Indicator	Baseline	End-of-Project target	Status at TE	TE Assessment
			evidence that the tool will be taken up after project closure.	
Year:	2012	Sep 2019	Apr 2019	Apr 2019

Key evidence reviewed:

- National report to the 13th Conference of Parties to the Ramsar Convention, 2018, indicating protection level of wetland ecosystems

By the end of 2017, the level of protection of wetland ecosystems reached 49.03%, exceeding the revised end target of 48%. The phrasing of this indicator remained unclear throughout the project; “coverage of natural wetlands in the national PA network”. In fact, the project has been measuring the percentage of total wetland ecosystems that are protected, i.e., within protected areas. The reference value of the total coverage of wetland ecosystems is 800 million mu (53.33 million ha), which is from the 2nd National Wetland Survey report (2013). 49.03% of the total coverage of wetland ecosystems is 26.15 million ha, representing an increase of 2.94 million ha from the baseline in 2013 of 43.51%.

Regarding Indicator No. 5, the child projects utilized the Ecosystem Health Index (EHI) to assess ecosystem health of the target wetland PA's, particularly nature reserves, and the project supported a technical assistance contract for development of a revised EHI that is less subjective in nature. Although the EHI assessments were useful activities for the local PA managers and provided valuable guidance for focusing resources, there was no evidence that the EHI has been adopted as a management tool, either among the child projects or across the broader wetland PA system. And, there is no evidence that the DWM or other enabling stakeholders are promoting the revised EHI as a management tool.

Outcome 2: External threats to Wetland PAs reduced through mainstreaming wetland PA considerations in sector planning

Achievement of Outcome 2 is rated as: Satisfactory

Achievement of the Outcome 2 is rated as **satisfactory**, as outlined below in **Table 15** and the ensuing discussion.

Table 15: Evaluation of achievement of Outcome 2

Indicator	Baseline	End-of-Project target	Status at TE	TE Assessment
6. The national standards for wetland restoration and management in place and in use	No safeguards for wetland PAs	Safeguards in the form of standards and procedures in place for each sector, and used centrally by SFA to avoid threats from external sectors.	National Wetlands Conservation and Rehabilitation System Plan (2016), NFGA; Wetland Land Use Classification (National Standard GB/T21010-2017), Ministry of Land Resources.	Achieved
7. Increased national financing for wetland PA management (funds and number of mechanisms) as recorded in the financial sustainability scorecard	Baseline amount is the national budget allocation of US\$87.95 Million per year for operation (US\$ 35,170,000) and infrastructure (US\$ 52,780,000).	Budget allocations for PA management operation increased by 50% over the baseline from national level sources (any sources, to be developed during implementation);	Governmental financing steadily increased over project lifespan. Budget allocation for wetland PA management USD 130 million in 2017.	Achieved
	Financing mechanisms are mainly budget allocations. There is an eco-compensation program, however the funding provincial governments receive is not linked to PA management.	New sustainable financing mechanisms for PAs established and operational including earmarking of eco-compensation program funding for wetland PA management.	Methodology for valuation of wetland ecosystem services developed. A standard on specifying wetland values of ecosystem services has been submitted to the standard department of NFGA for approval.	Partly achieved
Year:	2012	Feb 2019	Apr 2019	Apr 2019

Key evidence reviewed:

- National Wetlands Conservation and Rehabilitation System Plan (2016), NFGA,

- Wetland Land Use Classification (National Standard GB/T21010-2017), Ministry of Land Resources (currently Ministry of Natural Resources).
- GEF-5 BD-1 tracking tool, end-of-project assessment, 11 February 2019
- Draft standard on specifying values of wetland ecosystem services, NFGA, November 2018.

The National Wetland Conservation and Rehabilitation Systems Plan, approved by the SFA (NFGA) in November 2016 is a significant achievement, and each of the 31 provinces have since developed implementation plans accordingly. Another important governmental decision during the course of the project is the national standard on establishing wetlands as an official land use category (National Standard GB/T21010-2017) by the Ministry of Land Resources. This standard has far-reaching benefits, as wetlands will now be officially represented on land use plans and local governments will be better enabled to protect wetland ecosystems, e.g., through redlining.

As recorded in the GEF-5 BD-1 tracking tool end-of-project assessment, governmental financing for operation of wetland PA's in 2017 was USD 130 million, or USD 2.5/ha, which is an increase from the baseline figure in 2012 of USD 35.17 million, or USD 0.71/ha. There is an inconsistency in Section III (Financial Sustainability Scorecard) of the tracking tool. The total coverage of wetland PA's is indicated to be 52,033,656 ha in the tracking tool. The total area of wetland ecosystems in the country is 53.33 million ha, according to the 2nd national wetland survey, and 49.03% (26.15 million ha) of those were under protection by the end of 2017. The figure indicated in the tracking tool should be reassessed.

Project resources funded technical assistance for development of a methodology for valuation of wetland ecosystem services, and a draft standard has been reviewed by an expert group and then submitted to the standard department of the NFGA in November 2018. Approval of the standard is expected in June 2019. This is an important achievement; for example, this standard could potentially be used to determine compensations for development of wetland ecosystems. The end target of establishing new sustainable PA financing mechanisms was not achieved – and likely overly ambitious for a 5 or 6 year duration project.

Outcome 3: Increased knowledge management, lessons sharing, and awareness of wetland PA's

Achievement of Outcome 3 is rated as: Satisfactory

Achievement of the Outcome 3 is rated as **satisfactory**, as outlined below in **Table 16** and the ensuing discussion.

Table 16: Evaluation of achievement of Outcome 3

Indicator	Baseline	End-of-Project target	Status at TE	TE Assessment
8. Improved data sharing platform regularly updated, as indicated by use levels of data providers and data users including their usefulness	No use. Currently, the SFA lacks a comprehensive system to manage wetland data at the sub-system level.	Data sharing platform in use in the form of a virtual database, containing basic wetland PA data from all the PA agencies providing necessary information for wetland PA managers for their management decision making	Data platform for sharing to the public developed, not yet live, pending authorization. Scope of platform not as broad as project design	Expected to be achieved within 1 year
9. Public and government have better understanding and better access to information about wetland issues, indicated by results of the KAP surveys	KAP survey has been commissioned through the PPG and a baseline has been measured for the national level project in Beijing and for some of the provincial projects. The baseline is a score of 111.5 of 216 in Beijing (52%).	30% improvement in KAP survey results (i.e., a score of 173 or 82%).	End of project KAP survey: 84%	Achieved
10. Magnitude and coverage of lessons disseminated	No program level system to track or disseminate lessons.	Programmatic monitoring system in place as per the Program Framework and program level reporting is in place. Lessons documented and shared widely. Wetland PA Program Steering and Coordination Forum established	Effective program coordination through PSC, joint training, website management, etc.	Achieved
Year:	2012	Feb 2019	Apr 2019	Apr 2019

Key evidence reviewed:

- Report of the wetland PA information management system, Tsinghua University, October 2018.
- End-of-project KAP survey report, China Agricultural University, February 2019.
- Steering committee meeting minutes, project website, training records.

Project resources contributed to the development of a wetland PA information management platform, prepared by experts from the Xinhua University. The specific added value of the project was to promote public access to wetland information, and certain sections of the system were developed to allow public access. Public access is pending approval from the data security authorities; there is particular scrutiny on maps being made available publicly. Approval is expected to be achieved before project closure in September 2019; there is a moderate chance that additional time will be needed before approval is granted.

An end-of-project knowledge, practices and attitudes (KAP) survey was made in February 2019 by the same institution (China Agricultural University) that made the baseline KAP survey in 2012. The overall result of the end-of-project KAP survey was 84%, exceeding the end target of 82%. The respondents to the end-of-project survey are summarized below.

- 32 government officials, including the NFGA, Ministry of Finance, National Development and Reform Commission, Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Areas, Ministry of Natural Resources, Ministry of Ecology and Environment, International Poverty Reduction Center of China, etc.
- 41 managers and technicians from brand enterprises
- 50 managers and staff from famous NGO
- 43 journalists and from the main media in Beijing
- 50 university students in Beijing

The surveyed stakeholders are consistent with those included in the baseline survey. It might have been advisable to include more people outside of Beijing, as the survey was meant to be a national level representation.

Project coordination was successfully achieved, through convening regular steering group meetings, organizing cross visits among the child projects, holding joint training activities, maintaining a project website and facilitating frequent joint communication activities.

4.2.2 Relevance

Relevance is rated as: Highly Satisfactory

The importance of wetland ecosystems has been substantively elevated over the past 5-6 years. Between 2012 and the end of 2017, approx. 2.94 million ha of new wetland PA's have been established. A National Wetlands Conservation and Rehabilitation Systems Plan was approved in 2016 and each of the 31 provinces have since developed implementation plans. In 2017, the Ministry of Land Resources approved adding wetlands as a separate land use category. The timing of the GEF funding was opportune in this time and the project addressed the key barriers highlighted in the project design as hindering effective management of the national sub-system of wetland PA's.

The project was approved under the GEF-5 replenishment cycle and was closely aligned to the GEF-5 Biodiversity Strategy, specifically Objective 1, "Improve Sustainability of Protected Area Systems", Outcome 1.1, "Improved management effectiveness of existing and new protected areas" and Outcome 1.2, "Increased revenue for protected area systems to meet total expenditures required for management."

And, the project objective is consistent with the strategic directions outlined in the National Biodiversity Conservation Strategy and Action Plan (NBCSAP) and closely aligned with Outcome 1 of the 2011-2015 United Nations Development Assistance Framework (UNDAF) for China: "Government and other stakeholders ensure environmental sustainability, address climate change, and promote a green, low-carbon economy".

At project entry, the project objective was consistent with two outcomes of the 2011-2015 UNDP Country Programme Document for China: Outcome 4: "Low carbon and other environmentally sustainable strategies and technologies are adapted widely to meet China's commitments and compliance with Multilateral Environmental Agreements"; and Outcome 5: "The vulnerability of poor communities and ecosystems to climate change is reduced". The project remains relevant with respect to the priorities outlined in the 2016-2020 UNDP Country Programme Document, specifically Output 2.1, "China's actions on climate change mitigation, biodiversity and chemicals across sectors are scaled up, funded and implemented".

4.2.3 Efficiency

Efficiency is rated as: Moderately Satisfactory

Supporting Evidence:

- + The GEF funding addressed the key barriers highlighted in the project design.
- + Satisfactorily achieved the intended project outcomes within the allocated budget and timeframe.

- + Materialized cofinancing exceeds confirmed amount at project entry.
- Financial delivery 55% and 51% in 2017 and 2018, respectively.
- 15% of GEF project grant unspent as of 31 March 2019.
- Shortcomings regarding institutionalization several of the project outputs.

As of 31 March 2019, total project expenditures incurred were USD 2,261,651, or 85% of the USD 2,654,771 GEF grant for implementation, as broken down below in **Table 17**.

Table 17: Actual expenditures broken down by project component, 2013-2019

Outcome	Actual expenditures (USD)								Indicative Prodoc Budget
	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019*	Total	
Component 1	8,125	117,308	242,562	310,771	116,117	79,489	9,870	884,242	900,000
Component 2	0	102,623	231,950	239,799	94,496	91,583	50,998	811,449	1,100,000
Component 3	0	10,660	25,624	153,939	191,875	49,028	16,768	447,894	522,771
Project Management	0	25,563	27,505	22,982	26,417	9,827	0	112,294	132,000
Unrealized loss	0	4,044	5,328	9,201	4,764	9,143	0	32,480	N/A
Unrealized gain	(22)	(2,954)	(1,303)	(312)	(7,855)	(11,085)	(3,177)	(26,708)	N/A
Total	8,103	257,244	531,666	736,380	425,815	227,985	74,459	2,261,651	2,654,771
Balance, 31 Mar 2019:								393,120	

Source of budget figures: approved Project Document

Source of expenditures: Combined Delivery Reports (CDR), provided by UNDP

*2019 expenditures reported through 31 March

Spending has been generally consistent across the project components, with respect to the indicative budget included in the Project Document. Actual expenditures for Component 2 have been USD 811,449 through 31 March 2019, compared to the USD 1,100,000 indicative budget. Considering the operational closure date of 24 September 2019, most of the balance of USD 393,120 is expected to be expended in Q2 and Q3 2019.

Financial delivery was good during the first three full years of project implementation, at 97%, 98% and 87% in 2014, 2015 and 2016, respectively (see **Figure 5**). Delivery decreased in 2017 and 2018 to 55% and 51%, respectively.

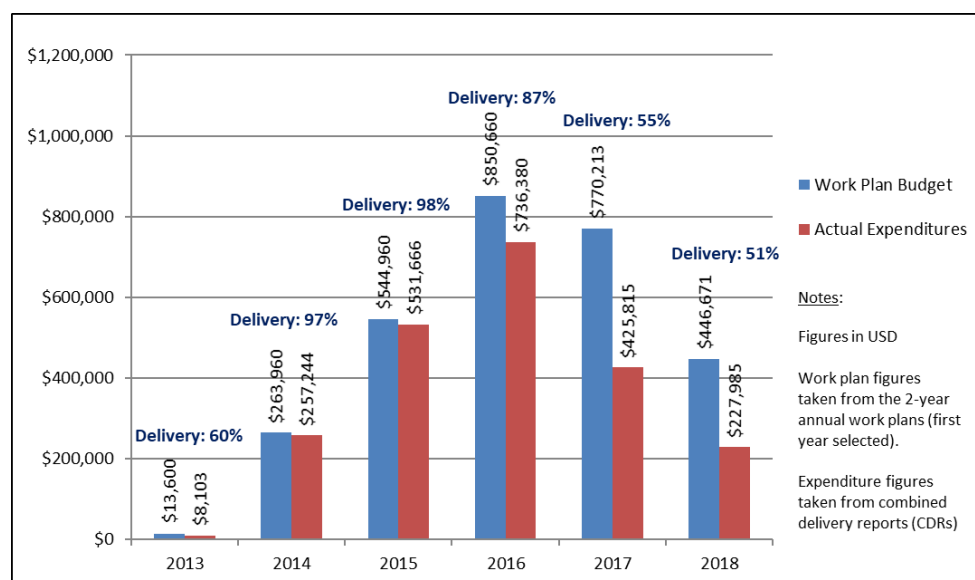


Figure 5: Planned annual budgets and actual expenditures, 2013-2018

On 19 March 2018, the SFA sent a request to the UNDP for a one-year, no-cost time extension. Among the reasons justifying the requested time extension, 4 of the 7 child projects had closure dates later than the national project, which has the role of program coordination (lesson learned). The UNDP approved the extension on 6 June 2018. The extended closure date of the project is 24 September 2019.

