

Validated Terminal Review of the UNEP-GEF Project

**Expansion and Improvement of Biodiversity Conservation and Sustainable
Use of Natural Resources in the Greater Shennongjia Area, Hubei Province,
China (GEF ID 4865)**

2018-2024



UNEP Ecosystems Division

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Expansion and Improvement of Biodiversity Conservation and Sustainable Use of Natural
Resources in the Greater Shennongjia Area, Hubei Province, China

PIMS ID: 37259/GEF ID: 4865

(Date 08/2025)

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The review consultant hopes that the findings, conclusions and recommendations will contribute to the successful finalisation of the current Project, formulation of a next phase and to the continuous improvement of similar projects in other countries and regions.

BRIEF EXTERNAL CONSULTANT(S) BIOGRAPHY

Langnan Chen is a principal independent evaluation specialist, economist/finance specialist, and professor of economics and finance with more than 43 years of academic and consulting experience in almost all development sectors, such as environment, climate change, energy, agriculture, forestry, water/sanitation/solid waste, transport, regional integration/trade facilitation, finance, education and other sectors, especially on the recent more than 120 projects supported by UNEP, UNDP, UNESCO, UNCDF, UNICEF, UN, UNFPA, UNOCT, World Bank, EU, ADB and many other international organizations in more than 30 countries across Asia, Africa, Europe and Latin America. The projects, in which he has been involved, range from project design, feasibility study, advisory technical assistant, to midterm review, project completion evaluation/review, and loan implementation/capacity building. In addition, he was contracted by UNEP, Integrated Office of the DSRSG/RC/HC UNDP, UNICEF, UNOCT, UNESCO, Asia Development Bank (ADB), EU, French Development Agency (AFD), and Organization of Eastern Caribbean States (OECS) to conduct project/program evaluation for 30 projects. Finally, he has 26 papers published in the leading peer reviewed journals (including 16 A-level journals) in economics and finance, and more than 100 academic papers and 10 books (in Chinese) published in China.

Review team

Langnan Chen

ABOUT THE REVIEW

Joint Review: No

Report Language(s): English.

Review Type: Terminal Review

Brief Description: This report is a management-led Terminal Review of a UNEP/GEF project implemented between 2018 and 2024. The project's overall development goal was to enhance (conservation) management effectiveness of National Nature Reserves (NNRs) in Hubei province, as well as the mainstreaming of biodiversity conservation and value of ecosystem services in economic development plans and sectors. The review sought to assess project performance (in terms of relevance, effectiveness and efficiency), and determine outcomes and impacts (actual and potential) stemming from the project, including their sustainability. The review has two primary purposes: (i) to provide evidence of results to meet accountability requirements, and (ii) to promote learning, feedback, and knowledge sharing through results and lessons learned among UNEP, GEF and the relevant agencies of the Project in Hubei Province, China.

Source(s) of Funding by Country: China

Source(s) of Funding by Institution Type:

Foundation/NGO	No
Private Sector	No
UN Body	No
Multilateral Fund	No
Environment Fund	Yes

Key words¹: National Nature Reserves (NNRs); Biodiversity conservation; Conservation management effectiveness; Sustainable use of natural resources; Value of ecosystem services

Primary data collection period: May 2025 to July 2025

Field mission dates: 6 July to 12 July 2025

¹ Please provide maximum five key words, which are not already in the project title.

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LIST OF ACRONYMS

AWP	Annual Work Plan
CBD	Convention on Biological Diversity
DRC	Development Reform Commission
GSA	Greater Shennongjia Area
HAD	Hubei Provincial Agricultural Department
HFD	Hubei Provincial Forestry Department
IAS	Invasive Alien Species
MEA	Multilateral Environment Agreement
NGO	Non-Governmental Organisation
NNR	National Nature Reserve
PRC	People Republic of China
PD	Project Document
PMU	Project Management Unit
PIU	Project (Field) Implementation Unit
PSC	Project Steering Committee
SD	Sustainable Development
SDG	Sustainable Development Goals
SFD	Shennongjia Forestry District
SNJ	Shennongjia
SNNR	Shennongjia National Nature Reserve
NR	Natural Reserve
SNP	Shennongjia National Park
SSC	South-South Cooperation
ToC	Theory of Change
TR	Terminal Review
UN	United Nations
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
UNEP	United Nations Environment Programme

PROJECT IDENTIFICATION TABLE

Table 1: Project Identification Table

GEF Project identification table

GEF Project ID/SMA ID ² :	4865	Grant ID ³ (if applicable):	S1-32GFL-000617
Type of GEF Project:	Child: N	Global Coordinating Project:	N
	If yes, provide GEF Programme ⁴ ID:	Medium-Size Project or Full-Size Project:	FSP
UNEP Management (Division/Branch/Unit):	UN Environment Programme Ecosystems Division Biodiversity and Land Branch GEF Biodiversity and Land Degradation Unit	Executing Agency:	Hubei Provincial Forestry Department
Sources of Funding (Co-finance):	Country ⁵ (ies): China		Institution ⁶ Name/Type: Shennongjia Forestry District (SFD)/Government Entity
Relevant SDG(s):	Sustainable Development Goals 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		
MTS (at approval):	2018-2021		
POW Direct Outcome(s) number/reference (applicable for projects approved from 2022): OR POW Output(s) number/reference (applicable for projects approved pre-2022)	POW Direct Outcome: N/A	MTS 2025 Outcome(s) number/reference (applicable for projects approved from 2022):	MTS 2025 Outcome:
	POW Output: Work (PoW) for 2018-2019, 2020-2021	OR POW Expected Accomplishment(s) number/reference (applicable for projects approved pre-2022):	POW Expected Accomplishment: Ecosystem Management sub-program: under EA (a) (i) (ii): The health and productivity of marine, freshwater and terrestrial ecosystems are institutionalized in education, monitoring and cross-sector and transboundary collaboration

² SMA refers to the ID provided by the Integrated Planning, Management and Reporting Solution (IPMR) system, which was introduced by UNEP in July 2023.

³ For example, ID references from EC, IKI, UNDA, Adaptation Fund, GCF.

⁴ GEF Programme refers to 'Parent' project.

⁵ Where applicable, list countries who have provided project funds and/or co-finance.

⁶ Indicate where funding institutions are any/all of the following: Foundation/NGO; Private Sector; UN Body; Multilateral Fund; Environment Fund.

			<i>frameworks at the national and international levels.</i>
Sub-programme:	Subprogram 3 – Healthy & Productive Ecosystems	Programme Coordination Project:	Conservation, Restoration and Sustainable Use of Biodiversity
UNEP approval date:	09/05/2018	GEF approval date:	May 2018
GEF Operational Programme #:	BD 1 Improving the sustainability of protected areas systems BD 2 Mainstream biodiversity conservation and sustainable use into production landscapes/seascapes and sectors	GEF Strategic Priority:	BD-1, BD-2
Focal Area(s):	Biodiversity		
Expected start date:	24/12/2015	Actual start date:	25/05/2018
Planned completion date:	31/05/2023	Actual operational completion date:	31/05/2023
Planned project budget at approval:	GEF grant allocation: US\$ 2,657,534		
	Expected co-financing: Cash: 10,279,105 In-kind: 4,812,700		
	Total planned budget: 17,749,339		
Actual total expenditures reported (cash only):	GEF grant expenditures reported as of 31 May 2025: US\$ 2,050,059.75		
	Actual co-financing: Cash: US\$ 14,587,995		
	Total actual expenditures reported as of 31 May 2025: \$16,638,054.75		
No. and dates of formal project revisions:	0	Date of last approved project revision:	N/A
No. of Steering Committee meetings:	5	Date of Last Steering Committee meeting:	27/8/2024
Mid-term Review/ Evaluation (<i>required or not required</i>):	UNEP requirement:	☒	Mid-term Review/ Evaluation (actual date): 15/06/2021
	GEF requirement:	☒	
Terminal Evaluation (<i>planned date</i>):	November 2024	Terminal Review (actual date):	July 2025
Coverage - Country(ies):	China	Coverage - Region(s):	Asia Pacific
Dates of previous project phases:	N/A	Status of future project phases:	N/A

Project background

1. China is rich in biodiversity, which enlivens the earth and is the basis for human survival and development, as well as the lifeline and foundation of the Earth's living community. However, the rate of species extinction has been accelerating, and the function of ecosystem services has declined markedly, affected by the loss and destruction of natural habitats, over-utilization of natural resources, environmental pollution, and invasion of alien species and climate change, posing a serious threat to the survival of humankind and to sustainable development.
2. The mountains in the Greater Shennongjia Area (GSA), especially at lower elevations, were under pressure from conversion of forest to agriculture, hunting and collection of wild plants and animals that resulted in significant losses of biodiversity. The loss of livelihoods due to the forestry ban and the motivation to local economic development in tourism, roads, mines, hydro-electric power and other efforts created additional pressures on the forest-based ecosystem. The threat of invasive alien species (IAS) was estimated at more than 56 species before 2018 and led to large economic losses in agricultural and forestry sectors. Further, the shift towards increased conservation of forested lands had led to increased reported cases of conflicts between growing numbers of wildlife due to successful conservation efforts and human settlements around the GSA reserves.
3. The main barriers to strengthening efforts to conserve biodiversity and sustain ecosystem services in GSA consisted of:
 - the absence of incorporating environmental and biodiversity considerations into the provincial development planning framework and processes;
 - an absence of tools and safeguards that reduce and mitigate external threats to nature reserves associated with poorly planned development activities both at provincial level and county level in GSA;
 - relatively incipient efforts to date in addressing issues of IAS in particular in relation to the conservation of native biodiversity both within and outside of GSA nature reserves;
 - the need to more readily identify and quantify in economic terms the "goods and services" provided by GSA nature reserves;
 - the relatively low development level of many of GSA's existing nature reserves;
 - a significant absence of scientific data needed to manage GSA nature reserves; and
 - the relatively low awareness of the importance of GSA biodiversity and the role that nature reserves play in its conservation (and the provision of other ecological "goods and services").
4. To overcome these barriers, the Project "Expansion and Improvement of Biodiversity Conservation and Sustainable Use of Natural Resources in the Greater Shennongjia Area (GSA), Hubei Province" was developed by UNEP with funding from the GEF and local government, and implemented between 2018 and 2024.

This Review

5. The review sought to assess project performance (in terms of relevance, effectiveness and efficiency) and determines the sustainability of outcomes and impacts. The review has two primary purposes: accountability and learning. Data collection methods

included: field observations, in-depth interviews, Focus Group Discussions and document reviews. Data analysis was based on applying triangulated data to assess performance against a reconstructed Theory of Change and its causal pathways.

Key findings and performance ratings

6. The Project was aligned with UNEP's mandate and thematic priorities as presented in the MTS cycles 2018-2021 and 2022-2025, as well as their respective PoWs (2018-2019, 2020-2021, and 2022-2025).
7. The Project was in line with one of the Chinese government's priorities: Improving the Ecosystem, under Chapter 37, 14th Five-Year Plan (2021-2025) of the People's Republic of China, National Ecosystem Protection and Development Plan for 2021-2035, China's National Biodiversity Strategy and Action Plan (NBSAP) for the period 2011-2030.
8. However, the document review and consultations indicated that the Project focused more on implementing subnational-level decisions, rather than global, regional and national level cooperation, in part due to the limited involvement of key diverse institutions in the PSC, limiting its overall impact. A recommendation to address this issue in future projects has been included below.
9. The project complemented other GEF-funded initiatives approved at the time of Project launch up to 2018. While the Project did not complement any GEF-funded initiative after the start of the Project, it did coordinate with several non GEF-funded initiatives.
10. The main strengths of the project design included: (a) The challenging operating context, covering conflict between conservation, human resettlement, and climate change, was well identified. (b) The Project Document had an extensive analysis of the problems and gaps, stakeholders, and consultations which provided adequate preparation for implementation. (c) The Project was relevant to GEF strategic priorities. (d) The intended results and causality clearly described the causal pathways from Project outputs through outcomes towards impact. (e) The results framework and M&E framework captured some key elements of the ToC, provided a set of SMART indicators with baseline and target values for each outcome, and was generally appropriate for management and implementation at the outcome level. (f) The Project governance and supervision structure was comprehensive, clear and appropriate for implementation. (g) The Project had a clear and adequate knowledge management approach, and identified appropriate methods for communication with key stakeholders, including gender/minority groups.
11. The main weaknesses of the project design included: (a) There was no Theory of Change (ToC) with underlying assumptions and drivers in the original PD. (b) A set of intermediate targets needed to be added to establish a good ToC. (c) The work plan did not provide sufficient details for planning and implementation. (d) Both the results framework and M&E framework did not capture outputs, which were the key elements of the ToC. (e) The Project was not appropriately designed/adapted in relation to the duration since it did not consider the external shocks that might have impact on the timely delivery of Project outputs. (f) The value for money strategies was not mentioned in the PD. (g) Only some of the environmental, economic and social risks were identified and the related mitigation strategies were not adequate. (h) There was no "sustainability strategy" or "exit strategy" explicitly mentioned and detailed in the PD. (i) While gender mainstreaming issues were considered in the context, results framework, and budget, the PD did not design specific interventions to promote gender equality and women empowerment. (j) The results framework and M&E framework did not provide a set of indicators with baseline and target values for each output, which hampered some management decisions and implementation.

12. The project delivered all planned activities within the adjusted timeframe and budget, and successfully achieved most outputs. However, there were no output indicators with baseline and target to assess the effectiveness of the Project in terms of outputs. Some outputs delivered might not match the intended outputs and needed detailed review of the content. The outcome assessment suggested that most target values had been achieved, the assumptions for progress from project outputs to outcomes were mostly met, and drivers to support the transition from outputs to outcomes were in place.
13. The Project played a significant catalytic role by enhancing conservation management effectiveness of NNRs in Hubei province, as well as the mainstreaming of biodiversity conservation and value of ecosystem services in economic development plans and sector plans, and contributing to the Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework.
14. The Project generally utilized resources efficiently and achieved cost-effective results despite challenges like the COVID-19 pandemic. The Project had one justified no-cost extension of one year and included justified amendments to the approaches for achieving Project outcomes.
15. The indicator system was not updated during implementation due to unchanged Project scope and activities. While there were opportunities for improvement in the design of the project's indicators, the Project only considered process indicators at the outcome level and did not employ impact and output indicators. As such, some of the outcome indicators had limitations in their relevance for a comprehensive review of the Project. While outputs and impact were documented in the monitoring plan and results framework, the Project lacked more indicators capable of effectively measuring outputs and concrete impact in Hubei Province, China.
16. Despite the completeness of Project documentation, the reports were generally gender-neutral, except for documents specifically addressing gender-sensitive interventions. The data disaggregation by vulnerable or marginalized groups was absent across reporting. Finally, almost all reports were in Chinese and have not been released to the public or published.
17. The sustainability of project outcomes has a low degree of dependency on social/political factors at the local levels. It builds on trust and stable socio-political relationships of people at the local level, and community level. It also relies on long-term relationships with stable partners, and it takes a strong objective scientific approach, which allows it to stay on the technical side and avoid getting involved in politics.
18. The project outputs/outcomes are reliant, to great extent, on future funding for continued success and sustainability. The funding required in the short term could be secured through a Phase II project, demonstrating substantial progress in addressing the project's financial needs. The project can ensure its long-term financial sustainability by integrating its results into provincial government development plan, which was one of the key outcomes.
19. A robust mechanism was in place to support the institutionalization of Project results. The capacity of relevant individuals was enhanced, and they were likely to remain in positions where they could sustain these results. Further, an exit strategy with an institutional component has been initiated to guide the transition and ensure the continuation of project achievements. However, there is a need for more substantial integration of Project results through the institutions other than the areas in biodiversity conservation and ecosystem services. Future projects should focus on outreach of institutional achievements at the national or international level to ensure sustainability.
20. The lack of a timely inception process limited the project's ability to fully capitalize on opportunities and mitigate foreseeable risks at the outset. The evidence indicated that a

late inception meeting was held and the Project Document (including an annual work plan and a procurement plan) was not updated.

21. The Project was managed and supervised effectively by a strong Project Management Unit (PMU) and a functioning Project Steering Committee (PSC), with an excellent working relationship with all Project partners. Regular and constructive communication between the PMU/PIU and UNEP staff was maintained, and both UNEP and Executing Agency provided strong leadership. However, the existence of double operating/financial/monitoring systems in GSA and staff turnover at UNEP and the implementing partners delayed some key activities and thus the timely delivery of Project outputs/outcomes.
22. Although stakeholder participation improved during implementation, the Project faced challenges in engagement, with limited but effective efforts to promote stakeholder ownership. The Project provided a virtual platform to facilitate participatory processes and thus strengthened the stakeholders' participation and cooperation, and finally the ownership throughout the Project.
23. The environmental and social impacts on key stakeholders and in particular on the most vulnerable groups were considered to a limited extent despite having a management plan to address safeguards. The review of risk assessments was limited and the extent of the problems was under-reported. The evidence suggested that human rights and gender considerations were not fully integrated into project implementation, result interpretation, and project reporting; the Project did not include specific interventions to promote human rights and gender equality within biodiversity conservation and ecosystem improvement.
24. The provincial government and public sector agencies played a leadership role in driving change, endorsing Project results, and ensuring national ownership. The lack of strategic representation and involvement of key departments beyond the biodiversity sector limited project ownership at the national level.
25. Communication and public awareness activities were conducted, but the results were not as effective as expected. These efforts were largely ineffective in driving change towards outcomes beyond outputs at the national and international levels.

Table 2: Summary of project ratings

Criterion	Rating
Strategic Relevance	S
Quality of Project Design	MS
Nature of External Context	MS
Effectiveness	S
Financial Management	S
Efficiency	MS
Monitoring and Reporting	MS
Sustainability	L
Factors Affecting Performance	MS
Overall Project Performance Rating	S

26. Based on the findings from this review, the Project demonstrates performance at the 'satisfactory' level (a detailed table of ratings against all review criteria is found in the Conclusions section, below). The project has demonstrated strong performance in the areas of strategic relevance, effectiveness, financial management, and factors affecting performance. The areas that would benefit/would have benefited from further attention

are quality of Project design, efficiency, monitoring and reporting, sustainability and cross-cutting issues.

Conclusions summary

27. Conclusion 1: The Project was aligned with UNEP's mandate and thematic priorities as presented in the MTS cycles 2018-2021 and 2022-2025, as well as their respective PoWs (2018-2019, 2020-2021, and 2022-2025). The Project was aligned with the GEF-5 Focal Area strategies on Biodiversity, particularly its objective 1 and objective 2. The Project was in line with the Chinese government's 14th Five-Year Plan (2021-2025) for National Economic and Social Development and Vision 2035 of PRC, NEPD for 2021-2035, National Forestry Nature Reserve Development Plan NFNDRP 2006-2030, and NBSAP 2011-2030.
28. Conclusion 2: The Project design generally provided a good results framework equipped with a clear logical chain from activities to output, to outcomes and to impact, as well as a logical chain from activities to outcome indicators with baseline and target values. However, the Project design did not provide a theory of change and output indicators, so it was not sufficient or adequate in many cases to measure the progress or verify the achievements in terms of outputs.
29. Conclusion 3: During Project implementation, UNEP, HFD and Shennongjia National Park confirmed themselves as adaptive and responsive partners. UNEP's long-term presence and partnership with Government of Hubei Province, technical capacities of the staff, and strong accountability for results were recognized as crucial elements for successful implementation of the Project.
30. Conclusion 4: The Project was implemented effectively as most planned outputs in 3 components were delivered and the actual values reached the target values for most outcome indicators. The outcome indicator was an appropriate indicator to be used for assessing the effective performance of the Project.
31. Conclusion 5: The Project was generally efficient as most outputs were produced with cost-effectiveness and the PSC and PMU worked efficiently. However, the original monitoring and evaluation framework was not updated during the Inception Phase and was not used for improving efficiency. The implementation efficiency was further negatively affected by the delayed relocation of key partners and consultants, and the turnover of key staff in the PMU and PIU, which resulted in loss of institutional memory and lack of continuity and consistency in Project activity implementation in some cases.

Lessons Learned

32. Lesson 1: Consistent alignment of the Project activities and outputs with the UNEP Medium Term Strategy (MTS), Programme of Work (POW), persisting national needs, and GEF Strategic Priorities ensure the sustainability of the Project's results.
33. Lesson 2: It is extremely difficult to measure and verify the Project's effectiveness if the Project design does not include a set of output indicators.
34. Lesson 3: Sharing of best practices from implementation, successful achievements attained and challenges faced through appropriate regional cooperation arrangements increases the catalytic impact of intervention.
35. Lesson 4: A well-functioning PSC/board and a professional PMU will ensure project efficiency and good national ownership.
36. Lesson 5: A results framework equipped with a logical chain from activities to outputs and outcomes/impacts, and indicators with baseline and target values based on the Theory of Change enhances the effectiveness and efficiency of Project implementation.

37. Lesson 6: Adaptive management is a crucial tool for any project supported by international donors.
38. Lesson 7: Establishment of a sector (biodiversity and ecosystem service) policy and integration into national development plan is complicated and not a linear process due to its mixture with political agendas.
39. Lesson 8: Mainstreaming cross-cutting issues such as human rights, gender and vulnerable people in a project requires their integration in the project strategy as well as the implementation of specific activities and subsequent reporting of project progress.

Recommendations

40. Recommendation 1: It is recommended that future projects ensure the inclusion of representatives from various institutions in the Project Steering Committee to foster coherence and complementarity for planning, implementation and mainstreaming across institutions/ sectors.
41. Recommendation 2: It is recommended that future projects use SMART indicators with “incremental” target values to be achieved by the end of the Project for each output and outcome for monitoring and evaluation purpose in the project results framework as now mandated by the GEF.
42. Recommendation 3: In order to ensure the mainstreaming of cross-cutting issues such as human rights, gender and vulnerable people in a project, it is crucial to include them in the project activities, and outputs/outcomes with clear indicators in the results framework as well as part of reporting requirements in the quarterly and annual reports.

Validation

The report has been subject to an independent validation exercise performed by UNEP’s Evaluation Office. The performance ratings for the “Expansion and Improvement of Biodiversity Conservation and Sustainable Use of Natural Resources in the Greater Shennongjia Area, Hubei Province, China” project (GEF ID 4865), set out in the Conclusions and Recommendations section have not been adjusted as a result. The overall project performance is validated at the **Satisfactory** level. Moreover, the Evaluation Office has found the overall quality of the report to be Satisfactory (see Annex XV).

I. THE PROJECT

A. Context

Intervention context

43. For decades before 2018, China's historic rapid growth resulted in a decline in poverty that was unprecedented in its speed and scale. Real per capita income increased 16 times between 1978 and 2014, and real output per worker increased by a factor of 12:3. This enabled China's extreme poverty rate, based on the international purchasing power parity (PPP) US\$1.90 per day poverty line, to fall from 88.3 percent in 1981 to 1.9 percent in 2013. This implied that China's success enabled more than 850 million people to escape poverty.
44. Since 2014, China's growth had been slowing, and a rebalancing of the economy was underway. Real gross domestic product (GDP) growth rates, which averaged 10.4 percent over the period 2000–2010, declined to 7 to 8 percent over 2012–15. In many ways, slowing economic growth would be expected for countries that reach China's level of per capita income, as the contributions from factor accumulation started to diminish. For the medium to long term, growth would depend to a significant degree on the extent of reforms carried out.
45. China is rich in biodiversity, which enlivens the earth and is the basis for human survival and development, as well as the lifeline and foundation of the Earth's living community. However, the rate of species extinction had been accelerating, and the function of ecosystem services had declined markedly, affected by the loss and destruction of natural habitats, over-utilization of natural resources, environmental pollution, invasion of alien species and climate change, posing a serious threat to the survival of humankind and to sustainable development.
46. Therefore, urgent actions needed to be taken to halt and reverse the trend of biodiversity loss and put nature on the road to recovery. The Chinese government had firmly established and practiced the concept that lucid waters and lush mountains are invaluable assets, adhering to respect for nature, conformity to nature and protection of nature, actively promoting the construction of an ecological civilization and the protection of biodiversity, and taking measure to improve China's biodiversity conservation.
47. The mountains in the Greater Shennongjia Area (GSA), especially at lower elevations, were under the pressures of conversion of forest to agriculture, hunting and collection of wild plants and animals that resulted in significant losses of biodiversity. The loss of livelihoods due to the forestry ban and the motivation to local economic development in tourism, roads, mines, hydro-electric power and other efforts created additional pressures on forest-based ecosystem. The numbers of IAS were estimated at more than 56 species before 2018 and had led to large economic losses in agricultural and forestry sectors. Further, the shift towards increased conservation of forested lands had led to increased reported cases of conflicts between growing numbers of wildlife due to successful conservation efforts and human settlements around the GSA reserves.
48. The main barriers to strengthening of the efforts to conserve biodiversity and sustain ecosystem services in GSA consisted of:⁷
 - the absence of incorporating environmental and biodiversity considerations into the provincial development planning framework and processes;

⁷ Project Document

- an absence of tools and safeguards that reduce and mitigate external threats to nature reserves associated with poorly planned development activities both at provincial level and county level in GSA;
- relatively incipient efforts to date in addressing issues of IAS in particular in relation to the conservation of native biodiversity both within and outside of GSA nature reserves;
- the need to more readily identify and quantify in economic terms the “goods and services” provided by GSA nature reserves;
- the relatively low development level of many of GSA’s existing nature reserves;
- a significant absence of scientific data needed to manage GSA nature reserves; and
- the relatively low awareness of the importance of GSA biodiversity and the role that nature reserves play in its conservation (and the provision of other ecological “goods and services”).