Moderate efficiency gains were also achieved as a result of the decreasing value of the Chinese yuan against the US dollar over the course of the project. At the project start date on 24 September 2013, the USD:CNY exchange rate was 6.13678 and by the time of the terminal evaluation, 30 April 2019, the exchange rate was 6.73123 (see **Figure 6**).

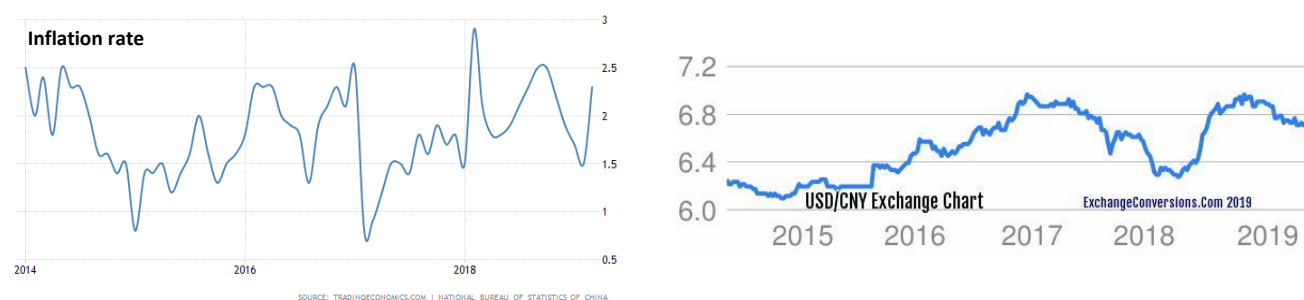


Figure 6: Consumer inflation rates in China and USD:CNY exchange rates, 2014-2019

According to the project asset report with the effective date of 31 December 2016, the cumulative purchase value of assets procured were USD 5,923.95 for assets acquired below a value of USD 1,500 and USD 7,151.62 for assets acquired above a value of USD 1,500. The purchased assets include desktop and laptop computers and digital cameras.

Independent financial audits have been completed of the project to demonstrate due diligence in the management of funds. Audit reports by the auditing company Mazars Certified Public Accountants for fiscal years 2015 and 2016 were provided to the TE team for review. No findings or observations were noted in the 2015 audit report. The 2016 audit report included one low level risk associated with the timeliness of recording expenses; the project management response accepted the observation and pledged to improve the timeliness of recording expenses.

One of the factors that diminished project efficiency is the fact that several of the project outputs have not been effectively institutionalized and there are no clear pathways for mainstreaming them after project closure. These include the revised EHI tool, the guideline on pollution control, training program, PA staff qualification standards.

4.3 Sustainability

Sustainability is generally considered to be the likelihood of continued benefits after the GEF funding ends. Under GEF criteria each sustainability dimension is critical, i.e., the overall ranking cannot be higher than the lowest one.

Overall:

Likelihood that benefits will continue to be delivered after project closure: Likely

Supporting Evidence:

- ✚ National Wetland Conservation and Rehabilitation System Plan, November 2016.
- ✚ 13th 5-year Plan on National Wetlands Protection, November 2016 (SFA).
- ✚ Official decision to include wetlands as a land use category, Ministry of Land Resources, 2017.
- ✚ Establishment of the Department of Wetlands Management (DWM), NFGA (2018)
- ✚ CNY 2 billion (approx. USD 300 million) budget for the DWM/NFGA, 2018
- ✚ Strengthened institutional capacities (NFGA, MEE)
- ✚ Increased protection of wetland ecosystems, with 2.94 million ha of new wetland PA's established.
- ✚ Increased awareness of the importance of wetlands (KAP survey in 2019: 84%; baseline: 52% in 2012).
- ✚ Strengthened management effectiveness and improved ecosystem health of wetland PA's.
- ✖ Limited project involvement by the Department of Protected Areas (NFGA) and Ministry of Ecology and Environment.
- ✖ Insufficient penalties for non-compliance infractions within wetland ecosystems.
- ✖ Continued development pressures on wetlands in many parts of the country.
- ✖ Long-term impacts of climate change.

Financial Dimension:

Likelihood that benefits will continue to be delivered after project closure: Likely

With respect to the financial dimension of sustainability, the likelihood that generated benefits will continue to be delivered after project closure is rated as likely. The Government of China has steadily increased financing for wetlands conservation and rehabilitation. For instance, the annual budget in 2018 for the Department of Wetlands Management

reached CNY 2 billion (approx. USD 300 million), which covers investments in national level wetland parks and eco-compensation programs such as conversion of farmland to wetlands. Moreover, the reported⁴ financing available for operation of wetland PA's in 2017 was USD 130 million, or USD 2.5/ha, which is an increase from the baseline figure in 2012 of USD 35.17 million, or USD 0.71/ha.

Governmental project cofinancing slightly exceed the sum confirmed at project entry; USD 16 million materialized, compared to USD 15.9 million confirmed.

Participation of NGOs and foundations in wetland conversation has also increased, and corporate social responsibility contributions from the business sector are being directed to environmental improvement programs.

The concept of volunteerism is also increasing in China, particularly in the more affluent, urban areas. Engaging volunteers in supporting PA management is in the early stages, however.

Socioeconomic Dimension:

Likelihood that benefits will continue to be delivered after project closure: Likely

The socioeconomic dimension of sustainability is rated as likely.

As measured in the end-of-project knowledge, attitudes and practices (KAP) survey, awareness has increased sharply among surveyed stakeholders. The overall end-of-project KAP survey score was 84%, up from the baseline score of 52% in 2012.

The number of national level wetland parks increased from 298 in 2012 to 898 in 2018, and there are many other provincial level wetland parks. Public benefits are a key element of wetland parks, offering eco-tourism and environmental education experiences for local communities.

The Government of China has eco-compensation funds, which have supported local governments and local farmers in areas designated as key ecological function zones and priority conservation areas.

There are a few factors that diminish the prospects of sustainability, including continued development pressure in many parts of China. The decision in 2017 to include wetlands as an official land use category has wide-reaching benefits in facilitating protection of wetland ecosystems, e.g., through the redlining process.

Collaborative co-management of wetland PA's has been demonstrated throughout the child projects under the MSL program as a way to engage local communities and thereby reducing threats to wetland ecosystems. These modalities remain in the early phase in China, and substantial more time and effort will be required to mainstream co-management as a viable management approach. As evident among some of the MSL child projects, local NGOs and foundations are working with communities in facilitating collaborative PA management arrangements and strengthening alternative livelihood ventures. These stakeholders are important enabling partners at the grassroots level.

Institutional Framework and Governance Dimension:

Likelihood that benefits will continue to be delivered after project closure: Likely

There are several factors that enhance the sustainability likelihood with respect to the institutional framework and governance influencing a rating of likely for this dimension.

The National Wetland Conservation and Rehabilitation System Plan approved in November 2016 provides a practical framework, and each of the 31 provinces have since developed provincial level implementation plans.

The 2017 decision by the Ministry of Land Resources to include wetlands as an official land use category significantly enhances the prospects for sustained conservation of wetland ecosystems. Wetlands will be officially included in the third national land survey scheduled to start in 2019, which will better enable local governments include wetland ecosystems in their redlining processes.

The creation in 2018 of the Department of Wetlands Management (DWM), under the NFGA is an important step in elevating wetland conservation to the government department level, which further enhances sustainability. And, the consolidation of management responsibility of all types of protected areas under the NFGA further strengthens the institutional framework with respect to PA management.

The 13th 5-year plan (2016-2020) on National Wetland Protection approved in November 2016 by SFA (now the NFGA) further enhances sustainability by providing a framework for resource allocation for wetland conservation and rehabilitation.

⁴ Source: GEF-5 Financial Sustainability Scorecard, 11 February 2019 assessment. The unit financing rates is based on a reported national sub-system PA system covering 52,033,656 ha (this reported number of hectares seems to be incorrect).

Wetlands management (weighted at 1.83%) was included among the green development indicator (GDI) system implemented in 2016. The performance of all local governments is assessed according to the GDI system and the inclusion of wetlands management is an effective way to promote ownership of wetland related issues.

As measured by the UNDP Capacity Development Scorecard, the institutional capacities of the DWM/NFGA and the Foreign Economic Cooperation Office (FECO) division of the Ministry of Ecology and Environment (MEE) increased from baselines of 50% and 54% in 2012 to 77% and 80% in 2019, respectively.

There are existing coordination mechanisms that enhance governance of wetland PA's; these include the National Ramsar Coordination Committee and the National Biodiversity Coordination Committee.

There are a few factors that diminish the sustainability likelihood. There was limited involvement of the Department of Protected Areas (NFGA) and this department's predecessor under the former SFA. This department is responsible for management of the nature reserve system in the country which comprise a significant proportion of the national sub-system of wetland PA's. Moreover, there was limited direct involvement of the MEE on this project, even though there was a specific target for improving their capacity in terms of wetland management.

Based on interviews made by the TE team, a common issue raised among provincial stakeholders was the insufficient level of penalties for non-compliance infractions committed in wetland ecosystems. There is a need to increase penalties and fines.

Environmental Dimension:

Likelihood that benefits will continue to be delivered after project closure: Likely

The environmental dimension of sustainability is rated as likely. Protection of wetland ecosystems has increased from 43.51% in 2013 to 49.03% by the end of 2017, representing an expansion of the national sub-system of wetland PA's of 2.94 million ha. This increased coverage strengthens protection of globally significant biodiversity and national and regionally important ecosystem functions.

As measured by the GEF-5 adapted METT, management effectiveness of the 38 wetland PA's, covering a cumulative area of 2.499 million ha, included among the 5 MSL child projects increased on average from 47% in 2012 to 66.9% in 2018. Ecosystem health, as measured by the ecosystem health index (EHI) of these same PA's increased on average from 0.52 in 2012 to 0.75 in 2018. Considering the wide variation in wetland types among the child projects, these results are a reasonable proxy for the national sub-system of wetland PA's.

Increased protection and management effectiveness also strengthen the resilience of wetlands and the local communities that depend on the associated ecosystem goods and services to the impacts of climate change. The national peatland survey made in key provinces in 2016 provides further adaptation benefits, through increased knowledge of wetland ecosystems. Climate change is largely unpredictable, however, and the possible long-term impacts pose risks to wetland across China.

There are also environmental risks associated with the continued development pressures in China. The national redlining process is one tool that is being implemented to help mitigate unsustainable development; however, implementation of redlining remains a work-in-progress.

4.4 Progress towards impact

Environmental Stress Reduction:

The project focused on strengthening the enabling environment at the national level for effective management of the wetland PA sub-system. There are examples of environmental stress reduction, including:

- Expansion of the wetland PA sub-system by 2.94 million ha.
- Improvements in management effectiveness, as measured by the GEF-5 adapted management effectiveness tracking tool (METT), of the 42 wetland nature reserves situated in 5 provinces and having a cumulative area of 1,035,645 ha. This set of wetland PA's is considered a proxy of the national wetland PA sub-system.

Environmental Status Change:

There has been environmental status change confirmed among the MSL child projects, including:

- Improvements in ecosystem health of wetland nature reserves, as measured by the Ecosystem Health Index (EHI).
- Stable or increasing populations of threatened wildlife.
- Reclamation of abandoned mining sites and regeneration of native vegetation.

Contributions to Changes in Policy/Legal/Regulatory Enabling Frameworks:

Significant advances to enabling policies occurred in recent years, including the following:

- National Wetlands Conservation and Rehabilitation System Plan (2016), NFGA.
- National standard on officially including wetlands as a land use category (2017), Ministry of Land Resources.
- Draft standard on the methodology for valuation of wetland ecosystem services, NFGA (pending approval).

Arrangements to Facilitate Follow-up Actions:

Conservation and rehabilitation of wetland ecosystems are directly covered in the mandate of the Department of Wetlands Management.

The 13th 5-year Plan of Wetlands Conservation and Rehabilitation (SFA/NFGA) approved in 2016 provides an official framework and basis for budget allocation over the period of 2016-2020.

Replication:

The National Wetlands Conservation and Rehabilitation System Plan developed under the project and approved by the SFA (NFGA) in 2016 has spurred provincial level implementation plans in each of the 31 provinces / autonomous regions.

The national standard on designating wetlands as an official land use category will be applied nationwide; wetlands will be included as a separate land use category in land use plans of local governments throughout China.

National wetland PA information management system offers a national level platform for sharing best practice across the wetland PA system.

5 Assessment of Monitoring & Evaluation Systems

5.1 M&E Design

Monitoring and Evaluation design at entry is rated as: Satisfactory

The M&E plan was developed using the standard UNDP template for GEF-financed projects.

The estimated cost for implementation of the M&E plan, as recorded in the project document, is USD 184,000, which is approximately 6.9% of the USD 2,654,771 GEF grant. More than 50% of the M&E budget was allocated for the midterm review and terminal evaluation, at USD 50,000 each. USD 10,000 was included for the inception workshop, and another USD 15,000 was slated for measurement of means of verification for project purpose indicators at the inception phase. As there is no evidence that changes were made to baseline figures in the strategic results framework, it is uncertain if this cost was incurred. The budget for the M&E plan also includes USD 40,000, at USD 8,000 per year, for measurement of means of verification of project progress and performance.

Having the role of program coordination, it would have been advisable to disaggregate the M&E plan for the project and program (lesson learned).

5.2 M&E implementation

Implementation of Monitoring and Evaluation Plan is rated as: Satisfactory

Implementation of the M&E plan improved through the implementation phase. Following the midterm review, the PMO hired a part-time M&E Officer and new quality control procedures were developed and applied for review of project deliverables, including consultancy reports, knowledge products and tracking tools. The Financial Scorecard (Part II of the GEF-5 Financial Sustainability Scorecard) was commendably filled out. Other parts of this scorecard contained inconsistencies, e.g., the coverage of the national wetland PA system. And, METT assessments on the Altai child project (PIMS 4596) were found to contain several erroneous and inconsistent entries. The project should have implemented more effective program level quality control on tracking tools and other M&E tools.

The project progress reports, particularly the annual project implementation review (PIR) reports were the main mechanisms reporting M&E results on the project. The PIR reports were thoroughly prepared, with inputs from the Project Manager, lead implementing partner and the UNDP, as the GEF implementing agency.

Tracking Tools:

The tracking tools under Objective 1 of the GEF-5 Biodiversity Strategy were applied to this project. With respect to Section I of the tracking tool, there are some inconsistencies in the figures presented as wetland protected areas. For

instance, marine protected areas covering coral reef and oceanic (areas beyond the Economic Exclusive Zone, EEZ) ecosystems were included; these are not wetlands. And, the total coverage of wetland protected areas indicated in the tracking tool is incorrect; the figure presented in the 2017 assessment is 52,033,656 ha. The 2nd national wetland survey reported that there are an estimated 800 million mu (53.33 million ha) of wetland ecosystems in the country, and by the end of 2017, 49.03% or 26.15 million ha were under protection.

With regard to Section II of the tracking tool, which includes the management effectiveness tracking tool (METT), the national project reported the individual METT scores for the wetland PA's included among the six provincial projects under the MSL program. Inconsistencies have been reported for some of METT assessments (e.g., for the Altai project, PIMS 4596). Considering the program coordination role of the national project, it would have been advisable to implement a quality control process for the individual METT scores among the child projects (lesson learned).

The Financial Scorecard (Part II) of the Financial Sustainability Scorecard (Section III of the tracking tool) was very well done, with detailed comments included for each entry and realistic scores applied throughout (good practice). Some of the entries in Part I of the Financial Sustainability Scorecard are not fully vetted, including the total area of the national sub-system of wetland PA's and the estimations of basic and optimal financing needs, which assume USD 1 million per PA and USD 2 million per PA, respectively.

Midterm review:

The midterm review (MTR) of the project was completed in 2016 and the management response issued by the PMO on 01 December 2016. The MTR presented a comprehensive assessment of progress made and several recommendations were made for improving project performance and enhancing the likelihood for sustainability of results. The recommendations from the midterm review were satisfactorily addressed by the project team during the second half of the implementation timeframe, as summarized below in **Table 18**.

Table 18: Status of MTR recommendations at terminal evaluation

Midterm review recommendation	Status at terminal evaluation
Recommendation 1: The Project Management Office (PMO) should be strengthened, in order to provide more proactive coordination and guidance during the second half of the project. Firstly, the project manager position should be full-time also covering the DXAL project as currently structured and support staff should be added to assist with technical oversight and monitoring and evaluation of project performance. Furthermore, an additional technical advisor should be hired, for the MSL Programme, and the roles and responsibilities among the chief technical advisor, the national technical advisor, the additional technical advisor, the project manager, and other PMO staff should be outlined in a matrix and approved by both the SFA as the executing agency and the UNDP, as the GEF Agency for the project.	An additional CTA was hired to support technical oversight across the MSL program, and a part-time M&E Officer was recruited for the national project.
Recommendation 2: A quality control plan should be developed and implemented, to help guide both technical and strategic oversight of the project. The quality control plan should cover, at a minimum, procedures for reviewing terms of reference, translation of particular documentation, periodic review of outputs, facilitating peer review, and organizing meetings among the professional community and government officials.	The PMO developed and implemented a quality control plan during the second half of the project, and actively involved participation of technical specialists and NFGA/DWM officials in review meetings.
Recommendation 3: The SFA/OWCM should issue Executive Instructions to the PMO, outlining the expectations of the agency and in turn facilitating implementation of some of the key project outputs, including but not limited to the following: valuation of wetland ecosystem services, sustainable financing for management of wetland PAs, assessment criteria for the management effectiveness and ecosystem health of wetland PAs, occupational competency standards for wetland PA staff members, and best practices in wetland management and conservation.	The PMO improved procedures for reporting to the NFGA/DWM and requesting feedback on key project outputs.
Recommendation 4: Complementary technical outputs should be generated in collaboration in order to maximize project results and facilitate improved cooperation among the professional community. Opportunities for cross-collaboration include, but are not limited to the following: valuation of wetland ecosystem services and sustainable financing for wetland PA management; development of occupational competency standards and delivery of training; development of best practices in wetland restoration and management and design and implementation of innovative wetland best practices in the provincial projects.	The management response to this recommendation focused on program coordination, including regular WeChat group conferences and organizing joint technical meetings on cross-cutting issues. There was less emphasis on improving synergies among the technical teams contracted to provide technical assistance on the national project.

Midterm review recommendation	Status at terminal evaluation
<u>Recommendation 5:</u> An advocacy plan should be developed and implemented, in order to better facilitate promotion and effectiveness of the project. The plan should clearly outline roles and responsibilities of key stakeholders, include priority advocacy objective, and should include a proposed timetable for realizing the objectives. Possible advocacy actions include presenting project information to the National Ramsar Coordination Committee; organizing a side event at the upcoming Conference of the Parties (COP) of the Ramsar Convention or CBD; lobbying for kick starting the FAO implemented Poyang Lake project, which is part of the MSL Programme but has been delayed for at least 2 years.	The project support two trainings at national Ramsar conferences, one in 2016 and the other in 2017. Implementation of the FAO-GEF project at Poyang Lake started after the MTR. And the project maintained close collaboration with the activities of the NFGA/DWM.
<u>Recommendation 6:</u> Working closely with SFA/OWCM officials, the PMO should reassess the capacity development needs, and prepare an updated training programme for the project. The training programme should include training materials that are based upon the competency standards being developed by the project. Knowledge retention should be assessed, and the trainees provided with a certificate of successful completion. It would also be advisable to organize expert workshops to disseminate the results of the overseas training events. In order to address some of the shortcomings under the mainstreaming component, it would be advisable to include wetland PA managers and staff from the MEP and SOA among the trainings delivered by the project.	A needs assessment was made during the project development phase and trainings were delivered throughout the project implementation phase. A coherent training program was not prepared.
<u>Recommendation 7:</u> An updated knowledge management plan should be developed and implemented, with the aim at maximizing information dissemination. The plan should reflect the decision to have the project support development of a public information management system on wetland management and conservation. It would also be advisable to highlight gender issues associated with wetlands on the public information management system. Furthermore, allocation of project resources on website maintenance should be reassessed as part of the KM plan, possibly focusing on strengthening the website of the OWCM and delivering timely updates of project news and general information on social media platforms.	An updated knowledge management plan was not prepared. The PMO did maintain a project website, linked to the DWM's website and actively posted information on social media platforms. An end-of-project KAP survey was implemented in 2019.
<u>Recommendation 8:</u> The Central PMO should be tasked with consolidating project level results and lessons learned across the MSL Programme, and spearheading development of knowledge products.	The PMO facilitated program level coordination, organizing conferences, including an international wetlands conference in Haikou in 2017 and developing knowledge products and other communication materials. Program results were not regularly reported, e.g., in an annual program progress report (lesson learned).
<u>Recommendation 9:</u> Special attention should be placed on ensuring financial delivery is sufficiently high during the second half of the project.	Financial delivery improved in 2016 (87%), but tailed off in 2017 and 2018 at 55% and 51%, respectively.
<u>Recommendation 10:</u> The strategic results framework should be updated, in order to provide a more representative measure of the performance of the project. The MTR team has put forward a set of suggested modifications to the results framework. The changes in the results framework is coupled with some shifts in activities, as reflected in the some of the previous recommendations, in order to warrant achievement of intended results.	Revisions were made to the project results framework. These revisions were approved by the project steering committee, and the changes represented in the 2017 and 2018 PIR reports.

6 Assessment of Implementation and Execution

6.1 Quality of implementation

Quality of Implementation (UNDP) is rated as: Satisfactory

The quality of implementation by UNDP as the GEF agency on this project is rated as satisfactory. UNDP has provided support throughout the project life cycle, from conceptualization to project development and throughout implementation.

The UNDP Country Office (CO) provided strategic guidance to the project, and the Environment and Energy Program Manager participated in each of the project steering committee meetings. The UNDP CO also provided extensive implementation support to the implementing partner; including procurement, contracting and financial administration. There could have been broader involvement of the UNDP CO, e.g., with respect to gender mainstreaming, consistent with the institutional strength of UNDP in human development issues. There was also room for improvement with respect to program level reporting and program quality control and backstopping regarding the application of GEF tracking tools and other M&E tools, including the UNDP Capacity Development Scorecard.

Grant cofinancing from UNDP did not materialized as planned, as allocation of core resources⁵ across the UNDP have been significantly decreased. The UNDP CO has reported in-kind cofinancing as part of the UNDP-CICETE⁶-Coca Cola Partnership on Water Governance. The TE team concurs that the scope of this program is consistent with the project and MSL program objectives.

The UNDP regional technical advisor (RTA) was actively involved, providing overall guidance during the project preparation phase, liaising with the Ecosystems and Biodiversity team at UNDP headquarters and with the GEF Secretariat. Project progress reports provided candid accounts of issues, and these were followed up during project steering committee meetings. Internal ratings were reasonable and project risks were monitored. Progress reports also contained constructive recommendations.

6.2 Quality of execution

Quality of Execution (NFGA) is rated as: Satisfactory

The quality of execution by the NFGA is rated as satisfactory. The key positions of National Project Director, Deputy Project Director, Project Manager, Deputy Project Manager and Chief Technical Advisor remained consistent throughout the duration of the implementation. Such consistency adds to the coherency of the project execution.

Following the midterm review, a Project Assistant and part-time M&E Officer were recruited, further strengthening the quality of project execution. There were concerns raised at the midterm review of the Project Manager being part-time on the project and also sharing his time with management of the Daxing'anling child project (PIMS 4824). Full-sized GEF projects should have full-time project managers, in the opinion of the TE team (Lesson learned).

The project/program steering committee was effective at providing strategic guidance to both the project and the MSL program. Rotating the steering committee meetings among the provinces where the child projects were implemented, organizing cross visits and regular group teleconferences were good practices in facilitating program management. There were shortcomings with respect to the lack of program level annual reporting and insufficient quality control on the application and consistency of GEF tracking tools and other M&E tools across the child projects (Lesson learned).

7 Other Assessments

7.1 Need for follow-up

There are a few issues that need to be followed up after project closure, including but not limited to:

- Advocating and facilitating approval of the wetland PA information management system.
- Advocating and facilitating approval of the government standard on specifying values of wetland ecosystem services.
- Follow up is required to further advocate and facilitate uptake of the regulatory recommendations.
- Mainstreaming the wetland PA training program, consisting of 10 modules.
- Institutionalizing the PA staff qualification criteria developed.

⁵ Target for Resource Assignments from the Core (TRAC).

⁶ China International Center for Economic and Technical Exchanges (CICETE) of Ministry of Commerce, Ministry of Water Resources, Beijing Normal University and Xiamen University of Technology.

7.2 Materialization of cofinancing

The amount of cofinancing that has reportedly materialized during project implementation is USD 16,904,935, which exceeds the USD 16,800,000 confirmed at project entry (see **Annex 6**).

Government cash cofinancing totaled USD 12,000,897, and included costs associated with wetland monitoring and management, a nationally implemented peatland survey made in key provinces and supporting budgets related to implementation of the Ramsar Convention and other international cooperation projects. In-kind government cofinancing totaled USD 4,004,038, and included office rental, office equipment and services, and staff time and travel related costs.

Grant cofinancing from UNDP did not materialize as planned. Without TRAC allocation, grant cofinancing from UNDP could not be mobilized. The UNDP has reported in-kind cofinancing as part of the UNDP-CICETE⁷-Coca Cola Partnership on Water Governance that has been implemented since 2013, and the second 5-year phase was approved in 2018. The water governance program has funded water conservation projects throughout China, on pollution control, promotion of sustainable agriculture, demonstration of innovative wastewater treatment, rehabilitation of degraded wetlands, etc.; for example, the program supported the development of a constructed wetland treatment system in Inner Mongolia (see **Figure 7**).