Institutional context

49. To overcome these barriers, the Project “Expansion and Improvement of Biodiversity Conservation and Sustainable Use of Natural Resources in the Greater Shennongjia Area (GSA), Hubei Province” (the Project) was developed by UNEP and implemented between 25/05/2018 and 31/05/2024. It was a full-size project, with \$2,657,534 from a GEF grant and \$15,091,805 in cofinancing from the local government. Initially approved by UNEP in May 2018, the Project was scheduled to run for 60 months, from May 2018 to May 2023. However, it extended to 72 months mainly due to the Covid-19 Pandemic. The project included a mid-term review, which was completed in June 2021, covering a project period from May 2018 to May 2021.
50. UNEP was the Implementing Agency, represented by the GEF Biodiversity and Land Degradation Unit of the Biodiversity and Land Branch, within the Ecosystems Division, while Hubei Provincial Forestry Department was the Executing Agency, who worked in the Project execution with the Project partners.
51. The Project significantly contributed to UNEP Current Subprogramme(s): Thematic: Nature action subprogramme with PoW Indicator(s): Nature: (iv) Increase in territory of land- and seascapes that is under improved ecosystem conservation and restoration and Nature: (v) Positive shift in public opinion, attitudes and actions in support of biodiversity and ecosystem approaches.
52. It was a GEF-5 project within the Biodiversity (BD) focal area. In particular, the Project contributed to BD Objective 1 “Improving the sustainability of protected areas systems” and objective 2 “Mainstreaming biodiversity conservation and sustainable use into production landscapes/seascapes and sectors”. The Project was under the responsibilities of the Land Degradation and Biodiversity Unit of the Biodiversity and Land Branch, within the Ecosystems Division.

B. Results Framework

53. The Project goal is to enhance (conservation) management effectiveness of National Nature Reserves (NNRs) in Hubei province, as well as the mainstreaming of biodiversity conservation and value of ecosystem services in economic development plans and sectors. The Project objective is to enhance biodiversity conservation and sustainable use of natural resources through the expansion and strengthening of the nature reserve network in the Greater Shennongjia Area, Hubei Province. Figure 1 illustrates the Project areas covering 7 nature reserves in the GSA.

the designated National Executing Agency (NEA), (ii) Ministry of Finance (MOF) the national GEF Focal Point and (iii) UNEP the GEF Implementing Agency (IA). In order to ensure a legal base for project implementation management and efficient and effective use of the project funds, a Project Cooperation Agreement (PCA) was signed between Department of Forestry in Hubei Province and UNEP.

56. UNEP, as GEF IA, was represented by the Ecosystems Division through its GEF Biodiversity and Land Degradation Unit, Biodiversity and Land Branch. UNEP regional offices in Bangkok provided support services upon request for project activities within the scope of the Project Document and work plan such as recruitment of international consultants, procurement, fund disbursements and periodic meetings with the EA.
57. The Executing Agency (EA) was the Hubei Provincial Forestry Department in collaboration with SNP. SNP had 14 divisions: General Office, Protection, Park, Policy, Planning, Finance, Forestry, Cooperation, Community, Education, Human Resource, Gender and Union, Audit, and Security. Among the 14 divisions, the Forestry Division, which acted as the Project (Field) Implementation Unit (PIU), was directly involved in the daily activities of the Project. Under each of the 6 NRs in the GSA, a PIU was also established to undertake the similar activities.
58. The Project comprised the following implementation structure with key partners to oversee management, oversight and coordination structures: (i) a Project Steering Committee (PSC) with strategic decision-making responsibilities; (ii) a Project Management Unit (PMU) located in Forestry Department of Hubei Province responsible for directing, supervising and coordinating project implementation; and (iii) a Field Implementing Unit (FIU) located in Shennongjia National Nature Reserve Management Bureau responsible for on the ground/on-site implementation of project activities (Figure 2).

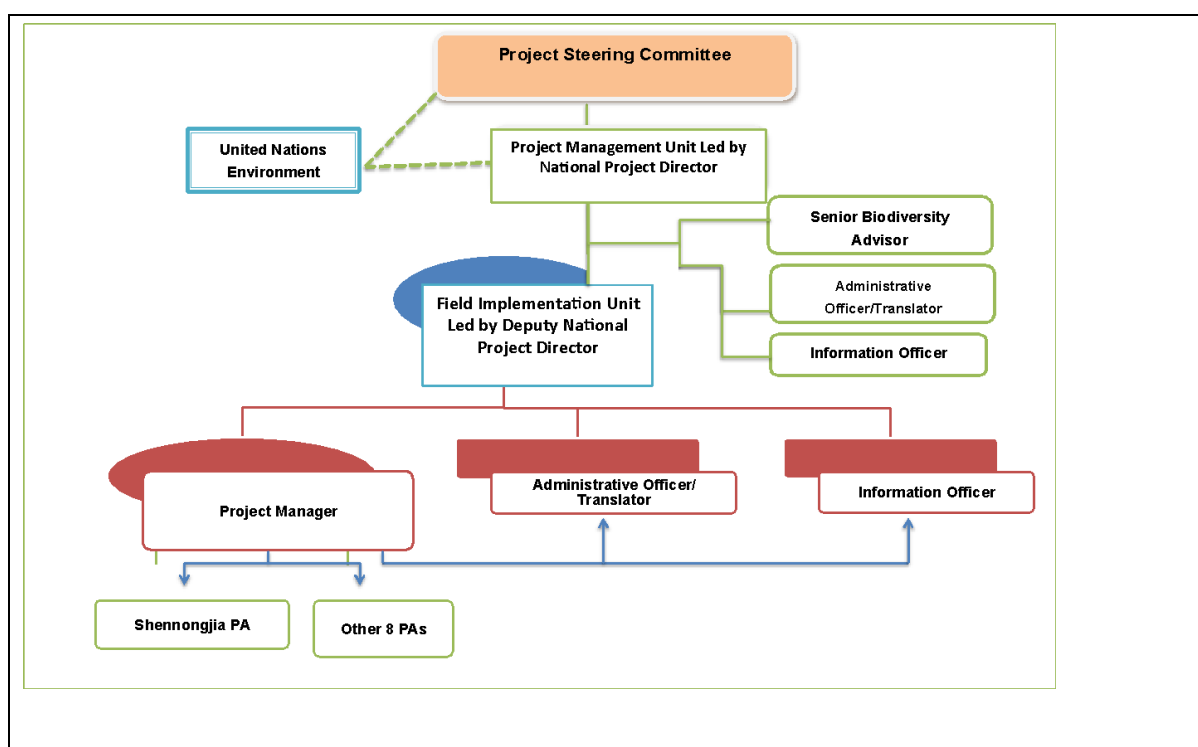


Figure 2: Organigram of the Project with key project key stakeholders

D. Stakeholders

59. UNEP was the implementing agency of this Global Environment Facility (GEF) Project. It ensured the consistency with GEF policies and procedures, and co-chaired the Project Steering Committee (PSC) that provided annual supervision of the Project. The role of the UNEP divisions or the Ecosystems Division, and Regional Office at the Asia Pacific had a strong interest. In fact, the Project was under the implementation of the Biodiversity and Land Degradation Unit of the Biodiversity and Land Branch, UNEP's Ecosystems Division.
60. Hubei Forestry Department (HFD), which acted as the executing agency, was the chair of the Steering committee. Through its decentralized services (or through Shennongjia Forestry District (SFD)), it played a vital institutional role to align national laws and policies to field level, as well as to monitor and control the Project implementation.
61. HFD was the line agency responsible for provincial forestry affairs with responsibilities including: (i) implementation of national laws, regulations and policies in support of forest resource management; (ii) overseeing the management of the province's forestry and ecological restoration; (iii) forest resources protection, supervision and management; (iv) organizing, coordinating, directing and supervising the work of the province's natural wetlands; (v) the protection, management and utilization of terrestrial wildlife resources; (vi) forest fire prevention; and (vii) the implementation of the ecological compensation system. HFD had 28 offices and divisions. In addition, it had 14 affiliated institutions before 2018.
62. Located in the northwestern part of Hubei Province, Shennongjia national Park (SNP) is among the 14 key areas of international significance in the world in bio-diversity conservation and research. It was responsible for protection, development and planning of the SGA covering the Projects sites.
63. Hubei Endangered Species Conservation Institute (Station) under HFD, which acted as the Project Management Unit (PMU), was responsible for managing the Project.
64. In addition to HFD, there was a large number of provincial and local institutions with responsibilities directly relevant to the project. These institutions included: Development and Reform Commission, Department of Finance, other main-line sector agencies such as Departments for Agriculture, Nature Resources, Water, Environmental Protection, Tourism, local government and civil society organizations.
65. Further, the key players also included Academic and Scientific Organizations, local communities, other government agencies, and indigenous People who were operating on the sites. These entities included the ecological corridor restoration sites, patrolling station of Shennongjia National Park, ecological monitoring stations, and field monitoring plots, Guanmenshan Botanical Garden, Guanmenshan Biodiversity Information Centre, Academy of Forestry, and Communications.

E. Changes in design during implementation

66. As indicated in the Project Identification Table, the expected start date was changed from 24/12/2015 to 25/05/2018. The GEF CEO Approval date was 24 December 2015, however, there were delays experienced in effecting the PCA agreement which was signed 30 months later on 25 May 2018, limiting the project's ability to fully capitalize on opportunities identified during the design process. In addition, the protected areas were updated from 8 nature reserves to 1 national park and 6 nature reserves, totalling 7 NRs.
67. For the 3 components, only Component 3 was updated from "Environmental Education & Communication" to "Education, Awareness & Communication".

F. Project financing

68. This FSP project was financed through a GEF grant for US\$2,657,534 with US\$15,091,805 from co-financing for a total of USD US\$17,749,339. The co-financing project budget was both cash (US\$10,279,105 or 58% of the total budget) from Hubei Bureau of Finance (BOF) and Shennongjia Forestry District (SFD); and in-kind (US\$4,812,700 or 27% of the total budget) from Hubei Bureau of Finance (BOF) and UNEP.
69. The total project expenditure amounted to US\$18,605,911.75, of which US\$2,050,059.75 (11%) was from a GEF grant and US\$16,555,852 (89%) from co-financing. As noted in Table 3 below, the secured co-financing was both cash (US\$14,587,995 or 78% of total project expenditure) and in-kind (US\$1,967,857 or 11% of total project cost). The secured co-financing came mainly from Hubei BOF and SFD.
70. It was noted that the total secured co-financing (US\$16,738,117) was US\$1,646,312 above planned co-financing (US\$15,091,805). The secured cash co-financing (US\$14,587,995) was US\$4,308,890 above planned cash co-financing (US\$10,279,105) while secured in-kind co-financing (US\$2,150,122) was USD 2,662,578 below planned co-financing (4,812,700), suggesting both the strong commitment of the partners who provided additional cash co-financing and their difficulty in sourcing in-kind co-financing.

Table 3: Co-financing table (GEF projects only)

Co-financing (Type/Source)	UNEP own Financing (US\$1,000)		Government Hubei Bureau of Finance (BOF) (US\$1,000)		Other* Shennongjia Forestry District (SFD) (US\$1,000)		Total (US\$1,000)		Total Disbursed (US\$1,000)
	Planned	Actual	Planned	Actual	Planned	Actual	Planned	Actual	
- Grants			1,628, 950	5,776, 551	8,650, 155	8,811, 444	10,279 ,105	14,587 ,995	14,587,995
- Loans									
- Credits									
- Equity investments									
- In-kind support	182,26 5	0	4,630, 435	1,967, 857			4,812, 700	1,967, 857	1,967,857
- Other (*) -									
Totals							15,091 ,805	16,738 ,117	16,555,852

* This refers to contributions mobilized for the project from other multilateral agencies, bilateral development cooperation agencies, NGOs, the private sector and beneficiaries.

CONFIRMED SOURCES OF Co-FINANCING FOR THE PROJECT BY NAME AND BY TYPE

Sources of Co-financing	Name of Co-financier	Type of Cofinancing	Investment Mobilized	Amount (\$) at CEO	Amount (\$) at MTR	Amount (\$) at TE
Local government	Hubei provincial department of finance	Cash		1,628,950	5776551	\$5,776,551
Local government	Hubei provincial department of finance	In-Kind		4,630,435	1967857	\$1,967,857
Local government	Shennongjia Forestry District	Cash		8,650,155	8811444	\$8,811,444
GEF Agency	UNEP	In-kind		182,265	0	0
Total Co-financing				15,091,805		16,555,852

II. REVIEW METHODS

A. UNEP's Review Approach

71. An external consultant (herein after referred to as the consultant) conducted the Project Terminal Review between May and September 2025 under the management and oversight of the Biodiversity and Land Degradation Unit of UNEP, based in Bangkok. The review was undertaken by following the methodology as indicated in the Terms of Reference.
72. In accordance with the UNEP Evaluation Policy, the UNEP Evaluation Manual and GEF Guidelines for Conducting Terminal Evaluations of Full-Size Projects, this terminal review employed a set of review criteria regrouped in nine categories : (i) strategic relevance; (ii) quality of project design; (iii) nature of external context; (iv) effectiveness, which comprises assessments of the availability of outputs, achievement of outcomes and likelihood of impact; (v) financial management; (vi) efficiency; (vii) monitoring and reporting; (viii) sustainability; and (ix) factors affecting project performance.
73. All review criteria were rated on a six-point scale: Highly Satisfactory (HS); Satisfactory (S); Moderately Satisfactory (MS); Moderately Unsatisfactory (MU); Unsatisfactory (U); Highly Unsatisfactory (HU). Sustainability and Likelihood of Impact were rated from Highly Likely (HL) down to Highly Unlikely (HU) and Nature of External Context was rated from Highly Favourable (HF) to Highly Unfavourable (HU). The ratings against each criterion were 'weighted' to derive the Overall Project Performance Rating. The greatest weight was assigned to the achievement of outcomes, followed by sustainability. The UNEP Evaluation Office has developed detailed descriptions of the main elements required to be demonstrated at each level (i.e. Highly Satisfactory to Highly Unsatisfactory) for each review criterion. The consultant has taken into account all the evidence gathered during the review in relation to this matrix in order to generate performance ratings.
74. The terminal review adopted a participatory and consultative approach ensuring close involvement with the key stakeholders. The consultant kept the implementing agency (UNEP) and the executing agencies (HFD) informed of the progress throughout the review period. The consultant interviewed the key project stakeholders such as the project implementing teams, country officers and other major stakeholders, such as government agencies in the province. This process is shown in Figure 1.
75. In addition to the 9 review criteria outlined above, this terminal review addressed two types of questions:
76. First, the questions which are of interest to UNEP and to which the Project will make an important contribution. These questions are incorporated in Annex II.
77. Second, as the findings from this review will be uploaded in the GEF Portal, 5 topics of interest to the GEF were incorporated in the appropriate parts of the report such as sections of findings and conclusions. These topics included: (i) performance against GEF's Core Indicator Targets; (ii) engagement of stakeholders; (iii) gender-responsive measures and gender result areas; (iv) implementation of management measures taken against the Safeguards Plan; and (v) challenges and outcomes regarding the Project's completed Knowledge Management Approach. This reviewer developed a review framework matrix question as presented in Annex II, which consisted of a set of questions based on the above review criteria set out in the TOR, the UNEP strategic questions and the specific requests from the GEF.
78. The main target audiences for the review findings were UNEP project and programme management, UNEP regional offices and various divisions (such as the Evaluation Office,

Ecosystems, Policy and Programmes, Communications, and others), MEAs Secretariats, current and potential donors, China's State Forestry Administration (SFA), Hubei Provincial Forestry Department (HFD) and other partners such as the marginalized communities in the Project. These communities include Dianziping Village, Wanchao NR; Qingtian Village, Luoyang Village and Hongju Village, Shennongjia National Park. The farmers in these villages suffered from reduced incomes due to declining cultivated land, prohibited herbs picking and animal hunting, and other activities. This review will also provide recommendations on biodiversity conservation, which is relevant globally, as this Project covers a special area to biodiversity conservation.

B. Data Collection

Primary data sources

79. A combination of methods and tools were employed during the review to collect the data/information necessary to answer all questions in Annex II in an evidence-based manner and complete this report. These were illustrated in five phases in Figure 3.

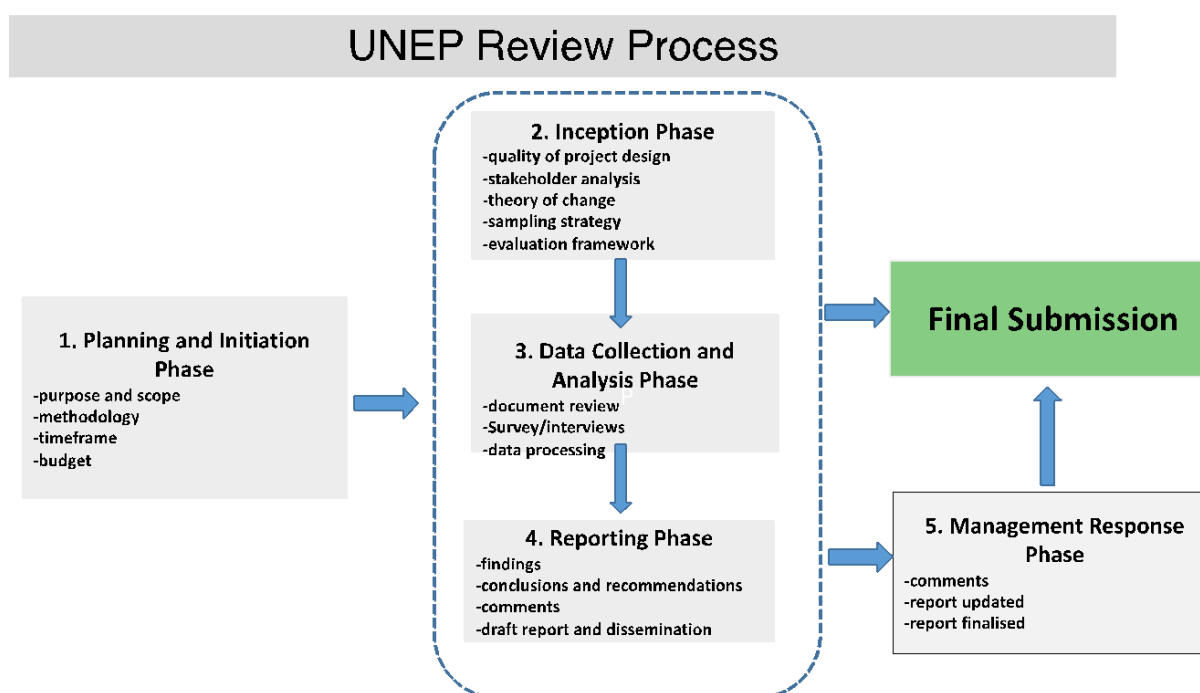


Figure 3: Terminal Review Process

80. During planning and initiation (Phase 1), the consultant reviewed the TOR and other documents provided by UNEP. The consultant started planning for the terminal review under the defined evaluation purpose, scope, methodology, timeframe and budget in the TOR.
81. During inception (Phase 2), the consultant prepared the Inception Report, which included initial review of project materials, assessment of the quality of Project design, stakeholder analysis, review and validation of theory of change (Toc), and establishment of sampling strategy and evaluation framework. In particular, the consultant undertook an initial review of key project documents, including the Project Document (PD), Project reports (half year and annual), Mid-Term Review, and relevant guidelines. The consultant also had the meetings and regular communication with the Task Managers (TM) and

project management teams to clarify the details. The consultant assessed the quality of the Project design using the Evaluation Office's standard template, with a formal rating of the PD's key aspects. During this phase, the consultant also assessed the stakeholders, and reconstructed the Theory of Change based on the results framework in the PD. Finally, the consultant completed the main elements of the review framework, including draft data collection tools and the review framework (Annex II).

82. During data collection and analysis (Phase 3): the consultant conducted interviews and undertook a country mission to collect the data for the review. The consultant conducted a series of semi-structured interviews with the stakeholders from UNEP in May 2025 in advance of the country mission – the previous Task Managers (TM) of the Project and her assistants. These interviews were conducted through a virtual tool. The exchange with the PMU focused on preparing the mission through exchanging emails and WeChat (similar to X in the US). The PMU/PIU teams provided a list of stakeholders to be potentially contacted. After discussions with the PMU/PIU teams, the consultant established a number of key stakeholders to be interviewed during the field mission (e.g., implementing partners, GEF focal point, and stakeholders in the Project sites).
83. The country mission took place between 6 and 12 July 2025. The country itinerary, the sites to be visited and the people to be met were determined by the consultant in discussions with the PMU/PIU. The sites were determined based on five criteria: 1) the ecological diversity (different forest landscapes); 2) the type of interventions (plants and/or on animals); 3) the management diversity (national park, nature reserve (NR), or zoo); 4) the types of communities supported (kinds of damages and compensation); and 5) their accessibility (e.g. possibility to meet different stakeholders and easy access). The consultant visited 3 NRs physically and interviewed all key stakeholders including local authorities, beneficiaries (including gender and marginalised beneficiaries), and implementing partners in the Shennongjia National Park and the key PIU teams from 7 NRs. During the field visits, there was a meeting with the Project implementing teams from the 4 NRs where the consultant was not able to visit. During the field mission, the consultant was accompanied by 2 staff from the PMU and 3 staff from the PIU. A detailed itinerary including dates, location, transport and agenda is presented in Annex V.
84. The people from different groups were selected based on their connections to the Project. For the people listed as project partners, the people were selected for having specialist knowledge of the Project in a purposeful manner. For the beneficiaries, the people were selected based on the location where the villagers suffered from wildlife damages due to the Project or the villagers received support from the Project.
85. The data collection tool in Table 1 presents how the different groups were consulted (e.g. during a field mission, in face-to-face meetings or through virtual interviews) and whether they were consulted individually or in groups (e.g. focus group discussion, at a conference/workshop, or through online interviews etc.).
86. The sampling strategy included interviews/surveys with the key groups involved in the Project implementation, such as the Project implementation Units, Project management unit, the executing agency, the Project partners, the direct beneficiaries (villagers involved in the Project locally) and the indirect beneficiaries (villagers not involved in the Project but connected to it). As shown in Table 4, for each group, the data needed included how many people were part of these groups, how many were contacted (by gender) and how many were responded (by gender).