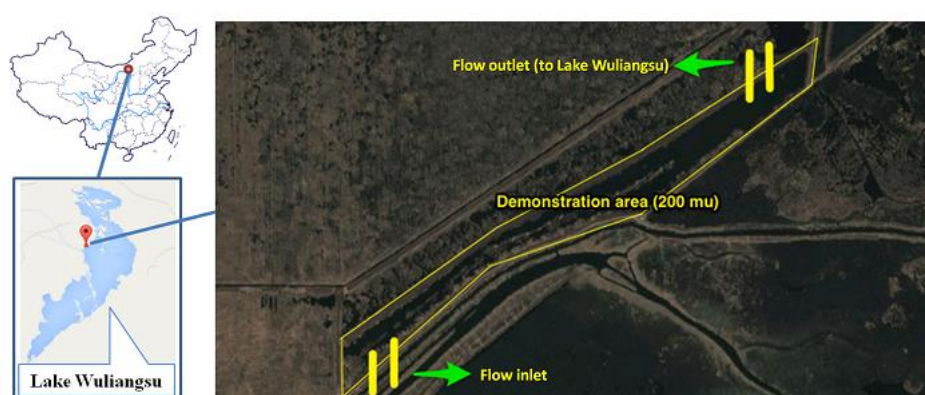


Figure 7: Aerial photograph of constructed wetland treatment system, Inner Mongolia⁸

The TE team concurs that the scope of this program is consistent with the project and program objectives and the benefits of implementing best practice water conservation approaches extends throughout the country.

The project did not maintain a regular tracking system for project cofinancing. The limited tracking of cofinancing contributions also implies that there might have been missed opportunities with other potential cofinancing partners. (Lesson learned)

7.3 Environmental and social safeguards

Social and environmental risks were screened as part of the project development phase, using the UNDP screening tool (included in the Project Document as Annex 9). The screening concluded that the project risks fell within Category 1, defined as: “The proposed project includes activities and outputs that support *upstream* planning processes that potentially pose environmental and social impacts or are vulnerable to environmental and social change (refer to Table 3.1) but as the proposed project **ONLY** includes upstream planning processes and not downstream planning processes then no further screening is needed”, and no further risk assessments were made.

7.4 Gender concerns

A gender analysis and action plan were not made at the project preparation phase, and none of the performance indicators in the project results framework were disaggregated by gender. The 2015 PIR report indicates that a gender mainstreaming plan was to be prepared, but there was no evidence of the plan or mention in the subsequent PIR reports.

The 2018 PIR report includes a discussion of the number of women on the PMO (7 women, 3 men), and provides a brief summary of women’s role in society and the importance of increasing awareness and knowledge of women regarding biodiversity conservation. Considering that the MSL child projects identified gender equality and women’s

⁷ China International Center for Economic and Technical Exchanges (CICETE) of Ministry of Commerce, Ministry of Water Resources, Beijing Normal University and Xiamen University of Technology.

⁸ Source: UNDP-CICETE-Coca Cola Partnership on Water Governance, 2018 Annual Progress Report

empowerment as risks on the projects, it would have been advisable to have developed a program level gender analysis and action plan, as part of the Project Document for the national project. Apart from mainstreaming gender issues on the project, one of the proposed actions might have been to address gender equality and women's empowerment in the national wetland conservation and rehabilitation systems plan and the 13th 5-year plan on wetland protection. (Lesson learned)

7.5 Indigenous peoples (ethnic minorities)

An indigenous peoples (ethnic minorities) plan was not made at the project preparation phase, and none of the performance indicators in the project results framework included reference to ethnic minorities.




The 2018 PIR report includes a discussion of how Evenki ethnic minorities were supported under the Daxing'anling project, which is a separate full-sized GEF project but managed by the national project PMO. There were ethnic minorities included in some of the wetland PA landscapes under some of the other MSL child projects.

It would have been advisable to have developed a program level ethnic minorities plan or include in as part of the stakeholder engagement plan, as part of the Project Document for the national project. Apart from mainstreaming ethnic minority issues on the project, one of the proposed actions might have been to address inclusion of ethnic minorities in the national wetland conservation and rehabilitation systems plan and the 13th 5-year plan on wetland protection. (Lesson learned)

7.6 Contributions to Aichi Targets and Sustainable Development Goals


The project has made contributions to several of the Aichi targets, as summarized below in **Table 19**.

Table 19: Project contributions to Aichi targets

Aichi Target		Project Contribution
Strategic Goal A: Address the underlying causes of biodiversity loss by mainstreaming biodiversity across government and society		
	Target 1: By 2020, at the latest, people are aware of the values of biodiversity and the steps they can take to conserve and use it sustainably.	Increased understanding by the public and government officials of the value of wetland ecosystems, as measured by a 30% increase in knowledge, attitudes and practices (KAP survey).
	Target 2: By 2020, at the latest, biodiversity values have been integrated into national and local development and poverty reduction strategies and planning processes and are being incorporated into national accounting, as appropriate, and reporting systems.	National Wetlands Conservation and Rehabilitation System Plan approved in 2016. Wetlands added as a new land use category through approval of National Standard GB/T21010-2017 by the Ministry of Land Resources.
Strategic Goal C: To improve the status of biodiversity by safeguarding ecosystems, species and genetic diversity		
	Target 11: By 2020, at least 17 per cent of terrestrial and inland water, and 10 per cent of coastal and marine areas, especially areas of particular importance for biodiversity and ecosystem services, are conserved through effectively and equitably managed, ecologically representative and well connected systems of protected areas and other effective area-based conservation measures, and integrated into the wider landscapes and seascapes.	Expansion of the national wetland PA sub-system by approx. 2.96 million ha, which includes 1.9 million ha among PA's targeted in the child projects of the MSL program. Improved management effectiveness of 38 wetland nature reserves among 5 of the provincial child projects covering a cumulative land area of 2.499 million ha.

The project has also made contributions towards achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals (see **Table 20**).

Table 20: Project contributions to Sustainable Development Goals

	Sustainable Development Goal 15: Protect, restore and promote sustainable use of terrestrial ecosystems, sustainably manage forests, combat desertification, and halt and reverse land degradation and halt biodiversity loss	
Relevant SDG 15 targets and indicators		Project Contributions
Target 15.1: By 2020, ensure the conservation, restoration and sustainable use of terrestrial and inland freshwater ecosystems and their services, in particular forests, wetlands, mountains and drylands, in line with obligations under international agreements.		Expansion of the national wetland PA sub-system by approx. 2.96 million ha, which includes 1.9 million ha among PA's targeted in the child projects of the MSL program.

	Sustainable Development Goal 15: Protect, restore and promote sustainable use of terrestrial ecosystems, sustainably manage forests, combat desertification, and halt and reverse land degradation and halt biodiversity loss
Relevant SDG 15 targets and indicators	Project Contributions
Indicator 15.1.2: Proportion of important sites for terrestrial and freshwater biodiversity that are covered by protected areas, by ecosystem type.	
Target 15.9: By 2020, integrate ecosystem and biodiversity values into national and local planning, development processes, poverty reduction strategies and accounts. Indicator 15.9.1: Progress towards national targets established in accordance with Aichi Biodiversity Target 2 of the Strategic Plan for Biodiversity 2011-2020.	National Wetlands Conservation and Rehabilitation System Plan approved in 2016. This system plan was followed by the development and approval of provincial level plans across all provinces and autonomous regions in the country.
Target 15.A: Mobilize and significantly increase financial resources from all sources to conserve and sustainably use biodiversity and ecosystems Indicator 15.A.1: Official development assistance and public expenditure on conservation and sustainable use of biodiversity and ecosystems.	Government financing for operation of the national wetland PA sub-system has also substantially increased, from 35 USD million, or 0.71 USD/ha in 2013 to USD 130 million, or USD 2.5/ha in 2017.

Secondary contributions were made to other SDG's, including SDG 2 (No Poverty) and SDG 5 (Gender Equality).

7.7 Stakeholder engagement

The project did a reasonably good job with stakeholder engagement, particularly with respect to bringing together stakeholders among the child projects through convening rotating steering committee meetings and organizing cross-visits among the different project sites. Provincial stakeholders were provided opportunities to engage with counterparts in other partners that are typically not available to them. For example, stakeholders in Xinjiang province have limited changes to interact with eastern provinces, including Hainan, Hubei and Anhui provinces.

There were some shortcomings with respect to stakeholder involvement. For example, there was limited involvement of the Department of Protected Areas at the NFGA (and the predecessor department at the now defunct SFA). The main project partner was the Department of Wetlands Management, which is responsible for national wetland parks. The 898 wetland parks have a cumulative area of 3,445,900 ha, which is <15% of the total area of wetland PA's. Nature reserves comprise the highest proportion of wetland PA's and these are managed by the Department of Protected Areas. A third department at NFGA, the Department of National Parks, is an important partner for future projects, as wetland ecosystems are included among the 11 pilot national parks and are likely to increase as more national parks are established in the coming years. (Lesson learned)

The stakeholder involvement plan in the project document mentions of the National Wetland Science and Technical Committee; there was no evidence of engagement with this committee. In terms of engagement with NGOs, apart from Wetlands International, which was a contracted project partner, there was limited engagement with international and national NGOs.

8 Lessons and Recommendations

The TE recommendations are summarized below.

No.	Recommendation	Responsible Entities	Timeframe
Corrective actions for the design, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of the project			
1.	Prepare a sustainability strategy and action plan. A sustainability strategy and action plan should be developed to guide enabling stakeholders in ensuring project results are sustained after GEF funding ceases. The strategy and action plan should be based on the project theory of change, e.g., focusing on the assumptions and impact drivers for achieving long-term impacts. The plan should outline the actions requiring follow-up after project closure, assigning roles and responsibilities and identifying timeframes.	PMO	Before project closure
2.	Reassess the GEF-5 BD-1 tracking tools, including the Financial Sustainability Scorecard and summary of METT scores. The inconsistencies in the Financial Sustainability Scorecard should be resolved, and the METT scores for the 42 wetland nature reserves should be quality reviewed and the reporting updated.	PMO	Before project closure
3.	Prepare and disseminated a knowledge product summarizing the results of overseas learning exchanges. The international best practices and approaches shared during the overseas learning exchanges have not been documented. A knowledge product should be prepared and disseminated among national and provincial PA agencies and shared with project development and implementation teams of other GEF-financed projects and programs in China.	PMO	Before project closure
Actions to follow up or reinforce initial benefits from the project			
4.	Apply the METT (or similar tool) to wetland parks. Wetland parks make up a large proportion of the newly established wetland PA's; however, METT assessments were not carried out for these types of PA's under the project.	DWM	Within 1-2 years
5.	Finalize a standard procedure for assessing wetlands coverage. Building upon the pilot demonstration of dynamic monitoring implemented on the project, it is important to finalize a standard procedure for assessing wetlands coverage in each province.	NFGA, DWM	Within 1-2 years
Proposals for future directions underlining main objectives			
6.	Carry out a national level assessment of the wetland PA sub-system and develop an expansion strategy. Much of the expansion of the wetland PA sub-system has been through establishment of wetland parks, and it is uncertain how these parks are contributing towards objectives associated with biodiversity conservation and protection of ecological functions and services. The national level assessment should be used in the development of a national wetland PA sub-system expansion strategy.	NFGA, MEE	Within 5 years

A few examples of good practices and lessons learned on the project are presented below.

Good Practices:

Effective program coordination. Establishing a project/program steering committee and rotating the venue for the meetings among the provinces where the child projects were implementing was an effective way to promote cross-sharing, organizing site visits concurrently with the PSC meetings and facilitating joint training and communication activities with the child project PMOs.

Adaptive management. The project did a good job at adapting to the priorities of the national government regarding wetlands conservation and management, providing timely incremental support.

Robust information management system (big data). The national wetland PA information management is comprehensive and forward-thinking, e.g., including detailed maps that are useful for local governments and PA management administrations.

Informative comments included among the Financial Scorecard and Capacity Development Scorecards. The end-of-project assessments of the GEF-5 Financial Scorecard (Part II of the Financial Sustainability Scorecard) and the UNDP Capacity Development Scorecards contained detailed, informative comments. These M&E tools were commendably filled out and can be used as a good practice example for other project teams.

Lessons Learned:

Insufficient validation of the project strategy at project inception. The project inception is an important phase of the project, particularly for validating the project strategy, including clarification of what is expected with respect to policy reform, the project results framework, mainstreaming of the METT and EHI tools, policy expectations, etc.

Gender mainstreaming and inclusion of ethnic minorities not integrated into the project design. Gender mainstreaming and inclusion of ethnic minorities were not integrated into the project design.

Inconsistencies some tracking tool entries and insufficient quality control of M&E tools applied among the child projects. Part I of the Financial Sustainability Scorecard contains inconsistencies, e.g., regarding wetland PA coverage, and some of the METT scores for the target PA's among the child projects contain inconsistencies (e.g., for the Altai project, PIMS 4596).

Lack of a communications and knowledge management strategy. There were a number of activities on the project that were focused on communications and knowledge management, but there was a lack of a strategic approach. It would have been advisable to have developed communications and knowledge management strategy and action plan.

Limited stakeholder engagement. There were some shortcomings in terms of stakeholder engagement, including the Department of Protected Areas of the NFGA (and the predecessor of this department), the MEE and the NGO sector.

Program results not regularly reported. Considering the project had the role of program coordination, it would have been advisable to have prepared annual program level progress reports.

Limited tracking of cofinancing and coordinating with cofinancing partners. Materialized government cofinancing exceeded the confirmed sum at project entry; however, the project was not regularly tracking cofinancing contributions, including mobilized investments and contributions from other partners.

It is better to use national currency, CNY for monetary-based targets instead of USD. For monetary-based targets, such as PA operational expenditures and household income, it is better to use the currency that the expenditures and incomes are denominated in. It is useful to indicate inflation rates in monitoring reports.

Annex 1: TE Mission Itinerary

日期Date	内容Theme
4月8日	Interview with DNP, Mr. Ma Guangren 规划型项目国家副主任马广仁访谈
	Materials review 项目办公室审阅材料
	14:00-15:30 Meeting with the Department of Wetlands Management, NFGA 与国家林草局湿地管理司座谈
	Meeting with staffs of PMO, PMO will present the progress with PPT 项目办项目汇报
4月9日 Apr.09	Meeting with subcontractor, Forest Economic Development Research Center/NFGA wetland conservation and restoration system 湿地保护修复制度研究---国家林草局经研中心
	Interview with NCTA, Professor Yu Xiubo 项目国内首席技术顾问于秀波访谈
	Meeting with subcontractor Guidelines for the Control of Water Environmental Pollution in Lakes, Rivers, Kutang and Coastal Wetlands in China- ----China Academy of Environmental Sciences 编制中国湖泊、河流、库塘及滨海湿地水环境污染控制指南-----中国环境科学研究院
	Interview PMO staff 项目办人员访谈
4月10日 Apr. 10	Meeting with subcontractor, formulate technical regulations for value assessment of ecological service systems, and carry out pilot research----Academy of Northwest Forestry Investigation and Planning/NFGA 制定生态服务系统价值评估技术规程·开展试点研究----国家林草局西北林业调查规划设计院
	Meeting with subcontractor, Pilot Work of Wetland Dynamic Monitoring in Ningxia Autonomous Region, Zhonglin International Co., Ltd. 全国湿地资源动态监测宁夏试点----中林国际
	Interview the representatives of provincial projects via Skype or we-chat 视频访谈各省级项目代表
4月11日 Apr.11	Meeting with subcontractor, Provincial EHI test, fine-tune, and adaptation; Weiran Valley Company 省级项目生态系统健康指数（EHI）验证、调整和采纳---蔚然幽谷有限公司
	Meeting with subcontractor, International Wetland City Evaluation Criteria, Beijing Forestry University 国际湿地城市评价标准,北京林业大学自然保护区学院
	Interview Manuscript coordinator/specialist Dr. Fan Longqing via Skype or we-chat, Strengthening Management of China's Wetland Protected Area 访谈《中国湿地保护地管理》统稿专家范隆庆博士
	Meeting with PMOs for supplementing necessary materials and answer questions from TE group 与项目办会议·项目办补充必要材料并回答评估组问题
4月12日 Apr.12	Debriefing to the department of wetland management, NFGA 向国家林草局汇报规划型项目评估结果
	Debrief with UNDP 联合国开发计划署驻华代表处汇报评估结果

Annex 2: Evaluation Matrix

Evaluation Criteria Questions	Indicators	Sources	Methodology
Relevance: Is the project relevant with respect to the environmental and development priorities at the local, regional and national levels?			
To what extent is the principle of the project in line with national priorities?	Level of participation of the concerned agencies in project activities. Consistency with relevant strategies and policies.	Minutes of meetings, Project progress reports, national and regional strategy and policy documents	Desk review, interviews
To what extent is the project aligned to the main objectives of the GEF focal area?	Consistency with GEF strategic objectives	GEF Strategy documents, PIRs, Tracking Tools	Desk review, interview with UNDP-GEF RTA
To what extent is the project aligned to the strategic objectives of UNDP?	Consistency with UNDP strategic objectives	UNDP Strategic Plan, Country Programme Document	Desk review, interview
Effectiveness: To what extent have the expected outcomes and objectives of the project been achieved?			
Assessment of progress made toward achieving the indicator targets agreed upon in the logical results framework			
Sustainability: To what extent are there financial, institutional, social-economic, and/or environmental risks to sustaining long-term project results?			
What evidence is available showing sufficient funding has been secured to sustain project results?	Financial risks	Progress reports, sectoral plans, budget allocation reports, testimonial evidence	Desk review, interviews
How have individual and institutional capacities been strengthened, and are governance structures capacitated and in place to sustain project results?	Institutional and individual capacities	Progress reports, testimonial evidence, training records	Desk review, interviews
What social or political risks threaten the sustainability of project results?	Socio-economic risks	Socio-economic studies, macroeconomic information	Desk review, interviews
Which ongoing circumstances and/or activities pose threats to the sustainability of project results?	Risks to sustainability	Sectoral plans, progress reports, macroeconomic information	Desk review, interviews, field visits
Have delays affected project outcomes and/or sustainability, and, if so, in what ways and through what causal linkages?	Impact of project delays	Progress reports	Desk review, interviews
Impact: Are there indications that the project has contributed to, or enabled progress toward long lasting desired changes?			
What verifiable environmental improvements have been made?	Verifiable environmental improvements	Progress reports, sectoral plans, municipal development plans	Desk review, interviews, theory of change analysis
What verifiable reductions in stress on environmental systems have been made?	Verifiable reductions in stress on environmental systems	Progress reports, sectoral plans, municipal development plans	Desk review, interviews, theory of change analysis
How has the project demonstrated progress towards these impact achievements?	Progress toward impact achievements	Progress reports, sectoral plans, municipal development plans	Desk review, interviews, theory of change analysis
Efficiency: Was the Project implemented efficiently, in-line with international and national norms and standards?			
How was the project efficient with respect to incremental cost criteria?	Incremental cost	National strategies and plans, progress reports	Desk review, interviews

Evaluation Criteria Questions	Indicators	Sources	Methodology
To what extent were the project objective and outcomes realized according to the proposed budget and timeline?	Efficient utilization of project resources	Progress reports, financial records	Desk review, interviews
Country Ownership:			
How are project results contributing to national and subnational development plans and priorities?	Development planning	Government approved plans and policies	Desk review, interviews
Which government policies or regulatory frameworks were approved in line with the project objective?	Policy reform	Government approved plans and policies	Desk review, interviews
How have governmental and other cofinancing partners maintained their financial commitment to the project?	Committed cofinancing realized	Audit reports, project accounting records	Desk review, interviews
Stakeholder Involvement and Partnership Arrangements:			
How has the project consulted with and made use of the skills, experience, and knowledge of the appropriate government entities, NGOs, community groups, private sector entities, local governments, and academic institutions?	Effective stakeholder involvement	Meeting minutes, reports, interview records	Desk review, interviews, field visits
How were partnership arrangements properly identified and roles and responsibilities negotiated prior to project approval?	Partnership arrangements	Memorandums of understanding, agreements	Desk review, interviews
How have partnerships influenced the effectiveness and efficiency of project implementation?	Effective partnerships	Progress reports, interview records	Desk review, interviews, field visits
How have relevant vulnerable groups and powerful supporters and opponents of the processes been properly involved?	Inclusive stakeholder involvement	Meeting minutes, reports, interview records	Desk review, interviews, field visits
How has the project sought participation from stakeholders in (1) project design, (2) implementation, and (3) monitoring & evaluation?	Stakeholder involvement	Plans, reports	Desk review, interviews, field visits
Catalytic Role:			
How has the project had a catalytic or replication effect in the country?	Catalytic effect	Interview records, municipal development plans	Desk review, interviews
Synergy with Other Projects/Programs			
How were synergies with other projects/programs incorporated in the design and/or implementation of the project?	Collaboration with other projects/programs	Plans, reports, meeting minutes	Desk review, interviews
Preparation and Readiness			
Were project objective and components clear, practicable, and feasible within its time frame?	Project coherence	Logical results framework	Desk review, interviews

Evaluation Criteria Questions	Indicators	Sources	Methodology
How were the capacities of the executing institution(s) and its counterparts properly considered when the project was designed?	Execution capacity	Progress reports, audit results	Desk review, interviews
Were counterpart resources, enabling legislation, and adequate project management arrangements in place at Project entry?	Readiness	Interview records, progress reports	Desk review, interviews, field visits
Financial Planning			
Did the project have the appropriate financial controls, including reporting and planning, that allowed management to make informed decisions regarding the budget and allowed for timely flow of funds?	Financial control	Audit reports, project accounting records	Desk review, interviews
Has there been due diligence in the management of funds and financial audits?	Financial management	Audit reports, project accounting records	Desk review, interviews, field visits
Has promised cofinancing materialized?	Realization of cofinancing	Audit reports, project accounting records	Desk review, interviews
Supervision and Backstopping			
How have GEF agency staff members identified problems in a timely fashion and accurately estimate their seriousness?	Supervision effectiveness	Progress reports	Desk review, interviews
How have GEF agency staff members provided quality support, approved modifications in time, and restructured the project when needed?	Project oversight	Progress reports	Desk review, interviews
How has the implementing agency provided the right staffing levels, continuity, skill mix, and frequency of field visits for the project?	Project backstopping	Progress reports, back-to-office reports, internal appraisals	Desk review, interviews, field visits
Monitoring & Evaluation			
Were intended results (outputs, outcomes) adequately defined, appropriate and stated in measurable terms, and were the results verifiable?	Monitoring and evaluation plan at entry	Project document, inception report	Desk review, interviews
How has the project monitoring & evaluation plan been implemented?	Effective monitoring and evaluation	Progress reports, monitoring reports	Desk review, interviews
How has there been focus on results-based management?	Results based management	Progress reports, monitoring reports	Desk review, interviews
Mainstreaming			
How were gender issues integrated in project design and implementation?	Greater consideration of gender aspects.	Project document, progress reports, monitoring reports	Desk review, interviews, field visits
How were effects on local populations considered in project design and implementation?	Positive or negative effects of the project on local populations.	Project document, progress reports, monitoring reports	Desk review, interviews, field visits

Annex 3: List of People Interviewed

Name	Position	Organization	Gender
Mr. Ma Guangren	Secretary general	China Wetlands Association	Male
Mr. Bao Daming	Deputy director	Office of Wetlands Conservation and Management (OWCM/ SFGA)	Male
Ms. Fang Yan	Division chief	Office of Wetlands Conservation and Management (OWCM/ SFGA)	Female
Dr. Ma Chaode	Program Manager, Energy and Environment	United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) China	Male
Mr. Gabriel Jaramillo	Regional Technical Specialist - Ecosystems and Biodiversity	UNDP, Bangkok Regional Hub	Male
Mr. Yuan Jun	Division chief/Project Manager	Institute of Forestry Investigation and Planning (IFIP/SFGA)/ National Project Management Office	Male
Mr. Yu Xiubo	National Chief Technical Advisor	Institute of Geography, Chinese Academy of Sciences	Male
Ms. Zhang Yuanyuan	Monitoring and Evaluation Specialist	National Project Management Office	Female
Ms. Sun Yulu	Vice Project Manager	National Project Management Office	Female
Ms. Wang Yibo	Project Assistant	National Project Management Office	Female
Mr. Li Jie	Technical Specialist / sub-contractor	Forestry Economic Development and Research Center, National Forestry and Grassland Administration	Male
Mr. Gu Zhenbin	Technical Specialist / sub-contractor	Forestry Economic Development and Research Center, National Forestry and Grassland Administration	Male
Ms. Yang Suwen	Research fellow	Chinese Research Academy of Environmental Sciences	Female
Mr. Wang Yiqun	Senior Engineer/ sub-contractor	Northwest Forestry Academy of Inventory and Planning	Male
Mr. Mao Jintao	Senior Engineer/ sub-contractor	Beijing Zhonglin International Forestry Engineering Consulting Co., Ltd.	Male
Mr. Hou Zhengfang	Senior Engineer/ sub-contractor	Beijing Zhonglin International Forestry Engineering Consulting Co., Ltd.	Male
Mr. Ma Keming	Research fellow/ sub-contractor	Beijing Weiranyougu Consulting Co., Ltd.	Male
Mr. Li Jinya	Research fellow/ sub-contractor	Beijing Weiranyougu Consulting Co., Ltd.	Male
Ms. Liu Yunzhu	Assistant Professor	Beijing Forestry University	Female
Mr. Fan Longqing	Ecologist/ compiling editor	Conservation International(CI)	Male
Mr. Li Jixiang	Deputy Project Manager	Daxing'anling Project, IM	Male
Mr. Hou Peng	Deputy Project Manager	Daxing'anling Project, HLJ	Male
Ms. Leng Fei	Project Manager	Anhui Project	Female
Mr. Pu Yunhai	Protect Officer	Hubei Project	Male
Ms. Zhou Zhiqin	Projector Manager	Hainan Project	Female

Annex 4: List of Information Reviewed

1. Project documents

- 1) GEF Project Identification Form (PIF), Project Document and Log Frame Analysis (LFA)
- 2) Project Inception report
- 3) Implementing/executing partner arrangements
- 4) List and contact details for project staff, key project stakeholders, including Project Boards, and other partners to be consulted
- 5) Project sites, highlighting suggested visits
- 6) Midterm review (MTR) and other relevant evaluations and assessments
- 7) Management response to midterm review recommendations
- 8) Annual Project Implementation Reports (PIR), APR, QPR
- 9) Financial audit reports
- 10) Project budget, broken out by outcomes and outputs
- 11) Project GEF BD-1 Tracking Tool: baseline, midterm and terminal assessments
- 12) Financial Data including Combined Delivery Reports (CDR)
- 13) Actual cofinancing realized by the end of the project
- 14) Project monitoring reports, e.g., regarding the community level activities
- 15) Sample of project communications materials, i.e. press releases, brochures, documentaries, etc.
- 16) Comprehensive reports of subcontracts (even in Chinese for national evaluator's reference).
- 17) Relevant minutes of project meetings (even in Chinese for national evaluator's reference).