Table 4: Respondents' Sample

Type of group		# people involved (M/F)	# people contacted (M/F)	# respondent (M/F)	% respondent
Implementing agency	UNEP	1/1	1/1	1/1	100
Executing agency	Hubei Provincial Forestry Department (PSC)	2/3	2/3	2/3	100
Project Supporting Divisions at HFD	Division of Finance Division of Wildlife and Wetland Division of NR Division of Science and Foreign Affaire	0/4	0/4	0/4	100
Project Management Unit	Endangered Species Conservation	2/3	2/3	2/3	100
Project Implementing Unit	Shennongjia National Park	0/4	0/4	0/4	100
Project Implementing Unit	Other 6 Nature Reserves	5/13	5/13	5/13	100
Project partner 1	Technical Group outside Shennongjia National Park: Huazhong Agricultural University, China Minzu University, and Chinese Academy of Science	0/4	0/4	0/4	100
Project partner 2	Technical Group, inside Shennongjia National Park: Research Institute, Lab, Patrolling Stations, Monitoring Stations, Surveillant Focal Point, and Animal Protection	2/10	2/10	2/10	100
Project partner 3	Local Communities and indigenous People	2/8	2/8	2/8	100

Strategies for inclusivity

87. In order to maximize response rates and reach all key beneficiaries, the TR held consultations with a number of different stakeholders, including the marginalized communities in the Project. These communities include Dianziping Village, Wanchao NR; Qingtian Village, Luoyang Village and Hongju Village, Shennongjia National Park. The farmers in these villages suffered from reduced incomes due to declining cultivated land, prohibited herbs picking and animal hunting, and other activities.

Secondary data sources

88. The TR included a systematic review of all the relevant project documents (complete list provided in Annex IV), as follows: Project Document (GEF ID 4865); Project design documents and committee meeting minutes; Progress and financial reports, partner submissions, Project Implementation Reviews (PIRs), tracking tools, and output documentation (e.g., publications, action plans); Annual work plans, budgets, and revisions to the logical framework; Knowledge products and other project-generated material.

C. Data Analysis

89. As soon as the data had been collected through the document review, virtual interviews and emails, in-country interviews and site visits, the validation was arranged based on the criteria and review questions as presented in Annex II. In case that the data/information from the three types of collection methods demonstrated complementarity, the data was used directly in the findings. In cases that the data/information did not match, additional interviews or consultations were conducted with relevant stakeholders or review of additional documentation, or through triangulation with other stakeholders and sources.
90. During reporting (Phase 4), the consultant derived the preliminary findings which were circulated among the UNEP's Ecosystems Division and the Project partners. These partners provided comments and these comments were included in the final report.
91. Then, the consultant developed a draft report and submitted it to the Task Manager at the Biodiversity and Land Degradation unit at the Ecosystems Division, who reviewed it and shared it with UNEP and Hubei Provincial Forestry Department. Finally, the consultant responded and updated the draft and submitted it to the Task Manager.
92. During the management response phase (Phase 5), the consultant received the comments from all stakeholders and finalised the Terminal Review Report.

D. Limitations and Mitigation Strategies

93. The review presented the limitations, as well as the measures taken to mitigate these constraints. Some potential limitations that affected the depth, completeness or representative nature of the data collected during the review include:
- The consultant only visited 3 NRs and was not able to verify all Project's outputs physically during the final review. There might be a risk regarding the inherent limitation of presenting all key stakeholder experiences as well as visual confirmation of the use of funds in those other sites.
 - The consultant was unable to meet with the GEF, the only donor to the Project. Without this meeting, the donor's opinions were not reflected in this report.

- In terms of scope, the final review was required to assess the results from the time of Project establishment. This might be difficult due to lack of institutional memory in the Mission such as staff rotation and turnover.
- Some interviews such as two former chief technical advisors during the mission did not materialise due to unavailability of people, which made it difficult to spend sufficient time with key informants or focus groups.
- The documents/information presented in the report that were familiar to the review team but less likely known to the reader were explicitly referenced by a footnote.

94. To address these limitations, the consultant broadened the range of documentation included in the desk review, including data and reports from the Government, United Nations agencies, donors, particularly the reports produced only in Chinese. The consultant expanded the horizon of the stakeholders and key informants to ensure coverage and diversity of views and triangulation of evidence from multiple sources. In addition, the consultant conducted extensive context analysis, as well as the virtual meetings with the technical advisor, MTR consultant and Project officer at the provincial level to discuss some of the emerging findings, check accuracy of evidence, and fill any data gaps.

E. Ethical Considerations

95. Throughout this review process and in the compilation of the Final Review Report, efforts have been made to represent the views of both mainstream and more marginalised groups. Data were collected with respect for ethics and human rights issues. All pictures were taken, and other information gathered after prior informed consent from people, all discussions remained anonymous, and all information was collected according to the UN 'Standards of Conduct'.

III. THEORY OF CHANGE AT REVIEW

96. The Theory of Change (TOC) illustrates the process of changes by presenting the causal pathways from outputs (availability of new products and services and/or gains in knowledge, abilities and awareness) through outcomes (as a change in institutions or behaviors, attitudes or conditions from the use of outputs by key stakeholders) through intermediate targets (changes beyond the Project outcomes necessary to achieve the impact) towards impact (long-lasting results arising, directly or indirectly from the outcomes/intermediate targets). The TOC identifies the main stakeholders involved and what roles they play. The change process between outputs to outcomes, to intermediate targets and impact may depend on certain conditions (assumptions, some beyond the control of the Project) or be facilitated by supporting actions or conditions (drivers that the Project can influence).
97. As the original Project Document (PD) did not include a TOC, the following abridged TOC was reconstructed based upon the results framework and information given in the Project Document. To develop a Theory of Change (ToC), the project objective defined in the original PD was used as the impact statement. In addition, 3 intermediate targets needed to be developed for each Component to show the relation between outcomes and impact. Table 5 presents the above procedures as applied to this project.

Table 5: Justification for Reformulation of Results Statements

Formulation in original project document(s)	Formulation for Reconstructed ToC at Review Inception (RTOC)	Justification for Reformulation
(LONG LASTING) IMPACT		
To enhance biodiversity conservation and sustainable use of natural resources through the expansion and strengthening of the protected area network in the GSA.		Unchanged
INTERMEDIATE STATES		
Not existing for component 1	Intermediate target 1 – Strengthened capacity building for Improved Development Planning	Not existing for Component 1 in the original document.
Not existing for component 2	Intermediate target 2 – Strengthened and Expanded GSA NR Network and Ecological Monitoring	Not existing for Component 2 in the original document.
Not existing for component 3	Intermediate target 3 – Improved Education, Awareness and Communication	Not existing for Component 3 in the original document.
PROJECT OUTCOMES		
Outcome 1 A. Improved policy and regulatory framework for development planning of production sectors in GSA	Unchanged	Unchanged
Outcome 1 B. Reduced impact to local biodiversity from invasive alien species (IAS) in the GSA	Unchanged	Unchanged

Outcome 2 A. Improved management effectiveness in existing GSA nature reserves	Unchanged	Unchanged
Outcome 2 B. Increased habitat integrity of areas under protection in the GSA	Unchanged	Unchanged
Outcome 2 C. Improved landscape-based species- and habitat protection through better planning, population monitoring and targeted actions in GSA	Unchanged	Unchanged
Outcome 3A. Improved capacity of provincial and local governments to conduct environmental education programs for promoting awareness of decision makers and the general public on the importance of protecting biodiversity and ecosystem services to sustainable development in GSA	Unchanged	Unchanged
Outcome 3B. Improved communications and enhanced awareness in GSA landscape of Hubei Province on biodiversity, ecosystems conservation and sustainable development	Unchanged	Unchanged

98. In the Project Document, the overall intervention logic and causal links from outputs to outcomes and to overall impact were generally clear. However, the causal pathway from Project outputs through outcomes towards impact was not so convincing. The three intermediate states were missing for each component to show the impact from outcomes to long-term impact and needed to be added in the TOC. The Project Document also did not include clear assumptions and drivers, which needed to be added in the TOC.
99. The general objective of the Project was to enhance biodiversity conservation and sustainable use of natural resources through the expansion and strengthening of the nature reserve network in the Greater Shennongjia Area, Hubei Province.
100. The underlying assumptions of the Project in the ToC were that 18 outputs would be achieved, as presented in Table 6.
101. The reconstructed abridged ToC is presented in Figure 4 with a narrative explanation below. It contains the logical flow from outputs to outcomes, intermediate targets and impact presented by arrows. It also shows that several outputs contribute towards achieving each of the three outcomes and these outcomes contribute to higher level results (intermediate targets and impact).

ToC Diagram

Figure 4. Theory of Change at Review

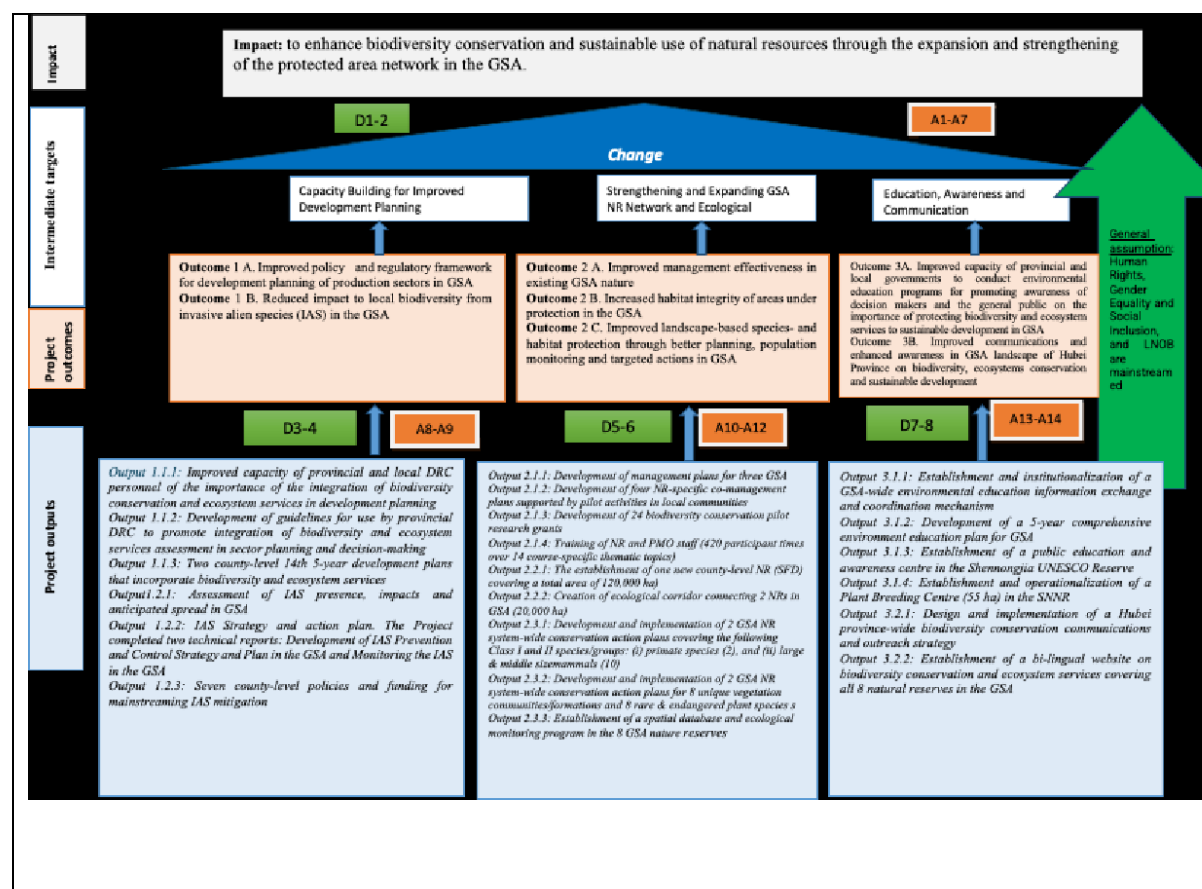


Table 6: Assumptions (A) and Drivers (D)

To translate Outcome to Impact through intermediate targets

A1: policy and regulatory framework has been integrated into development planning of production sectors in GSA.

A2: impact on the local biodiversity has been reduced due to protection against invasive alien species (IAS) in the GSA.

A3: management effectiveness in the existing GSA nature has been improved.

A4: habitat integrity of areas under protection has increased in the GSA.

A5: landscape-based species- and habitat protection have been improved.

A6: capacity of provincial and local governments in environmental education has been improved.

A7: communications have been improved and awareness has been enhanced.

D1: stable macroeconomic performance

D2: pilot national park policies issued by central government

To translate Outputs to Outcomes

Assumptions to achieve Outcome 1

A8: capacity of provincial and local DRC personnel, guidelines and 13th 5-year development plans have been established.
A9: assessment of IAS presence, impacts and anticipated spread has been completed and

Assumptions to achieve Outcome 2

A10: co-management plans, four NR-specific co-management contracts, 24 small-scale biodiversity conservation tools, and training of NR and PMO staff have been completed.
A11 one new county-level NR (SFD) and ecological corridor have been established.

seven county-level policies and funding have been established. D3: 14th 5-year development planning D4: a Species surveys implemented by HFD and HAD	A12: two landscape-based species conservation action plans, 2 GSA NR system-wide conservation action plans, and a spatial database and ecological monitoring program have been developed and implemented. D5: support from provincial governments across the region D6: support from multiple types of partners at all levels
Assumptions to achieve Outcome 3 A13: GSA-wide environmental education, a 5-year comprehensive environment education plan and a public education and awareness center have been established. A14: a Hubei province-wide biodiversity conservation communications and outreach strategy and a bi-lingual website on biodiversity conservation and ecosystem services have been established. D7: knowledge sharing mechanisms among local population D8: Innovative environmental education/training modalities	

102. There were three causal pathways from Project outputs through outcomes/ intermediate targets towards impact.

103. For the first pathway, there were six outputs:

Output 1.1.1: Improved capacity of provincial and local DRC personnel of the importance of the integration of biodiversity conservation and ecosystem services in development planning

Output 1.1.2: Development of guidelines for use by provincial DRC to promote integration of biodiversity and ecosystem services assessment in sector planning and decision-making

Output 1.1.3: Two county-level 14th 5-year development plans that incorporate biodiversity and ecosystem services

Output 1.2.1: Assessment of IAS presence, impacts and anticipated spread in GSA

Output 1.2.2: IAS Strategy and action plan. The Project completed two technical reports: Development of IAS Prevention and Control Strategy and Plan in the GSA and Monitoring the IAS in the GSA

Output 1.2.3: Seven county-level policies and funding for mainstreaming IAS mitigation

104. After the assumptions below were met:

A8: capacity of provincial and local DRC personnel, guidelines and 13th 5-year development plans have been established; and

A9: assessment of IAS presence, impacts and anticipated spread has been complete and seven county-level policies and funding have been established.

105. Then Outcome 1.A and Outcome 1B below will be achieved:

Outcome 1 A. Improved policy and regulatory framework for development planning of production sectors in GSA

Outcome 1 B. Reduced impact to local biodiversity from invasive alien species (IAS) in the GSA

106. For the second pathway, there were nine outputs:

Output 2.1.1: Development of management plans for three GSA

Output 2.1.2: Development of four NR-specific co-management plans supported by pilot activities in local communities
Output 2.1.3: Development of 24 biodiversity conservation pilot research grants
Output 2.1.4: Training of NR and PMO staff (420 participant times over 14 course-specific thematic topics)
Output 2.2.1: The establishment of one new county-level NR (SFD) covering a total area of 120,000 ha)
Output 2.2.2: Creation of ecological corridor connecting 2 NRs in GSA (20,000 ha)
Output 2.3.1: Development and implementation of 2 GSA NR system-wide conservation action plans covering the following Class I and II species/groups: (i) primate species (2), and (ii) large & mid-size mammals (10)
Output 2.3.2: Development and implementation of 2 GSA NR system-wide conservation action plans for 8 unique vegetation communities/formations and 8 rare & endangered plant species
Output 2.3.3: Establishment of a spatial database and ecological monitoring program in the 8 GSA nature reserves

107. After the assumptions below were met:

A10: co-management plans, four NR-specific co-management contracts, 24 small-scale biodiversity conservation tools, and training of NR and PMO staffs have been completed;

A11: one new county-level NR (SFD) and ecological corridor have been established; and

A12: two landscape-based species conservation action plans, 2 GSA NR system-wide conservation action plans, and a spatial database and ecological monitoring program have been developed and implemented.

108. Then Outcome 2 A., 2B. and 2C. below will be achieved:

Outcome 2 A. Improved management effectiveness in existing GSA nature reserves;
 Outcome 2 B. Increased habitat integrity of areas under protection in the GSA ; and
 Outcome 2 C. Improved landscape-based species- and habitat protection through better planning, population monitoring and targeted actions in GSA.

109. For the third pathway, there were six outputs:

Output 3.1.1: Establishment and institutionalization of a GSA-wide environmental education information exchange and coordination mechanism
Output 3.1.2: Development of a 5-year comprehensive environmental education plan for GSA
Output 3.1.3: Establishment of a public education and awareness centre in the Shennongjia UNESCO Reserve
Output 3.1.4: Establishment and operationalization of a Plant Breeding Centre (55 ha) in the SNNR
Output 3.2.1: Design and implementation of a Hubei province-wide biodiversity conservation communications and outreach strategy
Output 3.2.2: Establishment of a bi-lingual website on biodiversity conservation and ecosystem services covering all 8 natural reserves in the GSA.

110. After the assumptions below were met:

A13: GSA-wide environmental education, a 5-year comprehensive environment education plan and a public education and awareness center have been established; and

A14: a Hubei province-wide biodiversity conservation communications and outreach strategy and a bi-lingual website on biodiversity conservation and ecosystem services have been established.

111. Then Outcome 3 A. and 3B. below will be achieved:

Outcome 3A. Improved capacity of provincial and local governments to conduct environmental education programs for promoting awareness of decision makers and the general public on the importance of protecting biodiversity and ecosystem services to sustainable development in GSA.

Outcome 3B. Improved communications and enhanced awareness in GSA landscape of Hubei Province on biodiversity, ecosystems conservation and sustainable development.

112. Through intermediate target (IT) 1, intermediate target 2 and intermediate target 3 below:

IT1: Strengthened capacity building for Improved Development Planning; and

IT2: Strengthened and Expanded GSA NR Network and Ecological Monitoring.

IT3: Education, Awareness and Communication

113. The impact below will be realised:

To enhance biodiversity conservation and sustainable use of natural resources through the expansion and strengthening of the protected area network in the GSA.

114. The pathway from Project outcome to intermediate states and long-term impact was also supported by 8 drivers (see the green D text in Table 6 and Figure 4).

IV. REVIEW FINDINGS

115. This chapter presents the key findings of the TR based on the main review criteria.

A. Strategic Relevance

Alignment to UNEP's UNEP Medium Term Strategy⁸ (MTS), Programme of Work (POW) and Strategic Priorities

116. The Project was aligned with UNEP's Medium-Term Strategies (MTS), Programmes of Work (PoWs), and strategic priorities across two MTS cycles (2018-2021 and 2022-2025). This alignment was achieved by addressing the core UNEP priorities in healthy and productive ecosystems, environmental governance, climate change, and nature action.

117. For MTS 2018-2021, the Project contributed directly to the healthy and productive ecosystems, particularly through the following expected accomplishments (EA) and PoW indicators for 2018-2019 and 2020-2021:

- I. EA (a) (i) (ii): The health and productivity of marine, freshwater and terrestrial ecosystems are institutionalized in education, monitoring and cross-sector and transboundary collaboration frameworks at the national and international levels.
- II. EA (b) (i) (ii): Policymakers in the public and private sectors test the inclusion of the health and productivity of ecosystems in economic decision-making.

118. The project was aligned with the following PoW Outputs under PoW 2018-19 and PoW 2020-2021:

- I.1. Technical assistance and partnerships to establish indicators for biodiversity and ecosystem functioning and monitoring of key issues that have an impact on ecosystem functioning and ecosystem productivity
- I.2. Technical assistance and partnerships on effective conservation measures and monitoring thereof (ecosystem management, ecological representativeness and connectivity)

119. Under MTS 2022-2025 and PoW 2022-2025, the project was relevant to UNEP's Nature action subprogramme, particularly through PoW Indicator(s):

Nature: (iv) Increase in territory of land- and seascapes that is under improved ecosystem conservation and restoration

Nature: (v) Positive shift in public opinion, attitudes and actions in support of biodiversity and ecosystem approaches

120. The Project's goal was to enhance (conservation) management effectiveness of National Nature Reserves (NNRs) in Hubei province, as well as the mainstreaming of biodiversity conservation and value of ecosystem services in economic development plans and sectors. This goal was designed to fulfill UNEP's strategic vision: tackling climate change, biodiversity and nature loss, and pollution and waste from 2022–2025.

121. The Project was in line with the Bali Strategic Plan (BSP) and South-South Cooperation (SSC) by supporting Hubei Province in addressing environmental challenges and needs through capacity building, knowledge-sharing, and institutional strengthening. However,

⁸ UNEP's Medium-Term Strategy (MTS) is a document that guides UNEP's programme planning over a four-year period. It identifies UNEP's thematic priorities, known as Sub-programmes (SP), and sets out the desired outcomes, known as Expected Accomplishments (EAs), of the Sub-programmes. <https://www.unenvironment.org/about-un-environment/evaluation-office/our-evaluation-approach/un-environment-documents>.

clearer articulation of SSC mechanisms and specific outcomes in the Project design would have reinforced this alignment. For example, Output 2.3.1, Output 2.3.2 and Output 2.3.3 had the potential to foster SSC by promoting a collaborative approach to shared environmental challenges and solutions.⁹

122. In general, the Project was aligned with UNEP's mandate and thematic priorities as presented in the MTS cycles 2018-2021 and 2022-2025, as well as their respective PoWs (2018-2019, 2020-2021, and 2022-2025). The Project was relevant to UNEP's BSP and SSC policies. Alignment was also identified for PoW Expected Accomplishment indicators (2018-2019 and 2020-2021) and Nature action subprogramme indicators (2022-2025). Despite limited evidence, Output 2.3.1, Output 2.3.2 and Output 2.3.3 were instrumental in promoting UNEP's knowledge products.

Rating for Alignment to UNEP MTS, POW and Strategic Priorities: Highly Satisfactory.

Alignment to Donor/GEF/Partners Strategic Priorities

123. The Project was aligned with the GEF-5 Focal Area strategies on Biodiversity, particularly its objective 1: "Improving the sustainability of protected areas systems" and objective 2: "Mainstreaming biodiversity conservation and sustainable use into production landscapes/seascapes and sectors".¹⁰
124. The Project was in line with one of Chinese government's priority: Improving the Ecosystem, under Chapter 37, 14th Five-Year Plan (2021-2025) for National Economic and Social Development and Vision 2035 of the People's Republic of China, National Ecosystem Protection and Development Plan for 2021-2035, National Forestry Nature Reserve Development Plan (2006-2030), and China's National Biodiversity Strategy and Action Plan (NBSAP) for the period 2011-2030.
125. The Project was consistent with the objectives to reach the peak of carbon emissions by 2030 and to achieve carbon neutrality by 2060 as indicated in the 14th Five-Year Plan (2021-2025) for National Economic and Social Development and Vision 2035 of the People's Republic of China.
126. The project significantly contributed to UNDAF Outcome 1: Government institutions and other stakeholders ensure environmental sustainability, address climate change, and promote a green, low carbon economy; and specifically its Outcome 1.2 'Better managing natural resources' through Government capacity to conserve biodiversity and ecosystems is enhanced, and communities are empowered to increasingly benefit from the development of eco-based livelihood resources.

Rating for Alignment to Donor/GEF/Partners Strategic Priorities: Highly Satisfactory.

Relevance to Global, Regional, Sub-regional and National Priorities

127. The Project was relevant for global sustainable priorities: SDG 15 Life on land: Protect, restore and promote sustainable use of terrestrial ecosystems, sustainably manage

⁹ Output 2.3.1: Development and implementation of two landscape-based species conservation action plans and Output 2.3.3: Establishment of a spatial database and ecological monitoring program.