2. UNDP documents

- 18) Country Programme Document (CPD), 2016-2020
- 19) Country Programme Action Plan (CPAP), 2016-2020
- 20) UNDP Strategic Plan, 2014-2017
- 21) UNDP guidance for conducting Terminal Evaluations of UNDP-supported, GEF-financed projects, 2012
- 22) Social and Environmental Safeguard Standards, 2014

3. GEF documents

- 23) GEF focal area strategic Programme Objectives, GEF-5
- 24) Guidelines for GEF agencies in conducting terminal evaluation for full-projects, April 2017
- 25) GEF Gender Equality Policy and Guidance, 2018
- 26) GEF Cofinancing Guidelines, 2018

4. Other documents

- 27) National Biodiversity Strategy and Action Plan
- 28) National Reports to the Convention on Biological Diversity, 2014
- 29) Second National Wetlands Survey

Annex 5: Matrix of Rating Achievement of Project Objective and Outcomes

Indicator	Baseline	End of Project target	Self-assessment by PMO	TE Comments	TE assessment
Objective: To strengthen the sub-system of wetland protected areas to respond to existing and emerging threats to their globally significant biodiversity.				Achievement of project objective: Satisfactory	
1. GEF Management Effectiveness Tracking Tool (METT) scores of the six Provincial Projects of the MSL Program	Average score of the 41 protected areas in the six provincial projects of the MSL Program is 47	Average of the 41 protected areas in the six project provinces METT increasing to a score of 64	Achieved. Up till Aug. 6, 2018, the average score of the 42 PAs in 6 provinces is 66.9, surpassed the TE target 64. Specifically, Hainan from 32 to 60.86; Anhui from 59.16 to 69.57; Hubei from 44.37 to 73; Heilongjiang DXAL from 40 to 61.3, Inner Mongolia from 49 to 67.8; Xinjiang from 55 to 68.8, Jiangxi Project was launched in June 2017, no updated METT score from the involved PAs.	Self-assessment: Avg. METT = 66.9 for 42 PA's. Comment: some inconsistencies in scoring, e.g., for the Altai project.	Achieved (pending final review after reassessment of METT)
2. Level of adoption of the GEF Management Effectiveness Tracking Tool (METT) at the wetland PA sub-system level	Currently no systematic use of the METT	At the end of the project, 20% of the country's wetland PAs will have adopted the use of the METT as a regular monitoring tool	Achieved. In general the METT has been applied not only in the 42 PAs directly involved in this programme, but have also been strongly promoted by the provincial PA Authorities to their whole provinces. This means at least 7 provinces have adopted METT as their management tool, accounting for 22.6% of the total 31 provinces (including autonomous regions and municipalities). From the perspective of the land areas of these 7 provinces, the 7 provinces cover a total area of 3.84 million square kilometers and accounts for 40% of the whole country. The detail reasons are: a. All the involved 42 PAs of the MSL programme use the METT as the regular management tool. b. During the implementation of Hainan project, METT has been promoted to all the wetland PAs in the whole province through the forms of trainings. METT was also a very important subject for other provincial projects when they organized the trainings, so not only 42 programme involved PAs directly benefited from METT, quite a number of PAs have adopted at least part of METT as their management tool c. The annual RAMSAR training organized by Department of Wetland Management (DWM), NFGA in 2017 has made METT as one important part of the training to all the 83 participants from all RAMSAR sites and management authority provincial level d. During the implementation of project, one of the training organized by the DWM for the participants from national wetland parks has also selected METT as a subject of their training. e. In addition, as a commitment by the parties to the convention on wetlands of international importance, all RAMSAR sites (currently 57 in China) must use METT as a routine monitoring tool. DWM said that because some parts of the existing METT cannot fully meet the monitoring requirements of the existing wetland type protection sites, but part of the content have been adopted by the monitoring guidance and been used as regular management tool.	METT used at PA's among the MSL child projects, but not adopted as a regular management tool. Extensive METT trainings were delivered, including for Ramsar sites.	Partly achieved

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CBPF-MSL: Strengthening the Management Effectiveness of the Sub-system of Wetland Protected Areas for Conservation of Globally Significant Biodiversity

UNDP PIMS ID: 4391; GEF Project ID: 4655

Indicator	Baseline	End of Project target	Self-assessment by PMO	TE Comments	TE assessment
3. UNDP Capacity Assessment Scorecard for selected agencies involved or impacting upon wetland management	SFA (50%) MEP (55%) SOA (54%) Additional agencies to be added at Project Inception	An Increase of 25 percentage point for each Agency, i.e., SFA to 75%, MEP to 80%, SOA to 79%, others	Achieved. Adaptive management happened toward eco-civilization by governmental agency reform. According to the governance reform plan unveiled on March 17, 2018, the former SFA was changed to National Forestry and Grassland Administration (NFGA), the former MEP was changed to Ministry of Ecology and Environment(MEE); the responsibilities of former SOA were incorporated into Ministry of Natural Resources, thus SOA was not an independent government agency any more. SFA(NFGA) 50%-77% MEP(MEE) 55%-80% SOA no update before TE	NFGA: 77% (Feb 2019) MEE: 80% (Feb 2019)	Achieved
Outcome 1: Wetland PA Sub-System Strengthened through Better Ecological Representation and Enhanced Management Capacity.				Achievement of Outcome 1: Moderately Satisfactory	
4. 1.1. Coverage of natural wetlands in the national PA network increased from the baseline of 45.33% - protection of natural wetlands (43.51% - baseline year 2013 conservation rate) to 48%. [INDICATOR REVISED following MTR based on updated wetland survey data. During the PPG formulation it was 'Coverage of natural wetlands in the national PA network increased from the baseline of 50.3% to 52% by adding an extra 615,400 hectares under protection contributing towards the collective programmatic expansion target of 55%']	Natural Lakes (53%) Coastal Wetlands (61%) Riverine Wetlands (32%) Marshes (55%) TOTAL (50.3%)	Natural Lakes (58%) Coastal Wetlands (67%) Riverine Wetlands (35%) Marshes (61%) TOTAL (55%)	Achieved. 52.19% (issued by Statistics Bureau, 2018?, used officially in DG meetings) ... As pointed out by MTR teams, the baseline figures and end of programme targets for PA expansion are outdated, not reflecting the results of the second national wetlands survey, which was completed over the time period of 2009-2013 but only published in 2015. For the MSL programme, this timeframe is a more appropriate baseline. Baseline information on the types and areas of wetlands should be adjusted to the results of the second national wetlands survey, end of the programme targets should be reassessed accordingly, and the strategic results framework of the national project should be adjusted according to revisions in baselines. Adjustments were made by the NP-PMO in consultation with OWCM/SFA, and approved by PSC-4.	End of 2017: 49.03% (to be confirmed) Comment: Scope of indicator is different than what is being reported.	Achieved
5. 1.2: Ecosystem Health Index (EHI) monitoring systems for monitoring wetland health fine-tuned and in place for the entire sub-system, with a focus to reduce threats	Currently no use. The EHI has been developed during the PPG stage but will be fine-tuned based on implementation experience emerging from the provincial projects and other existing indexes (e.g., the WEEIS)	Fine-tuning and wide adoption of EHI at the sub-system wetland PA level.	Achieved. a. The EHI has been used by Forestry departments of the 7 provinces as one regular monitoring tool in project demo PAs and been extended to other PAs in their whole Provinces (details please see their PIR reports of each Project). EHI figures indicate general increase over baseline for each and every provincial project. EHI figures clearly indicate that the health of ecosystem in demo sites is improving steadily, and the demo sites have already exceeded the	The EHI was successfully used on the wetland PA's included among the 5 UNDP-supported MSL projects, providing PA managers with a rapid assessment of ecosystem health. Proposed revision to the EHI made, but not adopted and there is no evidence that the tool will be taken up after project closure.	Not achieved

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UNDP PIMS ID: 4391; GEF Project ID: 4655

Indicator	Baseline	End of Project target	Self-assessment by PMO	TE Comments	TE assessment
			<p>EOP target. This is an evidence of the adoption of EHI in the programme provinces.</p> <p>b. A service contract entitled "Development and Demonstration of Wetland Ecosystem Evaluation Index System (EHI)" was awarded and the EHI have been tested, fine-tuned, and adopted as a management tool to monitor wetland ecosystem health at the provincial projects of the MSL programme.</p> <p>c. As EHI is a cross-subject issue among projects, which involves multiple sectors' participation and contribution, a technical workshop was organized in Kunming in Q3, 2016, in which, EHI was one of the priority items. Fine-tuning EHI was discussed in the meeting, participants provided expert suggestions based on implementation experience;</p> <p>In conclusion, although the original EHI itself is somehow subjective and maybe more suitable to be used as the self-assessment tool for PAs, the updated EHI is difficult to get data for the PAs, but major contents of the updated EHI have been adopted as part to the monitoring plan for PAs and used as the regular tool., the EHI has been applied not only in the 42 PAs directly involved in this programme, but have also been strongly promoted by the provincial PA Authorities to their whole provinces through the trainings and other methods. This means at least 7 provinces have adopted METT as their management tool, accounting for 22.6% of the total 31 provinces (including autonomous regions and municipalities). From the perspective of the land areas of these 7 provinces, the 7 provinces cover a total area of 3.84 million square kilometers and accounts for 40% of the whole country.</p>		
Outcome 2: External threats to Wetland PAs reduced through mainstreaming wetland PA considerations in sector planning.				Achievement of Outcome 2: Satisfactory	
<p>6. 2.1. The national standards for wetland restoration and management in place and in use</p> <p>[INDICATOR REVISED in accordance with MTR. During the PPG formulation it was 'Safeguards from sector practices for MOA, MWR, MLWR, and MEP in place and in use']</p>	No safeguards for wetland PAs	Safeguards in the form of standards and procedures in place for each sector, and used centrally by SFA to avoid threats from external sectors.	<p>Achieved.</p> <p>The enabling environment for wetland biodiversity conservation, wetland ecosystem conservation and restoration has been improved greatly across the country. Since the 18th session of the CPC, Chinese Government has been strengthening wetland governance. The SFA (NFGA, after March, 2018) views wetland conservation as one of its top priorities. The wetland conservation and management system is nearly in place, consisted of wetland nature reserves, wetland parks and other forms of wetland protected areas.</p> <p>Specifically, 1) wetland conservation is becoming more and more important in realizing ecological civilization; the government is committed to bringing the coverage of wetlands to no less than 800 million Mu by 2020; 2) The wetland system is on the way of upgrading. During the reporting period, 16 more wetlands were nominated as internationally important ones; 25 national wetland</p>	<p>National Wetlands Conservation and Rehabilitation System Plan (2016), NFGA; Wetland Land Use Classification (National Standard GB/T21010-2017), Ministry of Land Resources.</p>	Achieved

Indicator	Baseline	End of Project target	Self-assessment by PMO	TE Comments	TE assessment
			PA were promoted from provincial level; some 607 wetlands were selected as national park system pilots. The Wetland Conservation and Restoration System Plan, which was issued by the end of 2016, is the guiding national standards for wetland restoration and management. Following the national standards, each province within the MSL Programme was required to develop its own plans and implementation. Till end of June, 2018, thirty-three provinces and cities have developed their own specific plans, including project pilot provinces: Heilongjiang province, Inner Mongolia Autonomous Region, Hubei province, Anhui province and Jiangxi province. In addition, Ministry of Land Resources issued “Land use classification standards” (national standard GB/T21010—2017) and wetland is a stand alone land use type in landuse category for the first time, which lay the legal foundation for Wetland conservation management. Furthermore, the Ministry of Land Resources has applies the new landuse category with wetland as a landuse type for the Third National Land Survey since 2018. Standards developed are recommended by NFGA to put to use as circumstances fit.		
7. 2.2: Increased national financing for wetland PA management (funds and number of mechanisms)as recorded in the financial sustainability scorecard	Baseline amount is the national budget allocation of US\$87.95 Million per year for operation (US\$ 35,170,000) and infrastructure (US\$ 52,780,000). Financing mechanisms are mainly budget allocations. There is an eco-compensation program, however the funding provincial governments receive is not linked to PA management.	Budget allocations for PA management operation increased by 50% over the baseline from national level sources (any sources, to be developed during implementation);	Achieved. National budget allocation for wetland PA governance, management, conservation and restoration, wetland biodiversity conservation increased more than 50% over the baseline, target has been achieved. Approximately approached to US\$135.905 million per year, dedicated to operation and infrastructure. The government is budgeting more funds to wetland related projects, programmes, innovations, etc. from 2013-2017, the government invested USD 1.25 billion (8.15 billion Chinese Yuan) with annual investment of USD 250.7 million to more than 1500 wetland restoration and compensation projects, more than 230,000 ha wetlands were restored; 510,000 ha farmland were restored to wetlands.	Governmental financing steadily increased over project lifespan. Budget allocation for wetland PA management USD 130 million in 2017.	Achieved
		and new sustainable financing mechanisms for PAs established and operational including earmarking of eco-compensation program funding for wetland PA management.		Methodology for valuation of wetland ecosystem services developed. A standard on specifying wetland values of ecosystem services has been submitted to the standard department of NFGA for approval.	Partially achieved
Outcome 3: Increased knowledge management, lessons sharing, and awareness for wetland PAs.				Achievement of Outcome 3: Satisfactory	
8. 3.1: Improved data sharing platform regularly updated, as indicated by use levels of data providers and data users including their usefulness.	No use. Currently, the SFA lacks a comprehensive system to manage wetland data at the sub-system level.	Data sharing platform in use in the form of a virtual database, containing basic wetland PA data from all the PA agencies providing necessary information for wetland PA managers for	Achieved. A database for wetlands has been developed and in trial use, soliciting feedbacks from users from all sectors involved in wetland conservation and restoration. All the materials have passed the preliminary review and are being submitted for approval. After approval, the relevant data will be	Data platform for sharing to the public developed, not yet live, pending authorization. Scope of platform not as broad as project design.	Expected to be achieved within 1 year

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CBPF-MSL: Strengthening the Management Effectiveness of the Sub-system of Wetland Protected Areas for Conservation of Globally Significant Biodiversity