¹⁰ GEF-5 Biodiversity Strategy

forests, combat desertification, and halt and reverse land degradation and halt biodiversity loss; and especially targets:

- 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;
 - 15.2 By 2020, promote the implementation of sustainable management of all types of forests, halt deforestation, restore degraded forests and substantially increase afforestation and reforestation globally;
 - 15.4 By 2030, ensure the conservation of mountain ecosystems, including their biodiversity, to enhance their capacity to provide benefits that are essential for sustainable development;
 - 15.8 By 2020, introduce measures to prevent the introduction and significantly reduce the impact of invasive alien species on land and water ecosystems and control or eradicate the priority species; and
 - 15.9 By 2020, integrate ecosystem and biodiversity values into national and local planning, development processes, poverty reduction strategies and accounts.
128. The interviews and consultations suggested that the Project's objectives were well-aligned with national environmental priorities, particularly in addressing (conservation) management effectiveness of National Nature Reserves (NNRs) as well as the mainstreaming of biodiversity conservation and value of ecosystem services in economic development plans and sectors. The Project provided the governments with additional resources to develop and strengthen the capacity-building in management effectiveness, biodiversity conservation and value of ecosystem services in economic development plans and sectors. The Project was formulated based on a detailed review of issues, needs, and capacity gaps of the GSA.
129. The Project was a response to capacity challenges and needs that were initially identified as barriers in the PD:¹¹
- an absence of tools and safeguards that reduce and mitigate external threats to nature reserves associated with poorly planned development activities both at provincial level and county level in GSA;
 - relatively incipient efforts to date in addressing issues of IAS in particular in relation to the conservation of native biodiversity both within and outside of GSA nature reserves;
 - the need to more readily identify and quantify in economic terms the “goods and services” provided by GSA nature reserves;
 - the relatively low development level of many of GSA’s existing nature reserves;
 - a significant absence of scientific data needed to manage GSA nature reserves; and
 - the relatively low awareness of the importance of GSA biodiversity and the role that nature reserves play in its conservation (and the provision of other ecological “goods and services”).
130. The Project was relevant for global biodiversity priorities as set out by the CBD. At the regional and sub-regional levels, the Project intended to strengthen biodiversity-related capacity by supporting the frameworks like the Strategic Plan for Biodiversity 2011–2020 and its successor, the post-2020 Global Biodiversity Framework.

¹¹ Project Document

131. However, the evidence from document review and consultations indicated that the Project focused more on implementing subnational-level decisions, and less on global, regional and national level cooperation, thereby limiting its overall impact. As the national priorities were not detailed for the province and the county, they were not incorporated in the Project results framework, which tailored project implementation to specific national contexts in collaboration with UNEP Regional Office and county partners although National Ecosystem Protection and Development Plan, National Forestry Nature Reserve Development Plan, and National Biodiversity Strategy and Action Plan (NBSAP) were central to guide the implementation of all biodiversity-related conventions and promoting synergy across them.

Rating for Relevance to Global, Regional, Sub-regional and National Priorities: Satisfactory.

Complementarity with Existing Interventions/Coherence

132. The project complemented the GEF-funded initiatives that existed at the time of Project preparation and/or would coincide during implementation. As shown in Table 7, there are several planned, on-going and completed GEF-funded initiatives focusing on biodiversity conservation in China. These projects were initially reviewed during the Project preparation phase so as to ensure no overlaps. In particular, the UNDP-GEF Project (Strengthening the Management Effectiveness of the Wetland Natural Reserve System Project) that was also being implemented by Hubei's Provincial Forestry Department with activities related to strengthening provincial capacities for conservation management was planned and implemented by the same PMU/PIU jointly to avoid duplication and enhance synergy.

Table 7: GEF-funded and other donors' projects during the design phase

GEF ID	GEF Focal Area	Project type	Project Title	Status (as of GEF PMIS 12/31/2013)
2435	Biodiversity	FSP	CBPF Priority Institutional Strengthening and Capacity Development to Implement the China Biodiversity Partnership and Framework for Action	Ongoing
2634	Biodiversity	FSP	Guangxi Integrated Forestry Development and Biodiversity Conservation	Completed
3465	Biodiversity	FSP	CBPF: Conservation and Sustainable Use of Biodiversity in the Headwaters of the Huaihe River	Ongoing
3706	Biodiversity	MSP	CBPF: Emergency Biodiversity Conservation Measures for the Recovery and Reconstruction of Wenchuan Earthquake Hit Regions in Sichuan Province	Completed

3864	Biodiversity	FSP	CBPF: Strengthening Globally Important Biodiversity Conservation Through Protected Area Strengthening in Gansu Province	Ongoing
4823	Biodiversity	FSP	CBPF-MSL: Strengthening the management effectiveness of the wetland protected area system in Hubei Province	Ongoing
	Biodiversity	GIZ	China Wetland Biodiversity Protection	Completed
	Forestry	German Government	German Government Loan Project: Forestry Management Project in Dawu, Anlu, Yicheng, Zhongxiang and Shayang County of Hubei Province	Ongoing

133. Other non-GEF projects in Table 7 were also reviewed to ensure whether their interventions complemented with the Project. These projects included GIZ funded Wetland Biodiversity Protection Project implemented by State Forestry Administration (completed), the EU-China Biodiversity Program (ECBP) (completed), and German Government Leon Project (Forestry Management Project in Dawu, Anlu, Yicheng, Zhongxiang and Shayang County of Hubei Province) (ongoing during the Project implementation). These projects supported the environmental impact assessment and linked biodiversity considerations with the land use planning process. The results of these projects provided an important basis to support the implementation of the Project. Consequently, both internal and external coherences were ensured.

134. The Project did not seek out complementarity with any GEF-funded initiative or donor funded projects that came about after the start of the Project but did coordinate with several domestic non-GEF initiatives.

Rating for Complementarity with Existing Interventions/Coherence: Satisfactory

Rating for Strategic Relevance: Satisfactory

B. Quality of Project Design

135. Overall, the Project Design Quality (PDQ) scores “moderately satisfactory”. The overall and specific ratings are provided in Table 8.

136. The scoring processing is detailed in the Inception Report by referencing the Project Document and other documents. This rating is based on the elements of Operating Context, Project Preparation, Strategic Relevance, Intended Results and Causality, Results Framework and Monitoring, Governance and Supervision Arrangements, Partnerships, Learning, Communication and Outreach, Financial Planning / Budgeting, Efficiency, Risk identification and Social Safeguards, Sustainability / Replication and Catalytic Effects, and Identified Project Design Weaknesses/Gaps. Through this rating, it was found that a formal ToC was not constructed, and outcomes needed to be updated with intermediate targets and overall impacts that needed to be defined. The section below provides the main strengths and weaknesses of the Project design.

Table 8: Overall quality of project design score

	Section	Select Rating	Score ¹²	Weighting	Total
A	Operating Context	HS	5.3	0.4	0.21
B	Project Preparation	HS	5.3	1.2	0.63
C	Strategic Relevance	S	5	0.8	0.4
D	Intended Results and Causality	S	5	1.6	0.8
E	Logical Framework and Monitoring	S	4.6	0.8	0.37
F	Governance and Supervision Arrangements	HS	5.3	0.4	0.21
G	Partnerships	S	5	0.8	0.4
H	Learning, Communication and Outreach	MS	4.3	0.4	0.17
I	Financial Planning / Budgeting	S	5	0.4	0.2
J	Efficiency	S	4.5	0.8	0.36
K	Risk Identification and Safeguards Effects	MS	3.7	0.8	0.29
L	Sustainability / Replication and Catalytic	S	3.7	1.2	0.56
M	Identified Project Design Weaknesses / Gaps	MS	4	0.4	0.16
Total Weighted Score			4.77		

137. The main strengths include: (a) The challenging operating context, covering conflict between conservation human resettlement, climate change, was well identified. (b) The preparation was adequate as the Project Document had an extensive analysis of the problems and gaps, stakeholders, and consultations. In addition, Project Document considered human rights, gender equality and other cross-cutting issues. (c) The Project was relevant to GEF strategic priorities (i) Biodiversity 1: Improving the sustainability of protected areas systems; and (ii) Biodiversity 2: Mainstreaming biodiversity conservation and sustainable use into production landscapes/seascapes and sectors, (iii) national and local priorities for biodiversity conservation. (d) The intended results and causality clearly described the causal pathways from Project outputs through outcomes towards impact. (e) The results framework and M&E framework captured some (not all) key elements of the ToC and provided a set of SMART indicators with baseline and target values for each outcome, and was generally appropriate for management and implementation at the outcome level. (f) The Project governance and supervision structure was comprehensive, clear and appropriate for implementation. (g) The Project

¹² Rating scores: 6=highly satisfactory (>5.16), 5=satisfactory (>4.33-5.16), 4=moderately satisfactory (>3.5-4.33), 3=moderately unsatisfactory (>2.66-3.5), 2=unsatisfactory (>1.83-2.66), 1=highly unsatisfactory (<1.83).

had a clear and adequate knowledge management approach, and identified appropriate methods for communication with key stakeholders, including gendered/minority groups.

138. The main weaknesses included: (a) There was no formal Theory of Change (ToC) with underlying assumptions and drivers. (b) A set of intermediate targets needed to be added to establish a good ToC. (c) The work plan was not well designed and did not provide sufficient details for planning and implementation. (d) Both the results framework and M&E framework did not capture outputs, which were the key elements of the ToC. (e) The Project was not appropriately designed/adapted in relation to the duration since it did not take into account the external shocks that might have impact on the timely delivery of Project outputs. (f) The value for money strategies was not mentioned in the Project Document. (g) Only some of the environmental, economic and social risks were identified and the related mitigation strategies were not adequate. (h) There was no “sustainability strategy” or “exit strategy” explicitly mentioned and detailed in the Project Document. (i) Although the gender mainstreaming issues were considered in the context, implementation, results frame, and the budget, the Project Document did not design special interventions to promote gender equality and women empowerment. (j) The results framework and M&E framework did not provide a set of indicators with baseline and target values for each output, and was not adequate for adaptive management and implementation.

Rating for Project Design: Moderately Satisfactory

C. Nature of the External Context

139. The COVID-19 pandemic was the crucial unexpected challenging factor that was likely to have an impact on the Project performance. Since the second quarter of 2020, the pandemic's impact on the project implementation had become obvious, including stopping staff and stakeholder travel and in-person meetings. The document review and consultations confirmed that the COVID-19 pandemic had a significantly negative impact on the project. The immediate result was the shift from in-person activities to virtual meetings and workshops, impacting the efficiency and effectiveness of the Project interventions.
140. In addition, the pandemic caused unnecessary delays in the review of key documents and delays in procurement and contracting, and thus further hampered the Project timelines and the timely delivery of the key outputs.
141. Hubei Provincial Government and Shennongjia Forestry District government underwent a restructuring with relocation of some key members in the Project Steering Committee and key staff in the PMUs/PIUs during Project implementation. The Project adapted by strengthening its relationships with national partners, by decentralizing work at local or district levels, and by relying on long-lasting partners.
142. There were internal community conflicts due to low standards of living and an economy of environmental predation. The Project simultaneously addressed both environmental conservation and local development through purchase of insurance; and avoided high likelihood of internal conflict at community level on governance and resource allocation. It also improved local livelihoods through income generating projects such as tea plantation, production and marketing.
143. The land conflicts were avoided as most of the land is registered as public owned, community owned or under transferred management to local communities' groups. The local populations were involved to ensure that customary rights were respected since the

government has released a series of regulations and policies to help local people to protect their interest.

144. In general, climate change and its variability did not impact the Project. Due to the nature of forest regeneration, the Project contributed to building resilience to climate change mitigation and adaptation. However, the ice storm in late 2023 was quite devastating at some sites in the GSA, destroying some bird ponds and some project infrastructure. In the GSA, some income generating activities such as agricultural and livestock production were destroyed. The Project mitigated this parameter by providing support where needed.
145. To address these challenges, the Project adopted the adaptation strategy of implementing one no-cost extension while focusing to some extent on virtual training and remote technical assistance. These measures resulted in the project being extended by one year (from 2023 to 2024).

Rating for Nature of the external context: Moderately Satisfactory

D. Effectiveness

Availability of Outputs

146. The fundamental assumption underlying the Project is that the outputs under three components in the form of capacity building for improved development planning, strengthening and expanding GSA NR network and ecological monitoring, and education awareness and communication, would contribute to the desired outcomes, which in turn contributed to ultimate impact. As such, the outputs need to be assessed from this cluster perspective. When the Project started on 25 May 2018, the central government initiated a national park programme and Shennongjia was one of 10 pilot nature reserves. At the same time, the central government and Hubei provincial government issued a series of policies related to National Parks. These provided an important basis for the Project implementation and were the crucial drivers to facilitate the contribution of all outputs to the intended outcomes and thus impact.
147. Output 1.1.1: Improved capacity of provincial and local DRC personnel of the importance of the integration of biodiversity conservation and ecosystem services in development planning. The Project consultants and PIU teams communicated frequently with the teams from the Hubei Provincial DRC, Baokang County DRC and Shennongjia Forest District DRC on the development planning. They also provided advice on biodiversity conservation and ecosystem services and how to mainstream these issues into the local 14th Five-Year Plans. The Project consultant and PIU teams were also heavily involved in revising the Five-Year Plans for Shennongjia Forestry District as well as Baokang County. Under the 14th Five-Year Plan (2021-2025) for National Economic and Social Development and Vision 2035 of Hubei Province, Chapter 4 provided a guideline on the implementation of biodiversity projects. In particular, Section 4 of Chapter 4 clearly indicated the support to the pilot national park programme and implementation of this UNEP/GEF Project.
148. Output 1.1.2: Development of guidelines for use by provincial DRC to promote integration of biodiversity and ecosystem services assessment in sector planning and decision-making. The Project developed a Technical Report on Biodiversity Mainstreaming in the Government Development Planning based on the requirements in the Project Document, which provided a guideline for mainstreaming the biodiversity and ecosystem services into the sector plans such as the plans in the provincial Ecological and Environmental Department, Agriculture and Rural Affairs Department, Transport Department, Natural Resources Department, Cultural and Tourist Department, and other

departments. At the same time, the Project formulated a training manual on the biodiversity and environmental protection.

149. Output 1.1.3: Two county-level 14th 5-year development plans that incorporate biodiversity and ecosystem services. The county-level 14th 5-year development plans that integrated biodiversity and ecosystem services have been developed for Shennongjia Forestry District and Baokang County respectively. For example, (i) Chapter 3 of Shennongjia Forestry District's 14th 5-year development plan clearly indicated the intended construction of national park, facilitation of ecological system protection and green living style, promotion of urban and rural development, prioritisation of biodiversity, and protection of reserve areas. (ii) Chapter 27 of Baokang's 14th 5-year development plan clearly illustrated the needs to protect the biodiversity and ecosystem services, and promote the influence and reputation of Wudaoxia national nature reserve.
150. Output 1.2.1: Assessment of IAS presence, impacts and anticipated spread in GSA. The Project completed a report entitled: Survey and Assessment of IAS Presence and Impact in the GSA, which included (i) the potential impact of IAS on the protected areas; (ii) field investigation and assessment on the IAS in the protected areas; (iii) situation analysis on the IAS anticipated spread based on location and climate; (iv) estimates of social and economic costs of IAS particularly in ecotourism, agriculture, forestry production, water resources and transport. The survey was conducted in 264 survey points in 7 counties, among which, there were 66 in Shennongjia Forestry District, 44 in Zhushan County, 40 in Fang County, 34 in Xingshan County, 32 in Badong County, 25 in Baokang County, and 23 in Zhuxi County. The survey points included grassland, forestry land, wetland, water areas, agricultural land, orchard, villages, and urban areas, covering 6,300 km.
151. Output 1.2.2: IAS Strategy and action plan. The Project completed two technical reports: Development of IAS Prevention and Control Strategy and Plan in the GSA and Monitoring the IAS in the GSA. In practice, the Project also supported (i) technical assistance to the IAS; (ii) public consultations and discussions on the IAS and sourcing strategy and action; (iii) mitigation of the IAS in the 7 counties. In particular, the Project supported the pilot projects in the IAS mitigation, establishment of the IAS monitoring points and undertaking the routine monitoring. Finally, the Project replaced 1525 mu of *Larix Kaempferi* by local species and removed 240 mu of *Ambrosia artemisiifolia* through harmless treatment.
152. Output 1.2.3. Seven county-level policies and funding for mainstreaming IAS mitigation. During the Project implementation, eight counties have integrated the biodiversity and IAS protection into 14th 5-year plans. At the same time, Hubei Provincial Forestry Department and Hubei Agricultural and Rural Affairs Department conducted the surveys in agricultural IAS and forestry and grassland IAS respectively.
153. Output 2.1.1: Development of management plans for three GSA. The Project developed management plans for four NRs, i.e., Shennongjia National Park Management Plan, Wanchaoshan Natural Reserve Management Plan, Badong Natural Reserve Management Plan, and Duheyuan Natural Reserve Management Plan.
154. Output 2.1.2: Development of four NR-specific co-management plans supported by pilot activities in local communities. The Project has signed a co-management plan supported by pilot activities with Xiagu Village, through Shennongjia National Park (Nature Reserve). It also had a co-management contract supported by pilot activities with Yanduhe Village through Badong Natural Reserve and Dianziping Village through Duheyuan Nature Reserve.
155. Output 2.1.3: Development of 24 biodiversity conservation pilot research grants. However, the Project only developed 14 biodiversity conservation pilot research grants

although it has established the small grant committee and technical advisory group, formulated the small grants application guidelines and management procedures, and implemented, monitored and assessed the conservation pilot research grants in 7 GSA natural reserves.

156. Output 2.1.4: Training of NR and PMO staff (420 participant times over 14 course-specific thematic topics). The Project provided training including development of thematic curriculum and training materials for the NRs and PMO staff with 400 participant times over 14 specific thematic topics such as agriculture, use of water resource, land degradation, industrial and water pollution, eco-tourism, IAS, and ecoservice fees. The Project also established the training technical advisory and working group and invited only national consultants to provide training due to Covid-19 pandemic between 2000 and 2022.
157. Output 2.2.1: The establishment of one new county-level NR (SFD) covering a total area of 120,000 ha. The Project established a new NR or Shennongjia Nature Reserve or Forestry District with 120,000 ha. In 2019, in response to the central government's requirements for nature reserve protection system in terms of national park, Shennongjia National Park was established by incorporating two state-level NRs and part of another protection area and received wide publicity. The 57-boundary demarcation (including boundary stakes/marks installation) and 17 notes have been installed. At the same time, a new nature reserve master plan (including participatory stakeholder workshops) has been developed and adopted. The Project also conducted biophysical and social-economic surveys and studies for new natural reserve. The results of the surveys were included in a report entitled: Socioeconomic Surveys and Impacts in a Newly Established Biodiversity Protection Area.
158. Output 2.2.2: Creation of ecological corridor connecting 2 NRs in GSA (20,000 ha). Jiudao ecological corridor connecting Shennongjia National Park to Yerengu Natural Reserve with 20,298 ha was established while the management plan was approved and the board was established during the Project implementation. However, there was no specific fund-raising plan for Jiudao ecological corridor although local governments all agreed to support the operation of the corridor.
159. Output 2.3.1: Development and implementation of 2 GSA NR system-wide conservation action plans covering the following Class I and II species/groups: (i) primate species (2), and (ii) large & middle size mammals (10). For (i) primate species (2), the Project has established 2 GSA NR system-wide conservation action plan covering the following Class I and II species/groups: primate species (2) including *Rhinopithecus roxellana* and *Macaca mulata*, which was consistent with one of the 12 priorities under 14th 5-Year National Plan in Forestry and Grassland. The action plan covered the trend and protection of the species, research, monitoring and protection of the disease, and public awareness. The action plan also provided detailed measures in 13 areas. For (ii) large & middle size mammals (10), the Project authorised the Huazhong Agricultural University to conduct a study on this subject and completed two reports: Report on Remote Sensing and Monitoring for Wildlife and Habitat in GSA and Wildlife and Habitat Protection Plan in GSA, which focused on 10 large & middle size mammals: *Ursus thibetanus*, *Viverra zibetha*, *Catopuma temminckii*, *Neofelis nebulosa*, *Panthera pardus*, *Moschus berezovskii*, *Elaphodus cephalophus*, *Muntiacus reevesi*, *Naemorhedus griseus* and *Capricornis sumatraensis*.
160. Output 2.3.2: Development and implementation of 2 GSA NR system-wide conservation action plans for 8 unique vegetation communities/formations and 8 rare & endangered plant species. The Project provided support in 4 areas: (i) technical assistance for system-wide conservation action plans; (ii) collection and analysis of the related information and data; (iii) field investigation; (iv) analysis on the status of

vegetation communities/formations and Rare & endangered plant species; and (v) establishment of the NR system-wide conservation action plans. For (iv), the reports included Technical Report on Important Plant Species - Presentation and Identifications in the GSA, Conservation and Management Handbook of Plant Species in the GSA, Technical Report on Typical Vegetation Protection Action Plan in the GSA, and Technical Report on Rare & Endangered Plant Species Protection Action Plan in the GSA. For (v), the Project produced Rare & Endangered Plant Species Protection Action Plan in the GSA and Important Vegetation Protection Action Plan in the GSA with the supports of the researchers from Botany Institute, Chinese Academy of Science.

161. Output 2.3.3: Establishment of a spatial database and ecological monitoring program in the 8 GSA nature reserves. The Project produced an Ecological Monitoring Plan in the Nature Reserves in GSA with the support of the Chinese Academy of Forestry. The Project, through its Information Centre, established a GIS Information System including a data base covering fire prevention and protection, perimeter video surveillance system, and emergency system in uninhabited areas. In addition, the Project formulated the Ecological Monitoring and Database Action Plan with support of Huazhong Agricultural University. Based on this action plan, 20,000 original samples and the copies of the samples have been established. Finally, the Project completed the Literature Database on Biology and Database for Biological Resources.
162. Output 3.1.1: Establishment and institutionalization of a GSA-wide environmental education information exchange and coordination mechanism. The Project completed the design of coordination mechanism of environmental education, which covered the objectives, organisational structure, procedures, roles and responsibility of the key staff, funding sources, financial management, human resource, and management through on-line survey.
163. Output 3.1.2: Development of a 5-year comprehensive environment education plan for GSA. The Project developed a 5-year comprehensive environment education plan including Training Curricula for GSA covering 7 countries and 6 NRs. Based on this plan, the Project formulated ecological training materials covering biodiversity, conservation, threat, and protection. The training materials have been delivered to various types of stakeholders including communities and primary and middle schools.
164. Output 3.1.3: Establishment of a public education and awareness centre in the Shennongjia UNESCO Reserve. The Project established a public educational and awareness centre with exhibition hall. At the same time, the Project developed a series of curricula for circulation including ecological system, products and services, plan species, climate change and its threat to GSA. The Project also established the Guanmenshan VR to present the biodiversity in SGA, updated the educational notices in Dajiuhe and Guanmenshan, added the contents of presentation, and developed the brochures and album for Shennongjia.
165. Output 3.1.4: Establishment and operationalization of a Plant Breeding Centre (55 ha) in the SNNR. same as last year). A plant breeding botanic garden was established. It serviced as an exhibition centre and a knowledge hub for endemic and endangered species. Interpretations for these species were well designed and developed. The SNJ Tourism Group was in charge of its day-to-day operation. However, a botanic garden was not a breeding centre in terms of functions.
166. Output 3.2.1: Design and implementation of a Hubei province-wide biodiversity conservation communications and outreach strategy. At the beginning of the Project implementation, several videos about Shennongjia, such as Shennongjia in Central China, View the Mystery, Road to National Park has been released in CCTV, East TV HK TV. The National Park was advertised in UNEP Website. However, the release of videos does not mean the communications and outreach strategy.

167. Output 3.2.2: Establishment of a bi-lingual website on biodiversity conservation and ecosystem services covering all 8 natural reserves in the GSA. The Project established a bi-lingual website on biodiversity conservation and ecosystem services covering all 8 natural reserves in the GSA and provided technical support and maintenance services. The website is now under the official website of the national park.
168. The project delivered all planned activities within the adjusted timeframe and budget, and successfully achieved almost all outputs. However, there were no output indicators with baseline and target to assess the effectiveness of the Project in terms of outputs. For some outputs, what was delivered might not exactly match the intended outputs and needed detailed review of the content.

Rating for Availability of Outputs: Satisfactory

Achievement of Project Outcomes

169. The above outputs would have resulted in three intended outcomes/intermediate targets: Capacity Building for capacity building for improved development planning, strengthening and expanding GSA NR network and ecological monitoring, and environmental education & communication.
170. The achievement of Project outcomes was assessed as performance against the outcome level indicators as defined in the reconstructed Theory of Change at the Review and results framework. These outcomes were intended to be achieved by the end of the project timeframe and within the project's budget. This review also analysed to what extent the assumptions for progress from project outputs to outcomes/impact were held, and the drivers to support the transition from outputs to outcomes/impacts were in place.
171. It is important to note that the pandemic-related delays significantly impacted the Project's achievement of the outcomes. In spite of this, the outcome-level indicators remained unchanged to better measure the progress toward the implementation of the Project. The indicators used in the review were identified from the results framework in the Project Document.
172. For Component 1: Capacity Building for Improved Development Planning, the review results of outcome 1 are presented in Table 9. Column Indicators and Targets are from results framework in the PD. Column End Value, % of Completion and Results are actual value at the end of the Project, verification and rationale respectively. Column Rating is a comprehensive assessment of % of completion for all components under Outcome 1. The results suggested that Outcome 1 was assessed as Satisfactory.

Table 9: Review results of outcomes under Component 1

Outcome	Indicator	End Target	End Value	% of Completion	Results	Rating
1.1. Improved policy and regulatory framework	1.1.a. Number of relevant institutions adapt and implement best practices for mainstreaming biodiversity and ecosystem services	9 (provincial plans, and all 7	9	100 %	14 th 5-year National Development Plans, Hubei Provincial Government; 14 th 5-year plan, Hubei Ecological and Environmental Department; 14 th 5-year Plans, HFD; 14 th 5-year Plans, Shennongjia District Government;	

ork for develop ment planning of producti on sectors in GSA.	considerations into development planning	county plans)			and 14th Five-Year Plans of all 6 counties (Baokang, Xingshan, Badong, Fangxian Zhuxi, Zhushan).	
	1.1.b. Number of coherent sets of economic and regulatory tools and incentives that promote and reward integration;	4	3	75%	Baokang County has established a subsidy system for ecological restoration of former mining sites. Shenongjia Tourism Group gives back ticket-box income to Shennongjia National Park Authority at a certain percentage (paused due to the very low income caused by the COVID-19 pandemic); and Agricultural insurance purchased by the Project to compensate the wildlife damage in the GSA.	
	1.1.c. Increased area of biodiversity conservation friendly production landscape	2,402,8 07 ha	2,402, 807 ha	100 %	The GSA areas have been transferred to biodiversity conservation friendly production landscape, reflected in the improved eco-tourism, ban of logging nature forests, and etc. due to the Project. However, no additional area has been increased.	Satis facto ry
s1.2. Reduced risk to local biodiver sity from invasive species (IAS) in the GSA	1.2.a. Improvement of planning capacity in invasive alien species prevention and control measured in 7 project counties	29	25	86%	The GEF IAS Tracking Tool was updated in early 2022. The Project has generally implemented the IAS prevention and control mechanism. The central government has issued the Management Methods of AIS (https://www.gov.cn/zhengce/zhengceku/2022-06/17/content_5696171.htm). In GSA, 7 Project counties and various provincial government departments have integrated IAS into the 14 th 5-year plans. The Project has achieved most other indicators except that the Project still needs to collect evidence on habitat restoration and establish a mechanism to plan the IAS.	

1.2.b. # of IAS management & action plans integrated in NR Management (Plans?) and their control started"	7	7	100 %	7 Project counties have integrated IAS into the 14 th 5-year plans. The 7 NRs have integrated IAS management and action plans into their management plans and started evaluation, prevention and monitoring of IAS in GSA.
1.2.c. # of County level IAS management plans operationalized/enabled with core government agencies	7	7	100 %	The 7 county-level IAS management plans started implementation. At the same time, HFD and HAD initiated the IAS surveys from their perspectives.

173. For Component 2: Strengthening and Expanding GSA NR Network and Ecological Monitoring, the review results of outcome 2 are presented in Table 10. Column Indicators and Targets are from results framework in the PD. Column End Value, % of Completion and Results are actual value at the end of the Project, verification and rationale respectively. Column Rating is a comprehensive assessment of % of completion for all components under Outcome 2. The results suggested that Outcome 2 was assessed as Satisfactory.

Table 10: Review results of outcomes under Component 2

Outcome	Indicator	End Target	End Value	Verification	Results	Rating
2.1: Improved management effectiveness in existing GSA nature reserves	2.1.a. Increase in average management effectiveness among 8 GSA NRs	84	85	100 %	The Average METT score of all 7 protected areas was 85 as of late 2023.	
	2.1.b. Nature Reserve management in GSA benefitting through actual payments from eco-tourism PES schemes	3NRs	4NRs	100 %	Shennongjia Tourism Group pays RMB 10 million annually as franchise fee to Shennongjia National Park. In Yerengu NR and Wudaoxia NR, the income generated from eco-tourism was collected by the local governments, and the latter further invested in the nature reserves through funds. The local government pays each resident around Dajiuhe 3,000 CNY annually to cover their costs on electricity as a compensation for not chopping woods for burning. The government in Shennongjia Forestry District paid 3.79 m CNY to 928 households in 3 years for protecting forests in nature reserves as some forests were still owned by the local communities as public welfare forests.	
	2.1.c. Increase in adoption of inclusive and gender sensitive co-management principles and practices in GSA NRs.	4NRs	2NRs	50 %	The Shennongjia Forestry District and National Park (including 2 NRs) have completed their studies on how women participated in the environment	

					protection and how gender mainstreaming was promoted.	
	2.1.d. Increased # and staff capacity in new PA management skills: landscape-based conservation, sustainable finance/PES, IAS control, co-management, flora & fauna monitoring, a.o. (incl. production sectors).	Capacity enhanced of 400 trainees, out of which 25% are female	Capacity enhanced of 400 trainees, out of which 25% are female	90%	During the Project period, 25 training sessions were organized for NR staff, public and government officials, 1,982 people times were trained. Among the trainees, 402 were women, accounting for around 20% of the total.	
2.2: Increased habitat integrity of areas under protection in the GSA	2.2a. Integrity index measured from the 8 GSA NRs.	61	61	100 %	As the number of protected areas is reduced from 8 to 7, the original baseline and target should also change. As all planned activities and outputs were completed, it was reasonable to regard this indicator target was met.	Satisfactory
	2.2.b. Increase at least 120,000 ha new protected areas in GSA.	120,000ha gazette as new PA	120,600 ha gazette as new PA	100 %	The Project established a new NR or Shennongjia Nature Reserve or Forestry District with 120,000 ha. It was noted that not only the two former reserves were merged, but also an area of forestry with 47,933 ha and a new area of orchids with 72,667 ha were added to the new NR after the acquisition.	
	2.2.c. Enhanced forest connectivity – as measured through area (ha) and sustained governance of reforestation in Hectares	20,000 ha newly planted forest effectively connecting NRs	20,000 ha newly planted forest effectively connecting NRs	100 %	Jiudao Ecological Corridor was established, with 20,000 ha of newly planted forest areas effectively connecting the two NRs.	
2.3: Improved landscape-based species- and habitat protection through better planning, population monitoring and targeted actions in GSA.	2.3a. A coordinated management decision among participating NRs on at least one species with geographic range beyond a single GSA reserve based on the information management system	Conservation action plan(s) up and running	Conservation action plan(s) up and running	100 %	The Western Hubei and Eastern Chongqing Conservation Area Alliance was established, and annual alliance meetings were held continuously. The alliance agreement was signed and a joint monitoring on IAS was carried out. The Project established a cross sectoral coordination mechanism between Shennongjia and Baokang (led by HFD with other government departments). The species included <i>Rhinopithecus roxellana</i> and <i>Macaca mulata</i> . The plant species include <i>Taxus wallichiana</i> var. <i>chinensis</i> , <i>Davidia involucre</i> , <i>Ginkgo biloba</i> , <i>Berchemiella wilsonii</i> , <i>Triaenophora rupestris</i> , <i>Torreya fargesii</i> , <i>Emmenopterys henryi</i> , and <i>Liriodendron chinensis</i> .	
	2.3b Population numbers of at least one primate and one middle-sized mammal (Class I & II species) stable or improving – as measured through newly developed monitoring protocols in the GSA landscape (2.3.1)	Population # stable or having increased (on at least 2 species)	Population # stable or having increased (on at least 2 species)	100 %	Snub-nosed monkey and black bear were selected as two species. Monitoring network was under establishment. Preliminary studies showed that black bear appeared in all nature reserves and the population of snub-nosed monkey increased from 1400 to 1600 during the Project period.	

	2.3c Increasing # of vegetation transects established & generating data. Target: Dajihu PNR-4; Shibalingxia NNR-6; Yeregu PNR-6; Wudaoxia PNR-6; Wanchaoshan PNR-6; Shennongxi PNR-6; Duheyuan NNR-10; and Shennongjia NNR-20	All 64 sites in function, annual surveys & data produced in all 64 sites	All 67 sites in function, annual surveys & data are been produced	100 %	Totally 67 sites have been achieved. 61 sites were located in National Park: (25ha * 1, 5ha * 1, 1ha * 6, 20m*20m * 53); Furthermore, there was 1 site in each of the 6 nature reserves.	
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174. For Component 3: Education, Awareness & Communication, the review results of outcome 3 are presented in Table 11. Column Indicators and Targets are from results framework in the PD. Column End Value, % of Completion and Results are actual value at the end of the Project, verification and rationale respectively. Column Rating is a comprehensive assessment of % of completion for all components under Outcome 3. The results suggested that Outcome3 was assessed as Satisfactory.

Table 11: Review results of outcomes under Component 3

Outcome	Indicator	End Target	End Value	Verification	Results	Rating
Outcome 3.1: Improved capacity of provincial and local governments to conduct environmental education programs for promoting awareness of decision makers and the general public on the importance of protecting biodiversity and ecosystem services to sustainable development in GSA.	3.1a. Increased regularized/institutionalized environment education policies and programs in GSA	7 regularized environment education programs among 6 nature reserves and national park in GSA	7 regularized environment education programs among 6 nature reserves and national park in GSA	100%	The 7 NRs have developed environment education materials/programmes and implemented the education programmes by themselves.	Satisfactory
	3.2.a. Baseline established, gender analysis conducted and statistically representative sample of (a) decision makers and (b) general public showing increased awareness levels of biodiversity conservation, the value and benefit of ecosystem services, and links with sustainable development	20% of Targeted group show increase in awareness on the baseline parameters set; gender disaggregate data available.	50% of Targeted group show increase in awareness on the baseline parameters set; gender disaggregate data available.	100%	50% is from METT. Based on the awareness survey in 2021, around 50% of the people being interviewed were aware of the natural education.	
Outcome 3.2: Improved communications and enhanced awareness in GSA landscape of Hubei Province	3.2.b. Increase in 'users hits' for information on the bi-lingual GSA Website - biodiversity conservation in Hubei and GSA	20% average annual increase in user hits (over life of project)	20% average annual increase in user hits (over life of project)	100%	The bilingual website was designed in early 2020. The framework and news of this GEF Project have been updated, until the Project was concluded. The former English site was revamped to the bilingual national park site. The former site: http://www.snjpark.com/dsnjswdyx/GEFxm.h The current site: http://en.snjnationalpark.com . Before	

on biodiversity, ecosystem conservation and sustainable development					being revamped, there was a 20% YoY increase of the website hits.
	3.2.c. Improved dissemination and exchange of best practices locally among the 8 GSA nature reserves, Hubei province and internationally	5 best practice guidelines produced-10 coordination meetings conducted involving all 6 NRs and NP	5 best practice guidelines produced-10 coordination meetings conducted involving all 6 NRs and NP	100%	5 GSA-wide 'best-practices' guidelines were developed and 10 coordination meetings were conducted involving all 6 NRs and national park.
	3.2.d. Increase in media coverage for biodiversity conservation in GSA on TV news broadcasts, radio, and newspapers (articles or features)	40% increase in media coverage for biodiversity conservation in GSA on TV news broadcasts, radio, and newspapers (articles or features) ⁷ rotating public education	40% increase in media coverage for biodiversity conservation in GSA on TV news broadcasts, radio, and newspapers (articles or features) ⁷ rotating public education	100%	Number of news articles: (National / provincial + local = total)2017: 9 + 18 = 27; 2018: 11 + 25 = 36; 2019: 20 + 39 = 59; 2020: 18 + 62 = 80; 2021: 24 + 125 = 149; 2022: 66 + 82 = 148; 2023: 186 CN + 63 EN = 249. "In China, iconic national park is redefining conservation" was published on UNEP website.
	3.2.e. At least one government policy amended/adopted to conserve biodiversity and ecosystem services in GSA	1 time annually	1 time annually	100%	In May 2018, the Hubei Provincial Government issued the Shennongjia National Park Protection Regulations. In September 2019, the Shennongjia Forest District Government issued a new draft Plan of Shennongjia Biodiversity NR. "The 14th five-year plan for economic and social development of Hubei Province and the outline of long-term objectives for 2035" was released by Hubei Provincial government in April 2021. It was planned to better promote the Shennongjia National Park in next 5 year plan. Some areas around the SNJ National Park were selected to include in the future (There are no updates in 2020 and 2022, as Hubei Province was seriously hit by the COVID).

146. The results suggested that most target values had been achieved and the assumptions for progress from project outputs to outcomes were mostly met, while drivers to support the transition from outputs to outcomes were in place.

Rating for Achievement of Project Outcomes: Satisfactory

Likelihood of Impact

175. The likelihood of the intended impacts of the Project was assessed based on the causal relationships in the reconstructed ToC, specifically from outcome, through the intermediate targets, to impact. As originally designed, the ultimate impact was to enhance biodiversity conservation and sustainable use of natural resources in the GSA, Hubei Province through 3 intermediate targets: capacity building for Improved development planning, strengthening and expanding GSA NR network and ecological monitoring, and education, awareness & communication.

176. Through outcome assessment above, it is important to note that the first intermediate target was likely to be achieved as Outcome 1 A. (Improved policy and regulatory framework for development planning of production sectors in GSA) and Outcome 1 B. (Reduced impact to local biodiversity from invasive alien species (IAS) in the GSA) had been realised to greater extent. For the 6 indicators under Component 1, the target values for 4 outcome indicators had been fully reached while the target values for 2 outcome indicators had been achieved with 85% on average.
177. Similarly, the second intermediate target was also likely to be realised as Outcome 2.1 (Improved management effectiveness in existing GSA nature reserves), Outcome 2.2 (Increased habitat integrity of areas under protection in the GSA) and Outcome 2.3 (Improved landscape-based species- and habitat protection through better planning, population monitoring and targeted actions in GSA) were achieved with 100% except for Indicator 2.1.c. (Increase in adoption of inclusive and gender sensitive co-management principles and practices in GSA NRs).
178. The third intermediate target (Education, Awareness & communication) had been realised as all indicators with target values under Outcome 3.1 (Improved capacity of provincial and local governments to conduct environmental education programs for promoting awareness of decision makers and the general public on the importance of protecting biodiversity and ecosystem services to sustainable development in GSA) and Outcome 3.2 (Improved communications and enhanced awareness in GSA landscape of Hubei Province on biodiversity, ecosystems conservation and sustainable development) had been reached with 100%.
179. As a consequence, the Project was likely to achieve its ultimate impact through developed capacity building for improved development planning and strengthened and expanded GSA NR network and ecological monitoring and improved education, awareness & communication as almost all outcome indicators' target have been met.
180. The Interviews and consultation indicated that the likelihood of the intended impact becoming a reality is generally viewed as positive but with varying degrees of optimism among respondents. Most respondents highlighted that strong partnerships among UNEP, donors, subnational government, and effective implementation of biodiversity-related activities were essential for achieving these impacts. However, some respondents addressed the challenges, including the lack of central government anchoring, insufficient focus on SDGs and cross-cutting issues in the Project activities will have negative impacts on the Likelihood of Impact. Others emphasized the needs for enhanced capacity building, awareness, and institutionalization to realize the full potential of the interventions.
181. For some outputs, the Project has expanded and surpassed the targets originally intended in the Project Document such as the delivery of insurance product and direct subsidy for compensating the losses and income generating activities due to wildlife damages or stop logging.
182. The Project played a significant catalytic role by enhancing conservation management effectiveness of NNRs in Hubei province, as well as the mainstreaming of biodiversity conservation and value of ecosystem services in economic development plans and sector plans, and contributing to the Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework. This impact can facilitate replication at various levels—local, national, regional and international.
183. Overall, in accordance with the "Likelihood of Impact Assessment Decision Tree" flow chart used by the Evaluation Office, the likelihood of achieving the intended impact was rated as "Moderately Likely" as the aspects of the project outcome that were crucial for attaining the intermediate targets were achieved. Other aspects of the project outcomes

(under 100% of completion) were still in progress by the end of the Project period. As mentioned in the previous sections, the assumptions for the transition from project outputs to project outcomes were partially valid and the drivers were in place to support the transition from outputs to project outcomes, and to intermediate targets. The assumptions for the process of change from intermediate state to impact were valid, and drivers to support the transition from intermediate targets to impact were in place.

Achievement of Likelihood of Impact: Moderately Likely

Rating for Effectiveness: Satisfactory

E. Financial Management

Adherence to UNEP's Financial Policies and Procedures

184. The Project followed the financial management standards and adherence to financial management policies and procedures established by both UNEP and Government China. The financial expenditures had generally been in line with the project's financial planning, in spite of delays in some outputs caused by the COVID-19 pandemic. Through the document reviews including the project updates, mid-term review, financial reports, operational project closure report, and consultation it was found:
 1. The Project had an accounting system that allows for the proper recording of Project financial transactions, including the allocation of expenditures in accordance with the respective components, disbursement categories, and sources of funds.
 2. The project used the entity accounting system for Shennongjia National Park and Project accounting system for the Project.
 3. The controls were in place concerning the preparation and approval of transactions, ensuring that all transactions were correctly made and adequately explained.
 4. The cost allocations to the various funding sources were made accurately and in accordance with established agreements with UNEP and Hubei Provincial Government.
 5. The financial reports were submitted every six-month, ensuring transparency and accountability.
185. No significant financial issues were reported during the Project period. The regular budget reviews and comparisons were conducted to reflect a responsive and adaptive management approach. Although the pandemic-related shocks delayed the delivery of the Project outputs, the ability to mobilize additional resources and update the timelines indicated a strong financial governance.
186. As indicated in Section Project Financing and Annex VI, it was possible to compare the expenditure by component as indicated in in the Project design document and the actual expenditures because the Project design document did clearly allocate costs by component. At the end of the Project, the three components received the respective shares of funding, accounted for 13.9% for Component 1, 59.5% for Component 2 and 23.5% for Component 3, as compared to 12.9, for Component 1, 65.9% for Component 2, and 17.9% for Component 3. Project management represented the remaining proportion of 3.1% at the end of the Project vs 3.3% at the Project design.
187. In summary, the Project followed both UNEP and Chinese accounting standards, policies and procedures for GEF and counterpart funds respectively. The Project used the existing accounting system to record the financial transactions of the Project, and proved to be a good control, cost allocation, and reporting system.

Rating for Adherence to UNEP's Financial Policies and Procedures: Highly Satisfactory

Completeness of Financial Information

188. The financial information of the project was generally complete, accurate, and accessible, as evidenced by various project documents, the mid-term review, financial reports, the Operational Closure Report (OCR), and consultations. During the Project implementation, the financial data was timely available through the accounting system in the PIUs. The budgets were prepared for all significant activities in sufficient details to allow meaningful monitoring of subsequent performance and the actual expenditures were compared to the budget with reasonable frequency. The budgets were regularly updated to align the expenditures with the planned revenues. Under any circumstances, the overall financial information was complete and accurate. The project provided a good budget system, including a breakdown by secured and unsecured funds, and detailed budgets for secured funds. In addition, the Project expenditure sheets were presented regularly at annual and quarterly intervals, with a summary budget at the component level and cost breakdowns by funding type and source.
189. The Project followed a set of invoice-processing procedures: (i) copies of purchase orders and receiving reports to be obtained directly from issuing departments; (ii) comparison of invoice quantities, prices and terms, with those indicated on the purchase order and with records of goods actually received; (iii) comparison of invoice quantities with those indicated on the receiving reports; (iv) checking the accuracy of calculations; and (v) checking authenticity of invoices and supporting documents.
190. In conclusion, all required documents, including project budgets, disbursement records, expenditure sheets, and legal agreements, were completed and timely accessible for review. The items on project expenditure and detailed budgets were provided annually and quarterly and signed by the Project Manager (PM)/Financial Management Officer (FMO). A financial summary is presented in Section Project Financing and Annex VI. Table 16 in Annex VII presents the Financial Management overview.

Rating for Completeness of Financial Information: Highly Satisfactory

Communication Between Finance and Project Management Staff

191. Through Steering Committee minutes and consultations, there was evidence that the PM understood the current financial status of the Project and the FMO understood the overall progress of the project when the financial disbursements are made against financial and physical progress. There were regular communications between the PM and the FMO, including informal discussions and formal bi-weekly meetings as they were in the same office. As a result, the FMO was able to be proactive in raising and resolving financial issues as there have been several PMs for this project. Especially, all narrative and financial reports were reviewed by both PM and FMO staff before submission.
192. Through consultations and document reviews, some stakeholders also highlighted their satisfaction with the competencies of PM and FMO, their effective communication channels, and high-quality Project implementation. The established bi-weekly financial meetings, complemented by the Project management meeting, presented a systematic approach to financial risk monitoring and resolution. Although the frequency of these meetings was not always ensured during the COVID-19 period, there were no significantly negative effects on the Project implementation.
193. In general, the good communication between the PM and FMO had positive impacts on the Project implementation, ensuring timely delivery and a responsive, adaptive

management approach. Both the PM and FMO were well-informed about the project's financial conditions and physical progress, with regular contact between them. All these contributed to successful Project results.

Rating for Communication Between Finance and Project Management Staff: Satisfactory

Rating for Financial Management: Satisfactory

F. Efficiency

194. The Project was implemented based on the project design documents. UNEP regional offices in Bangkok provided support services upon request for the activities within the Project Document and work plan such as recruitment of international consultants, procurement and fund disbursements.
195. The outputs had been generally produced with cost-effectiveness. Through the PIRs and consultations, the excellent relationship between UNEP, HFD and other stakeholders in general contributed to an efficient implementation. The efficiency was ensured through strong commitment of the UNEP Task Manager, PMU/PIU staff and support from a wide range of stakeholders.
196. The utilisation of the resources was generally guided by the approved expenditure plan in line with the desired project outputs and outcomes. UNEP periodically arranged project-related meetings and PIU undertook the daily activities. These efforts further improved the efficiency of the Project.
197. However, the COVID-19 pandemic delayed the deployment of the key personnel and Project activities, thus delayed the timely delivery of the Project outputs as reported in the PIRs and other reports and from the consultations.
198. Through the document review and consultations, it appeared that the procurement, contracting, and disbursements worked well although the beneficiary participants sometimes expressed dissatisfaction related to the complicated procedures and delayed payment to the consultant. The efficiency was further hampered by the turnover of the key staff in the PMU, which resulted in a loss of institutional memory and lack of continuity and consistency in Project activity implementation.
199. During the implementation, the project underwent a no-cost extension, which was primarily caused by the COVID-19 Pandemic. This unprecedented global shock necessitated a shift to online operations, delay of key intergovernmental meetings, and adjustments to project schedules. The delays caused by extensions had a limited negative impact on Project performances. The project largely met its outcome indicators within the updated timeframes.
200. Overall, the Project generally utilized resources efficiently and achieved cost-effective results despite challenges like the COVID-19 pandemic. The Project had one justified no-cost extension of one year and included justified amendments to the formally approaches for achieving Project's outcomes.

Rating for Efficiency: Moderately Satisfactory

G. Monitoring and Reporting

Monitoring Design and Budgeting

201. In the Project Document, there was a Monitoring and a Reporting Plan based on the UNEP standards by incorporating indicators for outcomes but not for outputs. It covered

Objective / Outcome, Outcome / objective level indicators, Baseline Conditions, Mid-point Target, End of Project Target, Means of Verification, Monitoring / sampling (frequency / size), Location / Group, Responsibility, Time frame, Budget (Object of expenditure & cost).