UNDP PIMS ID: 4391; GEF Project ID: 4655

Indicator	Baseline	End of Project target	Self-assessment by PMO	TE Comments	TE assessment
		their management decision making	uploaded to the Wetland China website to share with the public, and link with the project zone		
9. 3.2: Public and government have better understanding and better access to information about wetland issues, indicated by results of the KAP surveys	KAP survey has been commissioned through the PPG and a baseline has been measured for the national level project in Beijing and for some of the provincial projects. The baseline is a score of 111.5 of 216 in Beijing (52%).	30% improvement in KAP survey results (i.e., a score of 173 or 82%).	Achieved. The terminal evaluation of the national project has been postponed to September of 2019 in line with the project extension. Thus the final KAP survey was scheduled slightly late than originally planned. Survey 2019: 181 (84%)	End of project KAP survey: 84%	Achieved
10. 3.3: Magnitude and coverage of lessons disseminated.	No program level system to track or disseminate lessons.	Programmatic monitoring system in place as per the Program Framework and program level reporting is in place. Lessons documented and shared widely. Wetland PA Program Steering and Coordination Forum established	Achieved. Establishing the Steering Committee of GEF China Wetland Protected Area System Programme. An annual meeting of the Steering Committee has reviewed the annual progress of each provincial project, identify the existing problems, make decisions on key issues, define the strategic direction of the Programme, and ensure that each provincial project can support the relevant government strategies and meet the technical needs of local protected areas. This management practice is essential for the success of the Programme The project website (www.gefwetland.com) is the most important and useful tool for disseminating news, documenting project events and also in raising public awareness for wetland conservation and restoration. Addition to project website, the management team also tried "internet+" models, such as we-chat, Skype meetings, etc. In order to further expand the influence of the project and enable more people to benefit from the project results, the project has cooperated with the wetland China website to establish a project zone. The basic information, the progress and outcome reports of the main subcontractors of NP project have been uploaded and shared with the public on the website. The outcomes of provincial projects also will be uploaded continuously and shared with the public. Organizing international symposia and training workshops is the most immediate and effective means to promote knowledge management and sharing on wetland conservation. Of these events, the International Symposium on Wetland Protected Area Systems, held in Haikou, Hainan Province, from December 4-6, 2017, was the most influential one. The Symposium aimed to showcase the latest achievements on wetland conservation in China, share the best practices of wetland protected area system development both at home and abroad, and discuss the new strategy on wetland conservation in the new era. The event was attended by more than	Effective program coordination through PSC, joint training, website management, etc.	Achieved

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UNDP PIMS ID: 4391; GEF Project ID: 4655

Indicator	Baseline	End of Project target	Self-assessment by PMO	TE Comments	TE assessment
			<p>260 participants from relevant government agencies, domestic and foreign NGOs, colleges and universities, research institutions and wetland protection and management organizations. The main topics ranged from policies and systems on wetland conservation; wetland restoration technologies and models; wetland monitoring and survey; to wetland big data and citizen science; addressing climate change with wetlands. The new ideas, mechanism, technologies and best practices generated from this symposium are expected to have a far-reaching impact on wetland conservation, restoration and management in China.</p> <p>the national project has developed a book manuscript to promote all the achievements of GEF wetland project and a handbook for PA staff in China. Currently, the NP PMO is close coordination with the publishing house, straightening out final details, these books will be officially published in June 2019</p> <p>During the period of the programme implementation, an effective consultant sharing mechanism was established to promote the sharing of outcomes and experiences among domestic and foreign consultants who undertake the same tasks. This has not only helped save relevant costs, but improved the efficiency of project implementation. Meanwhile, these consultants play an important role in facilitating the communication and exchange among different provincial projects.</p> <p>A series of books, photo albums and videos have also been published, produced and posted to raise public awareness on wetland conservation.</p>		

Annex 6: Cofinancing Table



Cofinancing Source	Type	GEF Agency		Government		Other		Total Cofinancing	
		Planned	Actual	Planned	Actual	Planned	Actual	Planned	Actual
GEF Agency:									
United Nations Development Programme (TRAC funds)	Cash	900,000	0					900,000	0
UNDP-CICETE -Coca Cola Partnership on Water Governance	In-kind	0	900,000					0	900,000
Sub-total, UNDP		900,000	900,000					900,000	900,000
Government:									
National Forestry and Grasslands Administration	Cash			11,920,000				11,920,000	
Wetland monitoring and management	Cash				8,972,633				8,972,633
peatland survey in key provinces at national level	Cash				1,794,527				1,794,527
Supporting budget in related with implementation of Ramsar Convention and other international cooperation projects	Cash				1,233,737				1,233,737
Sub-total, Government (cash)				11,920,000	12,000,897			11,920,000	12,000,897
Government:									
National Forestry and Grasslands Administration	In-kind			3,980,000				3,980,000	
Office rental, office equipment, etc.	In-kind				2,321,669				2,321,669
Others (Personnel, travel, etc.)	In-kind				1,682,369				1,682,369
Sub-total, Government (in-kind):	In-kind			3,980,000	4,004,038			3,980,000	4,004,038
Total Cofinancing for Project Implementation:		900,000	900,000	15,900,000	16,004,935			16,800,000	16,904,935

Note: cost figures in United States dollars (USD)

Annex 7: Evaluation Consultant Code of Conduct Agreement Form

Evaluators / Consultants:

1. Must present information that is complete and fair in its assessment of strengths and weaknesses so that decisions or actions taken are well founded.
2. Must disclose the full set of evaluation findings along with information on their limitations and have this accessible to all affected by the evaluation with expressed legal rights to receive results.
3. Should protect the anonymity and confidentiality of individual informants. They should provide maximum notice, minimize demands on time, and: respect people's right not to engage. Evaluators must respect people's right to provide information in confidence, and must ensure that sensitive information cannot be traced to its source. Evaluators are not expected to evaluate individuals, and must balance an evaluation of management functions with this general principle.
4. Sometimes uncover evidence of wrongdoing while conducting evaluations. Such cases must be reported discreetly to the appropriate investigative body. Evaluators should consult with other relevant oversight entities when there is any doubt about if and how issues should be reported.
5. Should be sensitive to beliefs, manners and customs and act with integrity and honesty in their relations with all stakeholders. In line with the UN Universal Declaration of Human Rights, evaluators must be sensitive to and address issues of discrimination and gender equality. They should avoid offending the dignity and self-respect of those persons with whom they come in contact in the course of the evaluation. Knowing that evaluation might negatively affect the interests of some stakeholders, evaluators should conduct the evaluation and communicate its purpose and results in a way that clearly respects the stakeholders' dignity and self-worth.
6. Are responsible for their performance and their product(s). They are responsible for the clear, accurate and fair written and/ or oral presentation of study limitations, findings and recommendations.
7. Should reflect sound accounting procedures and be prudent in using the resources of the evaluation.

TE Consultant Agreement Form	
<p>Agreement to abide by the Code of Conduct for Evaluation in the UN System</p> <p>Name of Consultants: James Lenoci, Liu Shuo</p> <p>We confirm that we have received and understood and will abide by the United Nations Code of Conduct for Evaluation.</p> <p>Signatures:</p>	
<p>Budapest, 15 March 2019</p>  <p>James Lenoci, International Consultant / Team Leader</p>	<p>Beijing, 15 March 2019</p>  <p>Liu Shuo, National Consultant</p>

Annex 8: Rating Scales

Outcome Ratings

The overall ratings on the outcomes of the project are based on performance on the following criteria:

- a. Relevance
- b. Effectiveness
- c. Efficiency

Project outcomes are rated based on the extent to which project objectives were achieved. A six-point rating scale is used to assess overall outcomes:

- Highly satisfactory (HS): Level of outcomes achieved clearly exceeds expectations and/or there were no short comings.
- Satisfactory (S): Level of outcomes achieved was as expected and/or there were no or minor short comings.
- Moderately Satisfactory (MS): Level of outcomes achieved more or less as expected and/or there were moderate short comings.
- Moderately Unsatisfactory (MU): Level of outcomes achieved somewhat lower than expected and/or there were significant shortcomings.
- Unsatisfactory (U): Level of outcomes achieved substantially lower than expected and/or there were major short comings.
- Highly Unsatisfactory (HU): Only a negligible level of outcomes achieved and/or there were severe short comings.
- Unable to Assess (UA): The available information does not allow an assessment of the level of outcome achievements.

The calculation of the overall outcomes rating of projects considers all the three criteria, of which relevance and effectiveness are critical. The rating on relevance determines whether the overall outcome rating will be in the unsatisfactory range (MU to HU = unsatisfactory range). If the relevance rating is in the unsatisfactory range then the overall outcome is in the unsatisfactory range as well. However, where the relevance rating is in the satisfactory range (HS to MS), the overall outcome rating could, depending on its effectiveness and efficiency rating, be either in the satisfactory range or in the unsatisfactory range.

The second constraint applied is that the overall outcome achievement rating may not be higher than the effectiveness rating.

During project implementation, the results framework of some projects may have been modified. In cases where modifications in the project impact, outcomes and outputs have not scaled down their overall scope, the evaluator should assess outcome achievements based on the revised results framework. In instances where the scope of the project objectives and outcomes has been scaled down, the magnitude of and necessity for downscaling is taken into account and despite achievement of results as per the revised results framework, where appropriate, a lower outcome effectiveness rating may be given.

Sustainability Ratings

The sustainability is assessed taking into account the risks related to financial, sociopolitical, institutional, and environmental sustainability of project outcomes. The evaluator may also take other risks into account that may affect sustainability. The overall sustainability is assessed using a four-point scale.

- Likely (L). There is little or no risks to sustainability.
- Moderately Likely (ML). There are moderate risks to sustainability.
- Moderately Unlikely (MU). There are significant risks to sustainability.
- Unlikely (U). There are severe risks to sustainability.
- Unable to Assess (UA). Unable to assess the expected incidence and magnitude of risks to sustainability.

Project M&E Ratings

Quality of project M&E is assessed in terms of:

- Design
- Implementation

Quality of M&E on these two dimensions is assessed on a six point scale:

- Highly satisfactory (HS): There were no short comings and quality of M&E design / implementation exceeded expectations.
- Satisfactory (S): There were no or minor short comings and quality of M&E design / implementation meets expectations.
- Moderately Satisfactory (MS): There were some short comings and quality of M&E design/implementation more or less meets expectations.
- Moderately Unsatisfactory (MU): There were significant shortcomings and quality of M&E design / implementation somewhat lower than expected.
- Unsatisfactory (U): There were major short comings and quality of M&E design/implementation substantially lower than expected.
- Highly Unsatisfactory (HU): There were severe short comings in M&E design/ implementation.
- Unable to Assess (UA): The available information does not allow an assessment of the quality of M&E design / implementation.

Implementation and Execution Rating

Quality of implementation and of execution is rated separately. Quality of implementation pertains to the role and responsibilities discharged by the GEF Agencies that have direct access to GEF resources. Quality of Execution pertains to the roles and responsibilities discharged by the country or regional counterparts that received GEF funds from the GEF Agencies and executed the funded activities on ground. The performance is rated on a six-point scale.

- Highly satisfactory (HS): There were no short comings and quality of implementation / execution exceeded expectations.
- Satisfactory (S): There were no or minor short comings and quality of implementation / execution meets expectations.
- Moderately Satisfactory (MS): There were some short comings and quality of implementation / execution more or less meets expectations.
- Moderately Unsatisfactory (MU): There were significant shortcomings and quality of implementation / execution somewhat lower than expected.
- Unsatisfactory (U): There were major short comings and quality of implementation / execution substantially lower than expected.
- Highly Unsatisfactory (HU): There were severe short comings in quality of implementation / execution.
- Unable to Assess (UA): The available information does not allow an assessment of the quality of implementation / execution.

Annex 9: Terms of Reference for Terminal Evaluation

TERMINAL EVALUATION TERMS OF REFERENCE

INTRODUCTION

In accordance with UNDP and GEF M&E policies and procedures, all full and medium-sized UNDP support GEF financed projects are required to undergo a terminal evaluation upon completion of implementation. These terms of reference (TOR) sets out the expectations for a *Terminal Evaluation (TE) of the two sister projects under the same CBPF-MSL (China Biodiversity Partnership Framework-Mainstream of Life) programme, they are: Project 1 (National Project, PIMS 4391), Strengthening the Management Effectiveness of the Sub-System of Wetland Protected Areas for Conservation of Globally Significant Biodiversity; Project 2 (Xinjiang Project, PIMS 4596), Strengthening the Management Effectiveness of the Protected Area Landscape in Altai Mountains and Wetlands.*

The essentials of the projects to be evaluated are as follows:

PROJECT SUMMARY TABLE

Project 1:

Project Title:	Strengthening the Management Effectiveness of the Sub-System of Wetland Protected Areas for Conservation of Globally Significant Biodiversity			
GEF Project ID:	4655		<u>at endorsement (US\$)</u>	<u>at completion (US\$)</u>
UNDP GEF Project ID:	4391			
Atlas award ID:	00069198	GEF financing:	2,654,771	2,654,771
Atlas project ID:	00083911			
Country:	China	IA/EA own:	N/A	N/A
Region:	Asia and Pacific	Government:	in-cash: 11,920,000 in-kind: 3,980,000	in-cash: 11,920,000 in-kind: 3,980,000
Focal Area:	Biodiversity	Other:	(UNDP) 900,000	(UNDP) 900,000
FA Objectives, (OP/SP):	BD1	Total co-financing:	16,800,000	16,800,000
Executing Agency:	State Forest Administration (SFA) (Reformed as NFGA-- National Forestry and Grassland Administration in March 2018)	Total Project Cost:	19,454,771	19,454,771
Other Partners involved:	N/A	ProDoc Signature (date project began):		September 25, 2013
		(Operational) Closing Date:	Original: September 24, 2018	Actual: September 24, 2019

Project 2: PIMS 4596

Project Title:	Strengthening the Management Effectiveness of the Protected Area Landscape in Altai Mountains and Wetlands			
GEF Project ID:	4653		<u>at endorsement (US\$)</u>	<u>at completion (US\$)</u>
UNDP GEF Project ID:	4596			
Atlas award ID:	00070004	GEF financing:	3,544,679	3,544,679
Atlas project ID:	00084238			
Country:	China	IA/EA own:	N/A	N/A
Region:	Asia and Pacific	Government:	in-cash: 16,500,000 in-kind: 4,500,000	in-cash: 16,500,000 in-kind: 4,500,000
Focal Area:	Biodiversity	Other:	(UNDP) 1,000,000	(UNDP) 1,000,000
FA Objectives, (OP/SP):	BD1	Total co-financing:	22,000,000	22,000,000
Executing Agency:	Xinjiang Forestry Department	Total Project Cost:	25,544,679	25,544,679
Other Partners involved:	Liangheyuan Provincial Nature Reserve Management Bureau, Altai Mountains Forestry Bureau	ProDoc Signature (date project began):		February. 27, 2014
		(Operational) Closing Date:	Original: February 26, 2019	Actual: February 26, 2019

OBJECTIVE AND SCOPE

The project was designed to:

Project 1: The project goal is to deliver global biodiversity benefits by conserving China's wetlands through the strengthening of the sub-system of wetland PAs, thus enhancing conservation and management of these globally significant ecosystems. The project objective is to strengthen the sub-system of wetland protected areas to respond to the existing and accelerating threats to their globally significant biodiversity.