202. Based on the original Monitoring and Reporting Plan, the periodic monitoring was conducted through six-monthly reviews. The data was collected based on the results framework's means of verification, tracked progress against outputs, milestones, deliverables, and indicators. The monitoring responsibilities were distributed among the Project manager, team members, and administrative staff. The consultations indicated that the Project management team had a sense of ownership over the monitoring plan. The adaptive management strategies were used to address delays or unanticipated challenges.
203. Throughout the implementation of the project, the indicator system was not updated to align with its original scope and objectives due to unchanged Project scope and activities. However, there were opportunities for improvement in the design of the project's indicators. The Project only considered process indicators at the outcome level while ignoring impact indicator and output indicators. First, as compared to outcome indicators, the output indicators were better used to monitor the execution of activities, such as organizing events or activities. Second, the outcome level indicators did not measure the results or final changes generated. The impact-focused indicators assessed the long-term effects and the changes brought about by the project, measuring whether the expected objectives were achieved and the actual impact on social, economic, or environmental conditions.
204. Some outcome indicators did not follow the SMART criteria and could have been improved during the implementation. For examples, the following indicators were vague or not reflect SMART criteria (specific, measurable, achievable, relevant and time frame):
- 2.1.c. Increase in adoption of inclusive and gender sensitive co-management principles and practices in GSA NRs – not specific, measurable, achievable.
 - 3.1a. Increased regularized/institutionalized environment education policies and programs in GSA – not specific, measurable, achievable.

Rating for Monitoring Design and Budgeting: Moderately Satisfactory

Monitoring of Project Implementation

205. The assessment of the monitoring of project implementation indicated that the system was generally not operational and did not facilitate the timely tracking of results and progress toward the project's impact during the Project period. Based on the Project Document, PIRs, progress reports, and the self-closure and assessment report, a detailed updated monitoring plan was established during the design phase, but was not in place during the implementation although this plan covered all indicators as outlined in the results framework, included data collection methods, and frequency for data collection, which aligned with the requirements of the indicators.
206. In addition, the evidence from the Project Document showed that an annual workplan, broken down by outputs, was created, but not updated regularly throughout the project's implementation. Updated versions of the workplan were not produced during the project implementation, not reflecting ongoing updates to the changes of the project's needs and priorities.
207. Based on the document review and consultations, it appeared that a detailed monitoring system was not actually implemented and was not updated every six months,

so as to track progress toward the project's objective. The monitoring data was not collected regularly and entered into the system, so as to provide a comprehensive picture of the Project's deliverables

208. As indicated in the MTR, the monitoring and evaluation plan was not seriously analysed by the PMU and PIU, and reported to the Steering Committee or senior managers as there were not similar tables with comparisons between the actual values against target values during the implementation.
209. In summary, a detailed monitoring system was not actually implemented and the data generated by the implementation of the monitoring plan during the period of the project had not been used to adapt and improve project implementation, achieve results and ensure sustainability. Some of the outcome indicators used showed limitations in their relevance for a comprehensive review of the Project. While outputs and impact, were documented in the monitoring plan and results framework, the Project lacked more indicators capable of effectively measuring outputs and concrete impact in Hubei Province, China, such as changes in provincial policies or improvements in integrating synergistic approaches.

Rating for Monitoring of Project Implementation: Moderately Satisfactory

Project Reporting

210. Substantial documentation of Project progress throughout its life cycle was available. All major annual Project Implementation Review reports and Half Yearly Progress Report from 2019 to 2024 and PIRs were well completed. Reports to donors were produced regularly and without gaps. The subcontracted partners provided timely reports per their contractual arrangements.
211. Through document review and consultations, the documentation of project progress was generally thorough and of good quality, with reporting consistently completed on time and based on the standard templates and procedures. The reports were submitted punctually to the donors and the stakeholders, ensuring smooth tracking of project implementation and compliance except during the Covid-19 pandemic period. The regular bilateral communication and ongoing contact throughout the year further complemented formal reporting, contributing to donor satisfaction and effective project oversight.
212. However, the reporting for 2019 was vague, lacking detailed references to progress, indicators, and evidence-based results. The improvements in reporting were evident, with more detailed and focused reports from 2019 onwards. The reports including PIRs and Half Year Progress Report linked to Project outputs, and outcomes with indicators, accompanied by evidence and means of verification.
213. In spite of the completeness of Project life documentation, challenges arose in that the reports were generally gender-neutral, except for documents specifically addressing gender-sensitive interventions. The data disaggregation by vulnerable or marginalized groups was absent across reporting. Finally, almost all reports were in Chinese and have not been released to the public or published.

Rating for Project Reporting: Moderately Satisfactory

Rating for Monitoring and Reporting: Moderately Satisfactory

H. Sustainability

Socio-political Sustainability

214. The sustainability of project outcomes depends heavily on political will and stakeholder ownership. Changes in political leadership and the prioritization of environmental issues by governments can directly impact the continuity of the Project's results. Political shifts, especially within ministries, may lead to changes in responsibilities, undermining the expected impact of the project results. Furthermore, without strong political support, the Project's results may not be fully valued or integrated into national agendas. National Forestry and Grassland Administration (NFGA,) on behalf of central government, has been committed to biodiversity conservation and ecosystem services and provided all types of supports. Establishment of a national park was one of the important supporting measures to address the biodiversity conservation and ecosystem services issues. The results produced by the Project will sustain in the National Park even if the Project ends.
215. In addition, there are strong ownership, interest and commitment among the local governments and among other stakeholders, extending to the critical levels of government that have the power to sustain project outcomes. In this context, the continuous support was important to sustain community ownership/interest in the outcomes of the project. Therefore, ownership of the Project is fairly resilient to changes in government. At the same time, the implementation of the Project increased the capacity at the local level (the beneficiaries and the local institutions) and the overall understanding of the stakeholders at subnational level (the technical partners and its associated institutions). Thus, the Project strengthened socio-political sustainability through its implementation.
216. In general, the sustainability of project outcomes has a low degree of dependency on social/political factors at the local levels. It builds on trust and stable socio-political relationships of people at the local level, and community level. It also relies on long-term relationships with stable partners, and finally it takes a strong objective scientific approach allowing to stay on the technical side and avoid getting involved in politics.

Rating for Socio-political Sustainability: Likely

Financial Sustainability

217. The maintenance and development of Project outputs, particularly the ones under Outcome 2, depend heavily on future financial support. The key activities under Outcome 2.2 and 2.3 requiring continuous funding include maintenance, continuous capacity building, and stakeholder engagement. The frequent updates, technical improvements, and integration with national systems are essential to keep the outputs/outcomes sustainable. In the short term, the Project can secure funding by transitioning to a subsequent project, or a Phase II project, reflecting financial sustainability and the interest of participating provinces or counties. However, long-term financial sustainability remains a concern as funding is related to the new project phase. The continued financial support will rely on sustained government support at the central and provincial level, international development partners, and other donors.
218. The short-term financial sustainability was ensured as the results of the Project have been integrated into the follow-up project. A Phase II project will secure future funding and demonstrate the HFD' commitment to the project's outcomes. However, to ensure long-term sustainability, the future project should include a more detailed financial plan, such as national budget allocations or international partnerships, to support project outputs beyond donor funding and beyond the Project period. Exploring financial

incentives and cost-sharing models and fostering country-driven funding mechanisms would also be crucial for reducing reliance on external support.

219. The consultations indicated that the long-term financial sustainability of the Project remained uncertain. While some opportunities for future funding were identified through cooperation with other projects or donors, the lack of long-term financial resources for maintaining the project's outcomes was considered as a challenge. Although the project had benefited from substantial funding, particularly from Government of China, there was still a need to diversify funding sources to ensure continued funding.
220. Overall, the project outputs/outcomes are reliant, to great extent, on future funding for continued success and sustainability. The short term required funding can be secured through a Phase II project, demonstrating substantial progress in addressing the project's financial needs. The project can ensure its long-term financial sustainability by integrating its results into provincial government development plan, which was one of the key outcomes.

Rating for Financial Sustainability: Likely

Institutional Sustainability

221. The sustainability of Project results was, to great extent, reliant on institutional frameworks and governance structures. The institutional support mechanisms under the Convention on Biological Diversity officered a robust framework to sustain and institutionalize some Project results. These mechanisms, complemented by UNEP's focus on international environmental issues, ensure a high level of institutional support.
222. The Institutional capacity-building efforts under Outcome 3 of the Project enhanced the skills and knowledge of key individuals and institutions, increasing the likelihood of sustained support. As a consequence, the stakeholders engaged in implementing the Project within province were, in general, equipped with the necessary competencies to maintain and effectively utilize the skills and knowledge. These individuals, given their expected retention in relevant positions, were well-positioned to continue contributing to the project's outcomes.
223. Nevertheless, a challenge was found in integrating Project outcomes beyond biodiversity-oriented institutions and stakeholders. For instance, while biodiversity-related institutions demonstrated strong capacity and readiness to sustain the Project's benefits, the officers and staff in other government departments, such as planning and development, needed more substantial integration of project outcomes. This gap posed a threat to the broader institutionalization of the Project's achievements at subnational levels.
224. While the institutional support mechanisms and capacity development efforts appeared robust and aligned with governance frameworks, the future projects must focus on the expanding the reach of institutional achievements at the national level. This approach will ensure broader and more sustainable impacts.
225. Overall, the sustainability of project outcomes relies on the institutional support. A robust mechanism was in place to support the institutionalization of Project results. The capacity of relevant individuals was enhanced, and they were likely to remain in positions where they could sustain these results. Further, an exit strategy with an institutional component has been initiated to guide the transition and ensure the continuation of project achievements. However, there is a need for more substantial integration of Project results through the institutions other than the areas in biodiversity conservation and ecosystem services. In addition, the future projects must focus on outreach of institutional achievements at the national or international level to ensure the sustainable achievements.

Rating for Institutional Sustainability: Likely

Rating for Sustainability (Likelihood): Likely

I. Factors Affecting Performance and Cross-Cutting Issues

Preparation and Readiness

226. An inception process for the Project took place in mid-2018 once the PCA was signed and involved key stakeholders. However, the evidence from PIMS indicated that a second Project Deep Dive Review took place on December 5, 2018. This type of review was an opportunity for project stakeholders, program management, and senior officials to assess risks, identify problems, and strategically align project plans. However, it is unclear if/when the first Project Deep Dive Review took place, rather Minutes from the first Steering Committee meeting (September 2018) mainly concentrated on the exchange of information among participants.
227. Some other crucial elements were either incomplete or lacked sufficient details. For example, the work plan was not updated during the project's inception phase and, thus, did not provide sufficient details to fully guide implementation. No evidence was found of a detailed procurement plan, and the Environmental and Social Safeguards (ESE) assessment was not updated -though conducted during the project's design phase and included as an Annex of the Project Document. In addition, the Project Document was not updated for situation analysis, institutional analysis, stakeholder analysis, baseline and gap analysis, risk analysis and rationale for GEF interventions.
228. The expected start date was 24/12/2015, when the project received GEF CEO approval, but the actual start date was 25/05/2018, when the Project Cooperation Agreement (PCA) was signed. As the first disbursement was in July 2018, the period between Project Start and the first disbursement of funds was less than three months, reflecting a relatively efficient timeline. Staffing mobilization was undertaken promptly, and the project team effectively managed personnel changes to minimize disruptions.
229. In summary, the delay between GEF CEO Approval and PCA signature and subsequent delay in the inception process limited the project's ability to fully capitalize on opportunities identified during the design process and mitigate foreseeable risks at the outset. The evidence indicated that an inception meeting was held but the Project Document including an annual work plan and a procurement plan was not updated.

Rating for Preparation and Readiness: Moderately Satisfactory

Quality of Project Management and Supervision

230. The Project Management and Supervision demonstrated overall effectiveness and efficiency in implementing and guiding the Project towards achieving its planned results. While there were areas for improvement in the early stages of implementation, significant progress was made as the Project advanced, especially under the Project management team (including PMU and PIU) from 2019 onward. During the early stage, the project management team faced challenges, such as the absence of a standard inception process, lack of updated monitoring and reporting, and insufficient organization of Project records in the PIMS. Since 2019, the Project benefitted from improved management practices, including more detailed reporting, and greater focus on the feedback from workshops and training activities. These changes addressed part of the weaknesses presented at the inception phase.

231. The governance structure was generally appropriate, as evidenced by the establishment of a Project Steering Committee (PSC) with appropriate representation from UNEP, HFD, and other implementing partners. The PSC meetings were held normally once a year throughout the Project period. The first Steering Committee meeting, only held in second half of 2018, focused primarily on updating the relevant documents and exchanging information. The PSC functioned well, providing good oversight and guidance throughout the project period.
232. The Project Management Team implemented the Project and undertook the daily activities very well, with a constructive and effective working relationship with all types of Project partners. The staff at UNEP was managed with minimal turnover and support by documentation and information exchange from UNEP. Moreover, all staff demonstrated the necessary capacity to meet project requirements and were strategically located to ensure efficient implementation.
233. Through the document review and consultations, the stakeholders were satisfied with the project management and supervision, particularly their commitment, enthusiasm, and ability to communicate clearly about planned activities. Despite the negative impact posed by the COVID-19 pandemic, the Project management team demonstrated resilience and adaptability, ensuring that deadlines were met most of the time.
234. Overall, the Project has been managed and supervised effectively by a strong Project management team and a functioning Steering Committee, with an excellent working relationship with all Project partners. Regular and constructive communication between the PMU/PIU and UNEP staff has been maintained, and both UNEP and Executing Agency provided strong leadership. In addition, the Project demonstrated strong adaptive management, with prompt responses to changes of needs and priorities. However, the document review and consultations indicated that staff relocation/turnover at UNEP and the implementing partners delayed the key activities, and thus delayed timely delivery of Project outputs/outcomes.

Rating for Quality of Project Management and Supervision: Satisfactory

Stakeholders Participation and Cooperation

235. The stakeholder participation and cooperation in the Project were assessed from two phases. During the design phase, the stakeholders, being consulted, felt that their views were not adequately reflected in the final design. In addition, no updated participatory situation analysis, updated risk analysis or the theory of change and results framework was not collaboratively developed, undermining the early stakeholder alignment and support. As a consequence, the Project missed an opportunity to foster ownership and collaboration from the outset.
236. During the implementation phase, the stakeholder participations were improved. The Project Steering Committee, consisted of a group of key stakeholders, became a focal point for engagement. A total of six Project Steering Committee meeting minutes were reviewed and analyzed, occurring at average intervals of one year throughout the project. The participants at the Project Steering Committee meetings expressed their views, reflecting of their sustained interest. The minutes indicated the presence of number of participants each time. In all meetings, almost all entities represented on the Project Steering Committee were in attendance. However, these meetings primarily served as forums for information exchange and coordination, rather than platforms for strategic steering or design updates.
237. In addition to the formal meetings, the stakeholder participations were facilitated in the events and side meetings, particularly during the period of the constraints posed by

the COVID-19 pandemic. These interactions allowed for supplementary participation and collaboration, although under limited conditions.

238. In practice, the Project implemented a moderate analysis of stakeholder groups, balancing inclusivity with feasibility through virtual platform. While efforts to promote stakeholder ownership were limited in the inception phase, the Project management team provided good support for participation and collaboration, particularly through WeChat, through which, the Project also maintained mostly effective, though occasionally irregular communication with stakeholders.
239. Overall, although the stakeholder participation improved during implementation, the Project faced challenges in engagement, with limited but effective efforts to promote stakeholder ownership. The Project provided a virtual platform to facilitate participatory processes and thus strengthened the stakeholders' participation and cooperation, and finally the ownership throughout the Project.

Rating for Stakeholders Participation and Cooperation: Moderately Satisfactory

Responsiveness to Human Rights and Gender Equality

240. The final review analysed the extent to which these cross-cutting issues, such as human rights, gender equality and social inclusion, and LNOB, were taken into account and whether any dedicated interventions on these issues were delivered during the implementation.
241. During the Project design, UNEP's policies on human rights and gender equality integration were not yet fully developed. The Project only considered human rights, gender equality and other cross-cutting issues by developing an Indigenous People Plan (IPP), covering Section A: Current Status and Considerations, Section B: Indigenous people's Plan, c) Involvement in community based activities including alternative livelihoods and conservation, and awareness promotion activities, d) Capacity Building, and e) Specific Measures.
242. The indigenous peoples, while considered as biodiversity beneficiaries through improved information access, were not directly involved in the Project design or implementation. Moreover, the extent to which Indigenous knowledge was valued and integrated into the project's tools and outputs was neither systematically monitored nor explicitly addressed.
243. The role of disadvantaged groups in environmental protection and rehabilitation was addressed primarily through promoting gender equity in participation. As indicated in the MTR, the Project consistently met or exceeded its target of at least 25% representation of women in the activities.¹³
244. During the Project implementation, the Project has developed a Training Manual on Gender Mainstream, and a Training Manual on Facilitating Women in Ecological Conservation and Promoting Gender Mainstreaming during the Project implementation.
245. In addition, attendance records from the Project Steering Committee meeting minutes indicated that women's participation ratio ranged between approximately 20% and 30%, suggesting commendable progress in enhancing women's participation, although broader engagement of disadvantaged groups remained limited.
246. However, the Project did not mainstream human rights, gender equality and other cross-cutting issues into the activities, outputs, or outcomes, and reporting except for Outcome 2.1.d and Outcome 3.2.a. In particular, the Project did not conduct a detailed

¹³ MTR

analysis on the vulnerabilities faced by disadvantaged groups, particularly women, children, and indigenous peoples. Although there was an annex called Indigenous People Plan in the Project Document, there was no systematic approach to incorporating these cross-cutting issues into implementation. In addition, the project did not demonstrate a good performance in addressing inequalities, vulnerabilities, and the role of disadvantaged groups in environmental management.

247. Overall, the evidence suggested that human rights and gender considerations were not integrated into project implementation, result interpretation, and project reporting. Minor attention was given to human rights and gender in the project implementation. More importantly, the Project did not promote human rights and gender equality by designing special interventions in the area of biodiversity conservation and ecosystem improvement.

Rating for Responsiveness to Human Rights and Gender Equality: Moderately Satisfactory

Environmental and Social Safeguards

248. To address this requirement UNEP/GEF has developed a checklist which was included in the Project Document with the following guidance:

1. Executing Agency is responsible for completing the checklist with support from UNEP/GEF Task Manager.
2. Checklist shall initially be filled in during concept development to help guide in the identification of possible risks and activities that will need to be assessed and included in the project design.
3. The checklist shall accompany the PIF with the relevant column completed.
4. Checklist shall be updated during PPG phase and mitigation measures, including responsibility for addressing issues shall be indicated in relevant column
5. Final checklist shall be submitted with Project Package to PRC clearly showing what activities have been assessed and how negative impact will be avoided or mitigated, incl. responsibility for mitigation measures.
6. Checklist and planned mitigation measures shall be reviewed annually at PIR stage, to ensure that planned mitigation measures are taking place and that any previously unanticipated issues are identified and addressed.
7. Checklists and implementation will be reviewed by UNEP/GEF annually during PIR review, at Mid-term and at Terminal Evaluation stage.

249. The check list completed during the project design stage indicated that no significant environmental or social impacts were anticipated. As part of the GEF's evolving Fiduciary Standards, Implementing Agencies have to include and address 'Environmental and Social Safeguards'.

250. However, the Project established a management plan to address social and environmental issues. As a result, serious social and environmental issues were addressed as they emerged, but sometimes too late, e.g. wildlife damage, climate shocks such as flood and drought, fires and ice storms. Although some of the social issues were serious, most of the environmental issues would have benefited from detailed planning rather than reactive measures.

251. Overall, the environmental and social impacts on key stakeholders and in particular on the most vulnerable groups were considered or addressed, but to a limited extent although there was a management plan to address safeguards. The review of risk assessments tended to be oversight and the extent of the problems was under-reported.

Rating for Environmental and Social Safeguards: Moderately Satisfactory

Country Ownership and Driven-ness

252. The involvement of government and public sector agencies in the Project has an impact on the ownership of the intended project achievements, particularly in terms of moving from outputs to outcomes and from outcomes to intermediate targets/impact. In spite of some positive efforts, there were some weaknesses in country ownership, which affected the long-term sustainability and impact of the Project.
253. One of the weaknesses was the absence of country-level representation in the Project Steering Committee since none of the institutions within the key stakeholder groups represented the national-level organisations. In addition, the Project Steering Committee did not have representation from sectors beyond biodiversity, such as national development planning or other relevant ministries. This absence of diverse institutional representation resulted in a shortage of strategic guidance for Project delivery, limiting national ownership and reducing the potential for organizational restructuring at the national level.
254. However, while a subnational project did not necessarily need national government representation on the Project Steering Committee, early involvement of national governments through a task force could have been designed. Such an initiative could have promoted a more interactive approach to developing and implementing solutions for national ownership.

In spite of these weaknesses, the Project tried hard to ensure certain country ownership. The consultations suggested that some ministries, particularly National Forestry and Grassland Administration (NFGA) demonstrated leadership in strategic planning, and aligning project goals with national biodiversity strategy. NFGA also allocated resources and initiated complementary activities to sustain the Project outcomes.

255. In general, the provincial government and public sector agencies played a leadership role in driving change, endorsing Project results, and ensure national ownership. The lack of strategic representation (absence of country-level representation in the PSC) and involvement of key institutions beyond the biodiversity sector (such as NDRC), limited the project's country ownership.

Rating for Country Ownership and Driven-ness: Moderately Unsatisfactory

Communication and Public Awareness

256. The project was designed at the three core components with associated outcomes and outputs. The third component Education, Awareness & Communication was directly associated with communication and public awareness. As a cross-cutting issue throughout the Project period, the communication and public awareness were assessed at two complementary levels: site/community level and national/global level.
257. At the Project site and community level, there was effective communication of learning and exchange of experience among Project stakeholders. This communication activity was well targeted at the core audiences (local leaders, beneficiaries, the population at large, including the most marginalised groups) by utilising various and complementary tools such as newspaper, websites, radio, and TV. The local awareness-raising activities were effective in influencing the behaviour of the wider community. For example, local people eagerly planted targeted species in their own fields, and many more villages participated in the Project than originally targeted. At the subnational level, the Project benefited from the support from the HFD that published Project information in its website.
258. At the national, regional or international level, the Project conducted some tailor-made communication to a specialised environmental audience with several publications. The Project published environment materials and Project information in its bilingual website

and once on the UNEP/GEF website. These were specific, scientifically based publications on the fringes of the project's main objective. The project also produced some short videos and a documentary that was broadcast on the website/TV.

259. However, the Project did not proactively employ communication channels such as X, Facebook, or newsletters and networks such as a pool of UN agencies, development aid, NGOs, and national government agencies. As a result, the Project's achievements were not well-known, even within the environmental sector at national and international level. This poor communication and public awareness strategy had serious consequences for realizing the overall Project's objectives.

260. Overall, the communication and public awareness had been conducted, but the results were not as effective as expected. It had been largely ineffective in driving change towards outcomes beyond outputs at the national and international levels.