Three outcomes including:

Outcome 1: Wetland PA Sub-System Strengthened through Better Ecological Representation and Enhanced Management Capacity.

Outcome 2: External threats to Wetland PAs reduced through mainstreaming wetland PA considerations in sector planning.

Outcome 3: Increased knowledge management, lessons sharing, and awareness for wetland PAs.

Project 2: The project Goal is to enhance the effectiveness of XUAR's PA system to conserve globally significant biodiversity and to maintain healthy and resilient ecosystems with strategic emphasis on the regional PA wetland sub-system.

The project objective is to strengthen the management effectiveness of PAs to respond to existing and emerging threats to the globally significant biodiversity and essential ecosystem services in AMWL in northern XUAR, People's Republic of China.

The objective will be achieved through three outcomes:

Outcome 1: The protection of wetland ecosystems with PA planning and management is enhanced in XUAR through systemic, legal and institutional capacity strengthening;

Outcome 2: The biodiversity of AMWL is effectively conserved with a strengthened PA network and enhanced operational budget through adoption of a landscape approach to conservation planning and environmental management;

Outcome 3: The adoption and development of a 'community co-management' approach to conservation in Liangheyuan NR demonstrates improved management effectiveness for a wetland PA in the Altai Mountains and Wetland Landscape.

As the national project played key role for coordinate programme level functions for umbrella impact to all the seven child projects, UNDP would like the team to provide a synthesis report at program level to capture the program successes and impact. It will provide an overview of the findings and recommendations from the six individual TE reports within 2 weeks of the finalization of all six TE reports, which may need some Skype interview meetings for clarifications with 7 PMOs staff and FAO China, as well as NPD from programme level.

An example program synthesis report is available from the mid-term to provide guidance to the TE team.

The TE will be conducted according to the guidance, rules and procedures established by UNDP and GEF as reflected in the UNDP Evaluation Guidance for GEF Financed Projects.

The objectives of the evaluation are to assess the achievement of project results, and to draw lessons that can both improve the sustainability of benefits from this project, and aid in the overall enhancement of UNDP programming.

EVALUATION APPROACH AND METHOD

An overall approach and method¹ for conducting project terminal evaluations of UNDP supported GEF financed projects has developed over time. The evaluator is expected to frame the evaluation effort using the criteria of **relevance, effectiveness, efficiency, sustainability, and impact**, as defined and explained in the [UNDP Guidance for Conducting Terminal Evaluations of UNDP-supported, GEF-financed Projects](#). A set of questions covering each of these criteria have been drafted and are included with this TOR (*fill in Annex C*). The evaluator is expected

¹ For additional information on methods, see the [Handbook on Planning, Monitoring and Evaluating for Development Results](#), Chapter 7, pg. 163

to amend, complete and submit this matrix as part of an evaluation inception report, and shall include it as an annex to the final report.

The evaluation must provide evidence-based information that is credible, reliable and useful. The evaluator is expected to follow a participatory and consultative approach ensuring close engagement with government counterparts, in particular the GEF operational focal point, UNDP Country Office, project team, UNDP GEF Technical Adviser based in the region and key stakeholders. The evaluator is expected to conduct a field mission to **China**, including the following project sites **including Beijing, Xinjiang Uyghur Autonomous Region**. About 4 days for project 1, 12 days for project 2. All related travel expenses will be covered. Interviews will be held with the following organizations and individuals at a minimum: **(UNDP, NFGA, Xinjiang Forestry Department and related sub-contractors and consultants, Skype with other 5 PMOs and FAO China)**.

The evaluator will review all relevant sources of information, such as the project document, project reports – including Annual APR/PIR, project budget revisions, midterm review, progress reports, GEF focal area tracking tools, project files, national strategic and legal documents, and any other materials that the evaluator considers useful for this evidence-based assessment. A list of documents that the project team will provide to the evaluator for review is included in [Annex B](#) of this Terms of Reference.

EVALUATION CRITERIA & RATINGS

An assessment of project performance will be carried out, based against expectations set out in the Project Logical Framework/Results Framework (see [Annex A](#)), which provides performance and impact indicators for project implementation along with their corresponding means of verification. The evaluation will at a minimum cover the criteria of: **relevance, effectiveness, efficiency, sustainability and impact**. Ratings must be provided on the following performance criteria. The completed table must be included in the evaluation executive summary. The obligatory rating scales are included in [Annex D](#).

Evaluation Ratings:			
1. Monitoring and Evaluation	rating	2. IA& EA Execution	rating
M&E design at entry		Quality of UNDP Implementation	
M&E Plan Implementation		Quality of Execution - Executing Agency	
Overall quality of M&E		Overall quality of Implementation / Execution	
3. Assessment of Outcomes	rating	4. Sustainability	rating
Relevance		Financial resources:	
Effectiveness		Socio-political:	
Efficiency		Institutional framework and governance:	
Overall Project Outcome Rating		Environmental:	
		Overall likelihood of sustainability:	

PROJECT FINANCE / COFINANCE

The Evaluation will assess the key financial aspects of the project, including the extent of co-financing planned and realized. Project cost and funding data will be required, including annual expenditures. Variances between planned and actual expenditures will need to be assessed and explained. Results from recent financial audits, as available, should be taken into consideration. The evaluator(s) will receive assistance from the Country Office (CO) and Project Team to obtain financial data in order to complete the co-financing table below, which will be included in the terminal evaluation report.

Co-financing (type/source)	UNDP own financing (mill. US\$)		Government (mill. US\$)		Partner Agency (mill. US\$)		Total (mill. US\$)	
	Planned	Actual	Planned	Actual	Planned	Actual	Actual	Actual
Grants								
Loans/Concessions								
• In-kind support								
• Other								
Totals								

MAINSTREAMING

UNDP supported GEF financed projects are key components in UNDP country programming, as well as regional and global programmes. The evaluation will assess the extent to which the project was successfully mainstreamed with other UNDP priorities, including poverty alleviation, improved governance, the prevention and recovery from natural disasters, and gender.

IMPACT

The evaluators will assess the extent to which the project is achieving impacts or progressing towards the achievement of impacts. Key findings that should be brought out in the evaluations include whether the project has demonstrated: a) verifiable improvements in ecological status, b) verifiable reductions in stress on ecological systems, and/or c) demonstrated progress towards these impact achievements.²

CONCLUSIONS, RECOMMENDATIONS & LESSONS

The evaluation report must include a chapter providing a set of **conclusions, recommendations** and **lessons**. Conclusions should build on findings and be based in evidence. Recommendations should be prioritized, specific, relevant, and targeted, with suggested implementers of the recommendations. Lessons should have wider applicability to other initiatives across the region, the area of intervention, and for the future.

IMPLEMENTATION ARRANGEMENTS

The principal responsibility for managing this evaluation resides with the UNDP CO in **China**. The UNDP CO will contract the evaluators and ensure the timely provision of per diems and travel arrangements within the country for the evaluation team. The Project Team will be responsible for liaising with the Evaluators team to set up stakeholder interviews, arrange field visits, coordinate with the Government etc.

EVALUATION TIMEFRAME

The total duration of the evaluation will be 55 days according to the following plan:

Activity	Timing	Completion Date
Preparation	5 days	February 1, 2019
Evaluation Mission	16 days	March 25, 2019
Draft Evaluation Report	24 days	April 25, 2019
Final Report	10 days	May 15, 2019

EVALUATION DELIVERABLES

The evaluation team is expected to deliver the following:

Deliverable	Content	Timing	Responsibilities
Inception Report	Evaluator provides clarifications on timing and method	No later than 2 weeks before the evaluation mission.	Evaluator submits to UNDP CO
Presentation	Initial Findings by PPT	End of evaluation mission	To project management, UNDP CO
Draft Final Report	Full report, (per annexed template) with annexes	Within 3 weeks of the evaluation mission	Sent to CO, reviewed by RTA, PCU
Final Report*	Revised report	Within 1 week of receiving UNDP comments on draft	Sent to CO for uploading to UNDP ERC.
Synthesis Report	Only one synthesis report will be created, which will provide an overview of the findings from the six individual MTR reports	Within 2 weeks of the finalization of all six TE reports	Sent to the Commissioning Unit

² A useful tool for gauging progress to impact is the Review of Outcomes to Impacts (ROtI) method developed by the GEF Evaluation Office: [ROtI Handbook 2009](#)

*When submitting the final evaluation report, the evaluator is required also to provide an 'audit trail', detailing how all received comments have (and have not) been addressed in the final evaluation report.

TEAM COMPOSITION

The evaluation team will be composed of **1 international and 1 national evaluator**. The consultants shall have prior experience in evaluating similar projects. Experience with GEF financed projects is an advantage. **The international evaluator will be designated as the team leader and will be responsible for finalizing the report.** The evaluators selected should not have participated in the project preparation and/or implementation and should not have conflict of interest with project related activities.

The Team members must present the following qualifications:

Competencies

- Strategic technical and intellectual skills in the substantive area with global dynamic perspectives;
- Leadership, innovation, facilitation, advocacy and coordination skills;
- Ability to manage technical teams and engage in long term strategic partnership;
- Entrepreneurial abilities and ability to work in an independent manner;
- Ability to work effectively in a team, with good relationship management skills
- Strong managerial and coordination skills, including ability to coordinate the development of large, complex projects;
- Demonstrated ability to operate effectively in a highly complex organizational context;
- Ability to maintain high standards despite pressing deadlines;
- Excellent communication (both oral and written) and partnership building skills with multi-dimension partners and people, skill for conflict resolution and negotiation;
- Excellent writing skills, especially in the preparation of official documents and reports;
- Good knowledge of China's environmental and socio-economic context.

Required Skills and Experience

Education

- An advanced degree in conservation, natural resources management, environmental science or related fields, preferably in PA conservation and management.

Experience

- Minimum 3 years of relevant professional experience including Project development, implementation and evaluation
- Knowledge of UNDP and GEF, such as GEF policy and practices, GEF project requirements;
- Previous experience with results-based monitoring and evaluation methodologies;
- Technical knowledge in the targeted focal area(s) including biodiversity conservation, agriculture, natural resources co-management, integrated planning, etc.
- Expertise in economic and social development issues
- Good communications and writing skills in English
- Professional experiences in working in China and with Chinese counterparts would be an advantage.
- Working experiences in high altitude areas

Language

- Fluency in written and spoken English is required;
- Good knowledge of Chinese is an asset.

IT Skills:

- Good IT skills.

EVALUATOR ETHICS

Evaluation consultants will be held to the highest ethical standards and are required to sign a Code of Conduct (Annex E) upon acceptance of the assignment. UNDP evaluations are conducted in accordance with the principles outlined in the [UNEG 'Ethical Guidelines for Evaluations'](#)

PAYMENT MODALITIES AND SPECIFICATIONS

(this payment schedule is indicative, to be filled in by the CO and UNDP GEF Technical Adviser based on their standard procurement procedures)

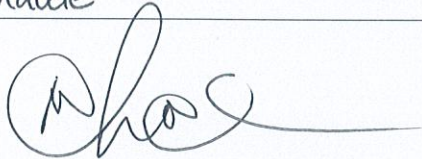

%	Milestone
10%	At contract signing
40%	Following submission and approval of the 1ST draft terminal evaluation report
50%	Following submission and approval (UNDP-CO and UNDP RTA) of the final terminal evaluation report

APPLICATION PROCESS

Applicants are requested to apply online (<http://jobs.undp.org> etc.) by **Oct. 8, 2018**. Individual consultants are invited to submit applications together with their CV for these positions. The application should contain a current and complete C.V. in English with indication of the e-mail and phone contact. Shortlisted candidates will be requested to submit a price offer indicating the cost of the assignment (mainly the daily fee).

UNDP applies a fair and transparent selection process that will take into account the competencies/skills of the applicants as well as their financial proposals. Qualified women and members of social minorities are encouraged to apply.

Annex 10: Signed TE Final Report Clearance Form

Terminal Evaluation Report Reviewed and Cleared By:	
UNDP Country Office	
Name: Ma Chaode	
Signature: 	Date: July 24, 2019
UNDP GEF Regional Technical Advisor	
Name: Gabriel Jaramillo	
Signature: 	Date: July 26, 2019