Rating for Communication and Public Awareness: Moderately Unsatisfactory

Rating for Factors Affecting Performance: Moderately Satisfactory

V. CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

A. Conclusions

261. Overall, the performance was assessed as **Satisfactory** against the standard UNEP review criteria including adaptive management and outreach. The analysis of the findings above leads to the following core conclusions.
262. The Project results framework was generally well designed to provide the Project management team with a clear vision needed to implement the Project in expansion and Improvement of Biodiversity Conservation and Sustainable Use of Natural Resources in the GSA, Hubei Province, China. However, the Project results framework did not provide a good instrument for M&E as it was not well equipped with a set of output indicators with baseline and target values and was not sufficient or adequate in many cases to measure the progress or verify the achievements for 18 outputs.
263. There was no Theory of Change (ToC) with underlying assumptions and drivers during the Project design.
264. UNEP's extensive presence in the Asia Pacific region and strong partnership with other UN agencies and member countries in the region, as well as technical capacities of the staff and strong accountability for results were recognized as the important factors for successful implementation of the Project.
265. The Project was aligned with UNEP's mandate and thematic priorities as presented in the MTS cycles 2018-2021 and 2022-2025, as well as their respective PoWs (2018-2019, 2020-2021, and 2022-2025). The Project was aligned with the GEF-5 Focal Area strategies on Biodiversity, particularly its objective 1 and objective 2. The Project was relevant for global sustainable priorities: SDG 15 was a response to capacity challenges and needs that were initially identified in the PD, was relevant for global biodiversity priorities as set out by the CBD.
266. The Project was in line with the Chinese government's 14th Five-Year Plan (2021-2025) for National Economic and Social Development and Vision 2035 of PRC, NEPD for 2021-2035, NFNDRP 2006-2030, and NBSAP 2011-2030. The Project significantly contributed to the theory of change for the relevant outcome especially in addressing biodiversity conservation and sustainable use of natural resources, suggesting that it remained relevant to its objective throughout the Project. However, the Project focused more on implementing subnational-level decisions and less on global and regional level cooperation, limiting its overall impact.
267. The Project expanded and improved biodiversity conservation and sustainable use of natural resources in the GSA by leveraging its comparative advantages among UN agencies while it employed a multidisciplinary approach to position itself sub-nationally as a leader in this area and thus ensured internal coherence. The external coherence was also ensured as the Project promoted complementarity, harmonisation and coordination with other key external agencies, such as GIZ, to maximise the achievement of results funded by GEF.
268. The Project was generally effective in delivering planned results in 3 components based on the actual values against the target values for each outcome indicator. However, the outcome indicator was not an appropriate indicator to be used for assessing the effective performance of the Project as the outcome indicator was the third step of the logical chain from activities to outputs to outcomes.
269. The Project was implemented efficiently as most outputs had been produced cost-effectively and the PSC and PMU worked well. Efficiency was ensured through strong commitment of the PMU and support from a wide range of stakeholders and the UNEP

regional office. However, the original monitoring and evaluation framework was not updated during Inception Phase and was not used for efficient implementation. The implementation efficiency was further hampered by the delayed mobilisation of the key partners and consultants, and the turnover of the key staff in the PMU, which resulted in loss of institutional memory and lack of continuity and consistency in Project implementation at times.

270. The Project has contributed to the achievement of intended results. When comparing key results with the objective, the Project had a significantly positive impact on the expansion and Improvement of Biodiversity Conservation and Sustainable Use of Natural Resources in the GSA, Hubei Province, China. For some outputs, the Project has expanded and surpassed the targets originally intended in the Project Document such as the delivery of insurance product and direct subsidy for compensating the losses and income generating activities due to wildlife damages or stop logging.
271. The Project made an important contribution to the long-term sustainable capacity development in biodiversity conservation and sustainable use of natural resources. The Project produced a wide range of high-quality outputs. In particular, those under Outcome 2.3.2 (populations of at least one primate and one middle-sized mammal (Class I & II species) stable or improving in the GSA) and Outcome 2.3.3 (# of vegetation transects established & generating data) ensure that 7 NRs have the capacity to deliver the outputs beyond the Project period and thus ensure sustainability of Project results.
272. The short-term financial risk is minimal while the long-term financial risk exists if funding from Hubei Government or international donors such as GEF diminishes, as the financial risk will impact the sustainability of the Project's outputs. The institutional and socio-political risks are relatively small for the sustainability of the Project's outputs.
273. The project design did not consider human rights, gender equality and "leave no one behind" (LNOB), nor did it provide specific logical chains to address cross-cutting issues that were mentioned in the results framework and monitoring and evaluation frameworks. As such, the Project was unable to integrate these cross-cutting issues in delivery, monitoring and reporting. In particular, the implementation phase lacked specific activities dedicated to human rights, gender equality and social inclusion, and LNOB. The design of future projects should ensure the inclusion of specific activities to address this.

Responses to Key Strategic Questions

274. The review Terms of Reference included a set of strategic questions of interest to UNEP:
 - Q1: To what extent has the Project enhanced the capacity in development planning of production sectors in GSA?
 - Q2: To what extent has the Project strengthened and expanded the GSA NR Network and Ecological Monitoring?
 - Q3: To what extent has the Project improved the capacity in education, awareness and communication associated with biodiversity conservation and sustainable use of natural resources in GSA?
186. Regarding Q1, the Project made an important contribution to the long-term sustainable capacity development in biodiversity conservation and sustainable use of natural resources, including development planning of production sectors in GSA. Through Output 1.1.1, Project consultants and PIU teams communicated frequently with the teams from the Hubei Provincial DRC, Baokang County DRC and Shennongjia Forest District DRC on the development planning; provided advice on biodiversity conservation and ecosystem services and how to mainstream these issues into the local 14th Five-

Year Plans; and were involved in revising the Five-Year Plans for Shennongjia Forestry District as well as Baokang County. Under the 14th Five-Year Plan (2021-2025) for National Economic and Social Development and Vision 2035 of Hubei Province, Chapter 4 provided a guideline on the implementation of biodiversity projects. In particular, Section 4 of Chapter 4 clearly indicated the support to the pilot national park programme and implementation of this UNEP/GEF Project. Through Output 1.1.2, the Project developed a Technical Report on Biodiversity Mainstreaming in the Government Development Planning based on the requirements in the Project Document, which provided a guideline for mainstreaming the biodiversity and ecosystem services into the sector plans such as the plans in the provincial Ecological and Environmental Department, Agriculture and Rural Affairs Department, Transport Department, Natural Resources Department, Cultural and Tourist Department, and other departments. At the same time, the Project formulated a training manual on the biodiversity and environmental protection.

275. Regarding strategic question two, the project improved management effectiveness in existing GSA nature reserves (indicated by improved METT scores of 85 in the 7 NRs), increased habitat integrity of areas under protection in the GSA, and improved landscape-based species- and habitat protection through better planning, population monitoring and targeted actions in GSA. However, the project did not manage to increase the adoption of inclusive and gender sensitive co-management principles and practices in GSA NRs (estimated at 50% accomplished).
276. Regarding strategic question three, the project is deemed to have improved capacity of provincial and local governments to conduct environmental education programs for promoting awareness of decision makers and the general public on the importance of protecting biodiversity and ecosystem services to sustainable development in GSA. It also improved communications and enhanced awareness in GSA landscape of Hubei Province on biodiversity, ecosystems conservation and sustainable development, as indicated by 100% achievement of the indicators for Component 3.

Summary of project findings and ratings

277. The overall assessment of the project was rated as Satisfactory, based on the 'weightings table for evaluation criteria rating' following the Evaluation Office of UNEP guidelines. The project performed well in areas such as Strategic Relevance, Financial Management, Effectiveness, Sustainability, and Monitoring and Reporting. It received moderate ratings in Quality of Project Design, Efficiency, Factors Affecting Performance and Cross-Cutting Issues. The table below summarizes the ratings and key findings discussed in Chapter V.

UNEP Evaluation Office Validation of Performance Ratings:

The UNEP Evaluation Office formally quality assesses (see Annex XV) management led Terminal Review reports and validates the performance ratings therein by ensuring that the performance judgments made are consistent with evidence presented in the Review report and in-line with the performance standards set out for independent evaluations.

The Evaluation Office assesses a Terminal Review report in the same way as it assesses the initial draft of a Terminal Evaluation report. It applies the following assumptions in its validation process:

- That what is being assessed is the contents of the report and the extent to which it makes a consistent and justifiable case for the performance ratings it records.
- That the consultant has, within the report, presented all the evidence that was made available to them.
- That the Review has been based on a robust Theory of Change, reconstructed where necessary, which reflects UNEP's definitions at all levels of results.
- That the project team and key stakeholders have already reviewed a draft version of the report and provided substantive comments and made factual corrections to the Review Consultant, who has responded to them. The Evaluation Office assumes, therefore, that it has received the Final (revised) version of the report.

In this instance the Evaluation Office finds that the Report satisfactory and validates the overall project performance rating at the '**Satisfactory**' level.

Table 12: Summary of project findings and ratings¹⁴

Criterion	Summary assessment	Rating	Justification for any ratings' changes due to validation (to be completed by the UNEP Evaluation Office – EOU)	EOU Validated Rating
Strategic Relevance		S	Using the Weighted Tables Rating, this rating should be rated as 'Highly Satisfactory'. The Evaluation Office therefore validates it at the 'Highly Satisfactory' level.	HS
1. Alignment to UNEP MTS, POW and strategic priorities	The Project was aligned with UNEP's mandate and thematic priorities as presented in the MTS cycles 2018-2021 and 2022-2025, as well as their respective PoWs (2018-2019, 2020-2021, and 2022-2025). The Project was relevant to UNEP's BSP and SSC policies. Alignment was also identified for PoW Expected Accomplishment indicators (2018-2019 and 2020-2021) and Nature action subprogramme indicators (2022-2025). Despite limited evidence, Output 2.3.1 and Output 2.3.3 were instrumental in promoting UNEP's knowledge products.	HS	Rating Validated	HS

¹⁴ Most criteria will be rated on a six-point scale as follows: Highly Satisfactory (HS); Satisfactory (S); Moderately Satisfactory (MS); Moderately Unsatisfactory (MU); Unsatisfactory (U); Highly Unsatisfactory (HU). Sustainability and Likelihood of Impact are rated, also on a six-point scale, from Highly Likely (HL) down to Highly Unlikely (HU) and Nature of External Context is rated from Highly Favourable (HF) to Highly Unfavourable (HU).

Criterion	Summary assessment	Rating	Justification for any ratings' changes due to validation (to be completed by the UNEP Evaluation Office – EOU)	EOU Validated Rating
2. Alignment to Donor/Partner strategic priorities	The Project was aligned with the GEF-5 Focal Area strategies on Biodiversity, particularly its objective 1: “Improving the sustainability of protected areas systems” and objective 2: “Mainstreaming biodiversity conservation and sustainable use into production landscapes/seascapes and sectors”. The Project was in line with one of Chinese government’s priority: Improving the Ecosystem, under Chapter 37, 14th Five-Year Plan (2021-2025) for National Economic and Social Development and Vision 2035 of the People's Republic of China, National Ecosystem Protection and Development Plan for 2021-2035, National Forestry Nature Reserve Development Plan (2006-2030), and China’s National Biodiversity Strategy and Action Plan (NBSAP) for the period 2011-2030.	HS	Rating Validated	HS

Criterion	Summary assessment	Rating	Justification for any ratings' changes due to validation (to be completed by the UNEP Evaluation Office – EOU)	EOU Validated Rating
3. Relevance to global, regional, sub-regional and national environmental priorities	The Project was relevant for global sustainable priorities: SDG 15 Life on land: Protect, restore and promote sustainable use of terrestrial ecosystems, sustainably manage forests, combat desertification, and halt and reverse land degradation and halt biodiversity loss; and especially targets: 15.1, 15.2, 15.4, 15.8 and 15.9. The Project was a response to capacity challenges and needs that were initially identified in the PD. 101. The Project was relevant for global biodiversity priorities as set out by the CBD. However, the evidence from document review and consultations indicated that the Project focused more on implementing sub-national-level decisions, but less on global and regional level cooperation, limiting its overall impact.	S	Rating Validated	S
4. Complementarity with relevant existing interventions/coherence	The project complemented the GEF-funded initiatives approved at the time of Project launch up to 2018 such as the UNDP-GEF Project that was also being implemented by HFD with activities related to strengthening provincial capacities for conservation management was planned and implemented jointly by the same PMU/PIU to avoid duplication and enhance synergy.	S	Rating Validated	S

Criterion	Summary assessment	Rating	Justification for any ratings' changes due to validation (to be completed by the UNEP Evaluation Office – EOU)	EOU Validated Rating
Quality of Project Design	The Project was generally well designed. However, there was no Theory of Change (ToC) with underlying assumptions and drivers. The work plan was not well designed and did not provide sufficient details for planning and implementation. The value for money strategies were not mentioned in the Project Document. There is no “sustainability strategy” or “exit strategy” explicitly mentioned and detailed in the Project Document. Although the gender issues were mainstreamed in the context, implementation, log frame, and the budget, the Project Document did not design specific interventions to promote gender equality and women empowerment. The results framework and M&E framework did not provide a set of indicators with baseline and target values for each output.	MS	Rating Validated	MS
Nature of External Context	Since the second quarter of 2020, the COVID-19 pandemic's impact on the project implementation had become obvious, including stopping staff and stakeholder travel and in-person meetings. The document review and consultations confirmed that the COVID-19 pandemic had a significantly negative impact on the project. The immediate result was the shift from in-person activities to virtual meetings and workshops, that affected the efficiency and effectiveness of certain Project interventions. There was also an ice storm in 2023, which caused tremendous impact on the Project implementation and livelihood of local households inside and outside the NRs.	MS	The criteria for Nature of External Context is rated from 'Highly Unfavourable' to 'Highly Favourable'. The rating is adjusted to 'Moderately Favourable'.	MF
Effectiveness		S	Rating Validated	S

Criterion	Summary assessment	Rating	Justification for any ratings' changes due to validation (to be completed by the UNEP Evaluation Office – EOU)	EOU Validated Rating
1. Availability of outputs	The project delivered most planned activities within the adjusted timeframe and budget, and successfully achieved all outputs. However, there were no output indicators with baseline and target to assess the effectiveness of the Project in terms of outputs. Some outputs, the outputs delivered might not exactly match the intended outputs and needed detailed review on the content.	S	Rating Validated	S
2. Achievement of project outcomes	The review assessed the extent to which the Project outcome was achieved against outcome-level indicators defined in the results framework. In spite of the pandemic, the outcome-level indicators remained unchanged to better measure the progress toward the implementation of the Project. This review also analysed to what extent the assumptions and drivers for progress from project outputs to outcomes/impact were held and in place. The results suggested that most target values had been achieved and the assumptions for progress from project outputs to outcomes were mostly met, while drivers to support the transition from outputs to outcomes were in place.	S	Rating Validated	S

Criterion	Summary assessment	Rating	Justification for any ratings' changes due to validation (to be completed by the UNEP Evaluation Office – EOU)	EOU Validated Rating
3. Likelihood of impact	The likelihood of achieving the intended impact was rated as "Moderately Likely" as the aspects of the project outcome that are crucial for attaining the intermediate state were achieved. As mentioned in previous sections, the assumptions for the transition from project outputs to project outcomes were valid and the drivers were in place to support the transition from outputs to project outcomes. Some intermediate results were partially achieved. The assumptions for the process of change from intermediate targets to impact were valid, and drivers to support the transition from intermediate state to impact were partially in place.	ML	Rating Validated	ML
Financial Management		S	Rating Validated at 'Highly Satisfactory' as per the Weighted Rating matrix.	HS
1. Adherence to UNEP's financial policies and procedures	The Project followed both UNEP and Chinese accounting standards, policies and procedures for GEF and counterpart funds respectively. The Project used the existing accounting system to record the financial transactions of the Project, and proved to be a good control, cost allocation, and reporting system.	HS	Rating Validated	HS

Criterion	Summary assessment	Rating	Justification for any ratings' changes due to validation (to be completed by the UNEP Evaluation Office – EOU)	EOU Validated Rating
2. Completeness of project financial information	all required documents, including project budgets, disbursement records, expenditure sheets, and legal agreements, were completed and timely accessible for review. The items on project expenditure and detailed budgets were provided annually and quarterly and signed by the Project Manager (PM)/Financial Management Officer (FMO). A financial summary is presented in Section Project Financing and Annex VI and Table 11 presents the Financial Management overview.	HS	Rating Validated	HS
3. Communication between finance and project management staff	The good communication between the PM and FMO had positive impacts on the Project implementation, ensuring timely delivery and a responsive, adaptive management approach. Both the PM and FMO were well-informed about the project's financial conditions and physical progress, with regular contact between them. All these contributed to successful Project results.	S	The evidence presented in the Review Findings narrative above and checked against the Ratings Matrix is consistent with a rating of 'Highly Satisfactory'	HS
Efficiency	The Project generally utilized resources efficiently and achieved cost-effective results despite challenges like the COVID-19 pandemic. The Project had one justified no-cost extension of one year and included justified amendments to the formally approaches for achieving Project's outcomes.	MS	The evidence presented in the Review Findings narrative above and checked against the Ratings Matrix is consistent with a rating of 'Satisfactory'	S
Monitoring and Reporting		MS	Rating Validated at the 'Satisfactory' level as per the Weighted Ratings matrix.	S

Criterion	Summary assessment	Rating	Justification for any ratings' changes due to validation (to be completed by the UNEP Evaluation Office – EOU)	EOU Validated Rating
1. Monitoring design and budgeting	In the Project Document, there was a Monitoring and a Reporting Plan based on the UNEP standards. Based on the original Monitoring and Reporting Plan, the periodic monitoring was conducted through six-monthly reviews. The data was collected based on the results framework's means of verification, tracked progress against outputs, milestones, deliverables, and indicators. However, the Project only considered process indicators at the outcome level while ignoring impact indicator and output indicators. The outcome indicators did not follow the SMART criteria and could have been improved during the implementation.	MS	Rating Validated	MS
2. Monitoring of project implementation	A detailed monitoring system was not actually implemented and the data generated by the implementation of the monitoring plan during the period of the project had not been used to adapt and improve project implementation, achieve results and ensure sustainability. Some of the outcome indicators used showed limitations in their relevance for a comprehensive review of the Project. While outputs and impact, were documented in the monitoring plan and results framework, the Project lacked more indicators capable of effectively measuring outputs and concrete impact in Hubei Province, China, such as changes in provincial policies or improvements in integrating synergistic approaches.	MS	Rating Validated	MS

Criterion	Summary assessment	Rating	Justification for any ratings' changes due to validation (to be completed by the UNEP Evaluation Office – EOU)	EOU Validated Rating
3. Project reporting	184. In spite of the completeness of Project life documentation, challenges arose in that the reports were generally gender-neutral, except for documents specifically addressing gender-sensitive interventions. The data disaggregation by vulnerable or marginalized groups was absent across reporting. Finally, almost all reports were in Chinese and have not been released to the public or published.	MS	The evidence presented in the Review Findings narrative above and checked against the Ratings Matrix is consistent with a rating of 'Satisfactory'.	S
Sustainability		L	Rating Validated	L
1. Socio-political sustainability	The sustainability of project outcomes has a low degree of dependency on social/political factors at the local levels. It builds on trust and stable socio-political relationships of people at the local level, and community level. It also relies on long-term relationships with stable partners, and finally it takes a strong objective scientific approach allowing to stay on the technical side and avoid getting involved in politics.	L	Rating Validated	L

Criterion	Summary assessment	Rating	Justification for any ratings' changes due to validation (to be completed by the UNEP Evaluation Office – EOU)	EOU Validated Rating
2. Financial sustainability	The project outputs/outcomes are reliant, to great extent, on future funding for continued success and sustainability. The short term required funding can be secured through a Phase II project, demonstrating substantial progress in addressing the project's financial needs. The project can ensure its long-term financial sustainability by integrating its results into provincial government development plan, which was one of the key outcomes.	L	Rating Validated	L
3. Institutional sustainability	The sustainability of project outcomes rely on the institutional support. A robust mechanism was in place to support the institutionalization of Project results. The capacity of relevant individuals was enhanced, and they were likely to remain in positions where they could sustain these results. Further, an exit strategy with an institutional component has been initiated to guide the transition and ensure the continuation of project achievements. However, there is a need for more substantial integration of Project results through the institutions other than the areas in biodiversity conservation and ecosystem services. In addition, the future projects must focus on outreach of institutional achievements at the national or international level to ensure the sustainable achievements.	L	Rating Validated	L
Factors Affecting Performance		MS	Rating Validated	MS

Criterion	Summary assessment	Rating	Justification for any ratings' changes due to validation (to be completed by the UNEP Evaluation Office – EOU)	EOU Validated Rating
1. Preparation and readiness	The lack of a timely inception process limited the project's ability to fully capitalize on opportunities and mitigate foreseeable risks at the outset. The evidence indicated that a late inception meeting was held and the Project Document including an annual work plan and a procurement plan was not updated.	MS	Rating Validated	MS
2. Quality of project management and supervision		S	Rating Validated	S
2.1 UNEP/Implementing Agency:	The Project Implementation Team managed the Project and undertook the daily activities very well, with a constructive and effective working relationship with all types of Project partners. The staff at UNEP was managed with minimal turnover and support by documentation and information exchange from UNEP. Moreover, all staff demonstrated the necessary capacity to meet project requirements and were strategically located to ensure efficient implementation. However, the document review and consultations indicated that staff relocation/turnover at UNEP and the implementing partners delayed the key activities, and thus delayed timely delivery of Project outputs/outcomes.	S	Rating Validated	S

Criterion	Summary assessment	Rating	Justification for any ratings' changes due to validation (to be completed by the UNEP Evaluation Office – EOU)	EOU Validated Rating
2.2 Partners/Executing Agency:	The governance structure was generally appropriate, as evidenced by the establishment of a Project Steering Committee (PSC) with appropriate representation from UNEP, HFD, and other implementing partners. The PSC meetings were held normally once a year throughout the Project period. The first Steering Committee meeting, only held in second half of 2018, focused primarily on updating the relevant documents and exchanging information. The PSC functioned well, providing good oversight and guidance throughout the project period.	S	Rating Validated	S
3. Stakeholders' participation and cooperation	Although stakeholder participation improved during implementation, the Project faced challenges in engagement, with limited but effective efforts to promote stakeholder ownership. The Project provided a virtual platform to facilitate participatory processes and thus strengthen the stakeholder cooperation and ownership throughout the project.	S	The rating presented in the Review Findings section above is 'Moderately Satisfactory' and the rating is validated at 'Moderately Satisfactory'.	MS
4. Responsiveness to human rights and gender equality	The evidence suggested that human rights and gender considerations were not integrated into project implementation, result interpretation, and project reporting. Minor attention was given to human rights and gender in the project implementation. More importantly, the Project did not promote human rights and gender equality by designing special interventions in the area of biodiversity conservation and ecosystem improvement.	MS	Rating Validated	MS

Criterion	Summary assessment	Rating	Justification for any ratings' changes due to validation (to be completed by the UNEP Evaluation Office – EOU)	EOU Validated Rating
5. Environmental and social safeguards	The environmental and social impacts on key stakeholders and in particular on the most vulnerable groups were considered or addressed, but to a limited extent although there was a management plan to address safeguards. The review of risk assessments tended to be oversight and the extent of the problems was under-reported.	MS	Rating Validated	MS
6. Country ownership and driven-ness	The provincial government and public sector agencies played a leadership role in driving change, endorsing Project results, and ensure national ownership. The lack of strategic representation (absence of country-level representation in the PSC) and involvement of key institutions beyond the biodiversity sector (such as NDRC), limited the project's country ownership.	MU	Rating Validated	MU
7. Communication and public awareness	The communication and public awareness had been conducted, but the results were not as effective as expected. It had been largely ineffective in driving change towards outcomes beyond outputs at the national and international levels.	MU	The evidence presented in the Review Findings narrative above and checked against the Ratings Matrix is consistent with a rating of 'Moderately Satisfactory'	MS
Overall Project Performance Rating		S	Rating Validated	S

B. Lessons learned

Lesson Learned #1:	Consistent alignment of the Project activities and outputs with the UNEP Medium Term Strategy (MTS), Programme of Work (POW), persisting national needs, and GEF Strategic Priorities ensure the sustainability of the Project's results.
Context/comment:	An intervention that is aligned with the UNEP Medium Term Strategy (MTS), Programme of Work (POW), and GEF Strategic Priorities will ensure the sustainability of the intervention results. Response to and meet the development demand and priorities of national partner is among the most important factors that have successfully contributed to the sustainability of achieved results. (V.A and D)
Lesson Learned #2:	It is difficult to measure and verify the Project's effectiveness if the Project design does not include a set of output indicators.
Context/comment:	Project effectiveness can only be assessed based on the comparison of actual indicator values against the target values for each output, which is not an appropriate method to verify and measure. (V.D)
Lesson Learned #3:	Sharing best practices from the implementation, successful achievements attained and challenges faced through appropriate regional cooperation arrangements increases the catalytic impact of intervention.
Context/comment:	A coordinated management decision among participating NRs on the species with geographic range beyond a single GSA reserve was established based on the information management system. In particular, the Western Hubei and Eastern Chongqing Conservation Area Alliance was established, and annual alliance meetings were held continuously. The alliance agreement was signed and a joint monitoring on IAS was carried out. In addition, the Project established a cross sectoral coordination mechanism between Shennongjia and Baokang (led by HFD with other government departments). (Outcome 2.3.a, V.D)
Lesson Learned #4:	A well-functioning Project Steering Committee/board linked to the executing agency and a professional Project Management Team linked to the implementing agency will ensure project efficiency and good national ownership.
Context/comment:	A well-functioning PSC/board that supervises the project through providing a strategic direction and guidance and a professional Project Management Team that undertakes the routine daily activities will ensure an implementation efficiency and sustainability of Project outputs. (V.E and F)
Lesson Learned #5:	A results framework equipped with a logical chain from activities to outputs and outcomes/impacts, and a logical chain from activities to outputs/outcomes indicators with baseline and target values based on the Theory of Change enhances the effectiveness and efficiency of Project implementation.
Context/comment:	The effectiveness and efficiency are measured through results framework and monitoring and evaluation plan. (V.B and G).

Lesson Learned #6:	Adaptive management is a crucial tool for any project supported by international donors.
Context/comment:	It offers the necessary flexibility to review and update the approach to implementing the Project as needed to ensure the project outcomes while respecting the original project design. (V.C)

Lesson Learned #7:	Establishment of a sector (biodiversity and ecosystem service) policy and integration into national development plan is complicated and not a linear process due to its mixture with political agendas.
Context/comment:	A 5-year project timeframe is too short and does not provide enough time contingency for risks related to changing environmental, political and economic conditions, and does not provide enough time to realize the project achievements before the Project is completed. (V.D)

Lesson Learned #8:	Mainstreaming cross-cutting issues such as human rights, gender and vulnerable people in a project requires their integration in the project strategy as well as the implementation of specific activities and subsequent reporting of project progress.
Context/comment:	The Project included cross-cutting issues only in 2 outcome indicators and was not able to ensure a mainstreaming of the issues in the Project.

C. Recommendations

278. Cross-reference(s) to rationale and supporting discussions

- Section V. D and H

Recommendation #1:	It is recommended that future projects ensure the inclusion of representatives from various institutions in the Project Steering Committee to foster coherence and complementarity for planning, implementation and mainstreaming across institutions/ sectors.
Challenge/problem to be addressed by the recommendation:	Some respondents stated that the challenges (e.g., the lack of central government anchoring, insufficient focus on SDGs and cross-cutting issues in the Project activities) will have negative impacts on the Likelihood of Impact. Others emphasized the needs for enhanced capacity building, awareness, and institutionalization to realize the full potential of the interventions.
Priority Level:	1
Type of Recommendation	Agency
Responsibility:	PMU/PIU
Proposed implementation timeframe:	After 2026

279. Cross-reference(s) to rationale and supporting discussions

- Section V. G

Recommendation #2:	It is recommended that future projects use SMART indicators with “incremental” target values to be achieved by the end of the Project for each output and outcome for monitoring and evaluation purpose in the project results framework as now mandated by the GEF.
Challenge/problem to be addressed by the recommendation:	For two outcome indicators: 2.2.b. (Increase at least 120,000 ha new protected areas in GSA) and 2.2.c. (Enhanced forest connectivity – as measured through area (ha) and sustained governance of reforestation in Hectares, the target values were: 120,600ha gazette as new PA and 20,000 ha newly planted forest effectively connecting NRs respectively), the target values were vague. (V.D)
Priority Level:	1
Type of Recommendation	Project
Responsibility:	UNEP and PMU/PIU
Proposed implementation timeframe:	After 2026

280. Cross-reference(s) to rationale and supporting discussions:

- Section V.D

Recommendation #3:	In order to ensure the mainstreaming of cross-cutting issues such as human rights, gender and vulnerable people in a project, it is crucial to include them in the project activities, and outputs/outcomes with clear indicators in the results framework as well as part of reporting requirements in the quarterly and annual reports.
Challenge/problem to be addressed by the recommendation:	The role of disadvantaged groups in environmental protection and rehabilitation was addressed primarily through promoting gender equity in participation. The project consistently did not meet or exceeded its target of at least 25% representation of men or women in activities. For instance, as indicated in the MTR, among 1227 trainee in the project workshops, 299 were females, which accounted for around 20%, and was consistent with the ratio of females in employment.
Priority Level:	1
Type of Recommendation	Project
Responsibility:	UNEP/PMU/PIU
Proposed implementation timeframe:	After 2026

ANNEX I. RESPONSE TO STAKEHOLDER COMMENTS
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No comments were received.

ANNEX II. REVIEW FRAMEWORK/MATRIX

Review criteria/questions	Review indicators	Means of verifications
Criterion A. Strategic relevance		
A1. To what extent were the Project's implement strategies and delivered contribution <u>aligned with the UNEP</u> Medium Term Strategy (MTS) and Programme of Work (POW) and Strategic Priorities?	• UNEP's mandate and thematic priorities, as represented in the Medium-Term Strategy and Programme of Work under which the Project was approved (2017/2018).	• Project Document. • MTR, PIR/annual reports. • Interviews with UNEP staff, UNEP MTS and POW.
A2. To what extent was the Project <u>aligned with GEF</u> Focal areas and Strategic priorities?	• Level of alignment with GEF.	• Project Document. • MTR, PIR/annual reports. • Interview/survey with Task Manager.
A3. To what extent was the Project suited, or responding to Global, Regional, Sub-regional and National Environmental Priorities	• Level of alignment with global, regional, sub-regional and / or national environmental priorities.	• Project Document. • MTR, PIR/annual reports. • interview/survey with UNEP staff and Government officials.
A4. To what extent were the cross-cutting issues including human rights and gender equality adequately considered in Project design and implementation?	• Level of alignment with identified target group and beneficiary needs and priorities.	• Review output documents, discussion with partners and beneficiaries at community level.
A5. To what extent did the Project complement to or duplicate with other interventions by UNEP, GEF or other partners working in the area or on the same issue?	• Evidence of collaboration, cooperation and complementarity actions.	• Project Document, other projects from UNEP, other GEF projects, and MEAs. • Interviews with Task manager and MEAs.
Criterion B. Quality of Project Design	See Annex C	
Criterion C. Nature of external context		
To what extent was Project performance affected by conflict between conservation and human settlement, climate change, and restructuring of government departments?	• Reported extreme external events. • Reported level of adaptation. • Evidence of government reform.	• Safeguards in Project Document. • PIR/Annual progress reports, MTR. • Interviews with UNEP staff and implementing partners.
To what extent was Project performance affected by health (i.e. COVID-19) and/or an unfavorable operating environment?	• Reported COVID. • Reported adaptive management to COVID.	• PIR/Annual progress reports, MTR. • Interviews with UNEP staff and implementing partners. • Governmental measures on COVID.
D. Effectiveness		

D1. Availability of outputs		
To what extent were the planned output made available for the intended users/beneficiaries?	● Level achievement for each Project output. ● Number of drivers that holds or not and why.	● PIR/Annual progress reports and MTR. ● Interviews with Task Manager and partners, especially at local level. ● Direct field observations.
To what extent were the most important outputs to achieve outcomes delivered in time and fulfilled their intended use?	● Level achievement for each Project output. ● Number of drivers that holds or not and why.	● PIR/Annual progress reports and MTR. ● Interviews with Task Manager and partners, especially at local level. ● Direct field observations.
How do users and reviewers rate (or consider) the quality and utility of the most important delivered outputs, i) poor, ii) good, or iii) excellent quality and utility?	● Level achievement for each Project output. ● Number of drivers that holds or not and why.	● PIR/Annual progress reports and MTR. ● Interviews with Task Manager and partners, especially at local level. ● Direct field observations.
What was the level of ownership of the intended users of key outputs? To what extent were the intended users of key outputs involved in / party to preparation of key outputs: i) not involved, ii) only peripherally involved, iii) partially and unevenly involved, iv) somewhat involved, v) meaningfully involved, or vi) closely involved?	● Level achievement for each Project output. ● Number of drivers that holds or not and why.	● PIR/Annual progress reports and MTR. ● Interviews with Task Manager and partners, especially at local level. ● Direct field observations.
To what extent did the COVID affect the Project and How did the Project respond and adapt to COVID situation?	● Level of stakeholder participation and cooperation in making and using the outputs.	● Direct field observation. ● Citation of stakeholders' roles in tangible products (publications, studies, etc.). ● Interviews with partners in implementation and Project beneficiaries.
D.2. Achievements of outcomes		
To what extent were the Project outcome achieved?	● Level achievement for each Project outcome. ● Number of drivers that holds or not and why.	● PIR/Annual progress reports and MTR. ● Interviews with Task Manager and partners, especially at local level. ● Direct field observations.
To what extent were the assumptions for progress from Project outputs to Project outcome held?	● Level achievement for each Project outcome. ● Number of drivers that holds or not and why.	● PIR/Annual progress reports and MTR. ● Interviews with Task Manager and partners, especially at local level. ● Direct field observations.
To what extent were the drivers to support transition from outcomes to impact?	● Level achievement for each Project outcome. ● Number of drivers that holds or not and why.	● PIR/Annual progress reports and MTR. ● Interviews with Task Manager and partners, especially at local level. ● Direct field observations.

1. To what extent has the Project enhanced the capacity in development planning of production sectors in GSA?	• Level achievement for each Project outcome. • Number of drivers that holds or not and why.	• PIR/Annual progress reports and MTR. • Interviews with Task Manager and partners, especially at local level. • Direct field observations.
2. To what extent has the Project strengthened and expanded the GSA NR Network and Ecological Monitoring?	• Level achievement for each Project outcome. • Number of drivers that holds or not and why.	• PIR/Annual progress reports and MTR. • Interviews with Task Manager and partners, especially at local level. • Direct field observations.
3. To what extent has the Project improved the capacity in education, awareness and communication associated with biodiversity conservation and sustainable use of natural resources in GSA?	• Level achievement for each Project outcome. • Number of drivers that holds or not and why.	• PIR/Annual progress reports and MTR. • Interviews with Task Manager and partners, especially at local level. • Direct field observations.
D.3 Likelihood of impact		
To what extent were the assumptions for progress from Project outcomes through intermediate targets towards the expected impact held?	• Level of intermediate targets achieved.	• PIR/Annual progress reports and MTR. • Interviews with Task Manager and partners, especially at local level. • Direct field observations.
To what extent were the drivers to support transition from Project outcomes through intermediate state towards the expected impact in place?	• Level of outcomes achieved.	• PIR/Annual progress reports and MTR. • Interviews with Task Manager and partners, especially at local level. • Direct field observations.
Was there already any evidence that indicated that the Project expected intermediated targets had been or will be achieved soon? What is the likelihood that the Project intermediated targets will be achieved?	• Level of intermediate targets achieved.	• PIR/Annual progress reports and MTR. • Interviews with Task Manager and partners, especially at local level. • Direct field observations.
To what extent were the assumptions for progress from Project outcomes through intermediate state towards the expected impact held?	• Level of intermediate targets achieved. • Level of outcomes achieved.	• PIR/Annual progress reports and MTR. • Interviews with Task Manager and partners, especially at local level. • Direct field observations.
Were there any unintended negative effects as a result of the Project? What is the likelihood that the intervention may lead, or contribute to, unintended negative effects?	• Level of intermediate targets achieved. • Level of outcomes achieved	• PIR/Annual progress reports and MTR. • Interviews with Task Manager and partners, especially at local level. • Direct field observations.
E. Financial Management		
E1. Adherence to UNEP's Financial Policies and Procedures	• Level of adherence to procedures.	• Interviews with Task Manager, FMO, members of executing agencies ((MEDD, ANAE). • Financial reports, audit reports, and Project revisions.

To what extent has the Project applied proper financial management standards and adhered to UNEP's financial management policies?	• Level of adherence to procedures.	• Interviews with Task Manager, FMO, members of executing agencies ((MEDD, ANAE). • Financial reports, audit reports, and Project revisions.
With what frequency was the cash advance to partners timely approved and disbursed?	• Level of adherence to procedures.	• Interviews with Task Manager, FMO, members of executing agencies ((MEDD, ANAE). • Financial reports, audit reports, and Project revisions.
With what frequency was regular analysis of actual expenditure against budget and workplan done?	• Level of adherence to procedures.	• Interviews with Task Manager, FMO, members of executing agencies ((MEDD, ANAE). • Financial reports, audit reports, and Project revisions.
How many regular expenditure reports (six-monthly and annual) were timely submitted?	• Level of adherence to procedures.	• Interviews with Task Manager, FMO, members of executing agencies ((MEDD, ANAE). • Financial reports, audit reports, and Project revisions.
Were expenditures within the approved annual budget? If it was the case, were timely revision submitted/approved?	• Level of adherence to procedures.	• Interviews with Task Manager, FMO, members of executing agencies ((MEDD, ANAE). • Financial reports, audit reports, and Project revisions.
Were regular budget revisions made when relevant and for expenditure variations of 10% and above?	• Level of adherence to procedures.	• Interviews with Task Manager, FMO, members of executing agencies ((MEDD, ANAE). • Financial reports, audit reports, and Project revisions.
E2. Completeness of Financial Information	• Level of adherence to procedures.	• Interviews with Task Manager, FMO, members of executing agencies ((MEDD, ANAE). • Financial reports, audit reports, and Project revisions.
Were there any financial management issues that have affected the timely delivery of the Project or the quality of its performance	• Level of adherence to procedures.	• Interviews with Task Manager, FMO, members of executing agencies ((MEDD, ANAE). • Financial reports, audit reports, and Project revisions.
To what extent was the financial information complete, accurate and made available to Review, considering the following criteria/items? High level Project budget (costs) for secured and unsecured funds. High level Project budget by funding source(s) for secured and unsecured funds. Disbursement (funds transfer) document from funding source(s) to UNEP. Project expenditure sheet by output/outcome (to-date). Detailed Project budget (by output/outcome) for secured funds. Proof/report of delivery of in-kind contributions.	• Level of adherence to procedures.	• Interviews with Task Manager, FMO, members of executing agencies ((MEDD, ANAE). • Financial reports, audit reports, and Project revisions.

Partner legal agreements and documentation for all amendments exist. Where applicable: Re-approved Project budget by budget line for Project extensions (both cost and no-cost extension). Disbursement (Funds Transfer) documents (cash statement) from UNEP to partners.		
E3. Communication Between Finance and Project Management Staff		
● Was the Project manager <i>strongly aware</i> of the current financial status of Project? ● Was the FMO <i>strongly aware</i> awareness of overall Project progress when financial disbursements are made. (i.e. Disbursements made against <i>good quality</i> financial and technical progress reports)? ● Were there <i>regular / frequent</i> contacts between PM and FMO? ● Were PM and FMO are proactive in raising and resolving financial issues. ● Were all narrative and financial reports are reviewed by both finance and Project staff members prior to submission. ● Were there evidence that good communication between financial and Project staff members has positively affected Project implementation (<i>i.e. within budget, no extensions, more outputs than planned etc.</i>).	Level of awareness of the Project manager of the current financial status of the Project. Level of awareness of the FMO of overall Project progress when financial disbursements are made. <i>Regularity of the contacts between PM and FMO.</i> Level of impact on the Project of communication between financial and Project staff members.	● Interviews with Task Manager, FMO, members of executing agencies ((MEDD). ● Financial reports and audit reports.
F. Efficiency		
Which of the following options better describe the Project regarding operation within existing roles or institutions? i) The Project established unnecessarily duplicative roles, mechanisms, or institutions. ii) The Project operated within existing roles, mechanisms, institutions or expanded them in an efficient and effective manner.	● Level of inclusion of pre-existing initiatives and institutions, proof cooperation with other projects.	● Annual progress reports and MTR. ● Interviews with partners, especially MEDD nationally and local institutions at site level. ● Discussions with related GEF projects, MEAs, interest NGOs.
To what extent the Project delivered maximum results from the given resources? To what extent has the Project achieved its results at the lowest possible cost? How could the Project be more efficient in the use of resources (time, funds, staff, partnerships, etc.)?	● Level of value for money.	● Annual progress reports and MTR. ● Interviews with partners, especially MEDD nationally and local institutions at site level. ● Discussions with related GEF projects, MEAs, interest NGOs.
What were the major reasons to require the no-cost extension? To what extent were the Project extension justified or could they have been avoided through stronger Project management?	● Level of compliance with Project planning / annual plans.	● Annual progress reports and MTR. ● Interviews with partners, especially MEDD nationally and local institutions at site level. ● Discussions with related GEF projects, MEAs, interest

		NGOs.
To what extent did the delays/extensions in Project implementation affect the achievement of the Project outcomes? What were the major implications of these delays/extensions?	• Level of compliance with Project planning / annual plans.	• Annual progress reports and MTR. • Interviews with partners, especially MEDD nationally and local institutions at site level. • Discussions with related GEF projects, MEAs, interest NGOs.
Was the Project implemented within the timeframe and against a revised results framework specified by a formal revision with additional resources?	• Level of compliance with Project planning / annual plans.	• Annual progress reports and MTR. • Interviews with partners, especially MEDD nationally and local institutions at site level. • Discussions with related GEF projects, MEAs, interest NGOs.
To what extent has the Project applied any time or cost-saving mechanisms or cost-effective approaches to achieve results within the approved timeframe and budget? If yes, to what extent these mechanisms or approaches supported the achievement of Project targets? If no, to what extent the lack of these mechanisms or approaches undermined the achievement of Project targets?	• Level of compliance with Project financial planning / annual plans	• Annual progress reports and MTR. • Interviews with partners, especially MEDD nationally and local institutions at site level. • Discussions with related GEF projects, MEAs, interest NGOs.
G. Monitoring and Reporting		
G.1. Monitoring Design and Budgeting		
To what extent were the indicators of M&E Plan (at Project launch) specific, measurable, achievable, relevant and time-oriented (SMART)? To what extent were the methods designed for tracking progress against the indicators adherent with results-based management?	• SMART criteria.	• PIR/Annual progress reports and MTR. • Interviews with Task Manager and partners, especially at local level. • Direct field observations.
At Project launch, to what extent the Project's M&E Plan: a. Covered all indicators appropriately in the logical framework b. Had data sources and data collection methods clearly defined c. Had appropriated data collection instruments in place d. Data collection frequency was appropriate e. Had a dedicated budget per monitoring activity f. Person responsible for monitoring progress against each indicator was identified g. Was disaggregated by relevant stakeholder groups including gender and minority/disadvantaged groups h. Additional gender specific indicators, if necessary, were developed	• Level of compliance with Project planning / annual plans.	• PIR/Annual progress reports and MTR. • Interviews with Task Manager and partners, especially at local level. • Direct field observations.

i. Funds for mid-term and terminal evaluations/reviews were considered adequate by the UNEP Evaluation Office and were available to the Review		
G.2. Monitoring of Project Implementation		
Was there a M&E Implementation Plan? What tools were used by the Project to conduct M&E (i.e. indicators profile sheet, indicator dashboard, etc.)?	• A detailed monitoring plan (items a-d above) exists.	•
To what extent was monitoring data analyzed and shared with appropriate Project managers, steering partners and evaluators?	• A detailed monitoring plan (items a-d above) exists. •	• Interviews with key stakeholders • Project implementation reports. • Management response to MTR.
To what extent was M&E data collected disaggregate by vulnerable/marginalized groups, including gender?	• A detailed monitoring plan (items a-d above) exists. •	• PIR/Annual progress reports and MTR. • Interviews with Task Manager and partners, especially at local level. • Direct field observations.
To what extent were the tools and methodologies utilized during monitoring responsive to the needs of different stakeholder groups?	• A detailed monitoring plan (items a-d above) exists. •	• PIR/Annual progress reports and MTR. • Interviews with Task Manager and partners, especially at local level. • Direct field observations.
How well were funds spent on monitoring in accordance with the planned expenditures or against budget lines identified for monitoring?	• A detailed monitoring plan (items a-d above) exists.	• PIR/Annual progress reports and MTR. • Interviews with Task Manager and partners, especially at local level. • Direct field observations.
To what extent was the information generated by the M&E used during the life of the Project to adapt and improve Project execution, achievement of outcomes and to ensure sustainability?	• A detailed monitoring plan (items a-d above) exists.	• PIR/Annual progress reports and MTR. • Interviews with Task Manager and partners, especially at local level. • Direct field observations.
G.3. Project Reporting		
To what extent had both UNEP and donor reporting commitments been fulfilled?	• Official records in PIMS/donor reports fully match available evidence. • The PIMS/donor reporting adequately reflects the Project scope of work. • Project reporting supports outcome level results and/or beyond.	• PIR/Annual progress reports and MTR. • Interviews with Task Manager and partners, especially at local level. • Direct field observations.
How complete and with what quality was documentation of Project progress made available?	• Official records in PIMS/donor reports fully match available evidence. • The PIMS/donor reporting adequately	• PIR/Annual progress reports and MTR. • Interviews with Task Manager and partners, especially at local level.

	- reflects the Project scope of work. • Project reporting supports outcome level results and/or beyond.	• Direct field observations.
Were there any gaps in PIMS/donor reporting?	• -Official records in PIMS/donor reports fully match available evidence. • -The PIMS/donor reporting adequately reflects the Project scope of work. • -Project reporting supports outcome level results and/or beyond.	• PIR/Annual progress reports and MTR. • Interviews with Task Manager and partners, especially at local level. • Direct field observations.
How well does the official records in PIMS/donor reports match available evidence?	• -Official records in PIMS/donor reports fully match available evidence. • -The PIMS/donor reporting adequately reflects the Project scope of work. • -Project reporting supports outcome level results and/or beyond.	• PIR/Annual progress reports and MTR. • Interviews with Task Manager and partners, especially at local level. • Direct field observations.
To what extent did the PIMS/donor reporting adequately reflect the Project scope of work?	• -Official records in PIMS/donor reports fully match available evidence. • -The PIMS/donor reporting adequately reflects the Project scope of work. • -Project reporting supports outcome level results and/or beyond.	• PIR/Annual progress reports and MTR. • Interviews with Task Manager and partners, especially at local level. • Direct field observations.
To what extent were monitoring reports gender neutral (i.e. reflecting gendered experiences equally) and/or, if appropriate, gender sensitive (i.e. reporting experiences differentiated by gender groups)?	• -Official records in PIMS/donor reports fully match available evidence. • -The PIMS/donor reporting adequately reflects the Project scope of work. • -Project reporting supports outcome level results and/or beyond.	• PIR/Annual progress reports and MTR. • Interviews with Task Manager and partners, especially at local level. • Direct field observations.
H. Sustainability		
<i>H.1. Socio-political sustainability</i>		
To what extent does the maintenance and further development of Project outcomes after the closure of the Project depend on social/political factors (i.e. changes in social-political context, interest and commitment among government representatives and other stakeholders to use the DaRT tool)?	• Qualitative Projection of achievements.	• PIR/Annual progress reports and MTR. • Interviews with Task Manager and partners, especially at local level. • Direct field observations.
What is the level of ownership, interest, and commitment among government representatives and other stakeholders to take the Project achievements forwards?	• Qualitative Projection of achievement.	• PIR/Annual progress reports and MTR. • Interviews with Task Manager and partners, especially at local level. • Direct field observations.

What mechanisms are in place to adapt/respond to changes in the social/political context that may jeopardize the sustainability of the Project outcomes?	• Qualitative Projection of achievements.	• PIR/Annual progress reports and MTR. • Interviews with Task Manager and partners, especially at local level. • Direct field observations.
H2. Financial sustainability		• PIR/Annual progress reports and MTR. • Interviews with Task Manager and partners, especially at local level. • Direct field observations.
To what extent does the maintenance and further development of Project outcomes after the closure of the Project depend on future funding /financial flows (i.e. maintenance of DaRT Tool, continuous capacity building, engagement with end users to promote DaRT Tool weewewewewebbbuse for decision making)?	• Financial risk analysis and projection.	• PIR/Annual progress reports and MTR. • Interviews with Task Manager and partners, especially at local level. • Direct field observations.
To what extent has the required future funding been secured?	• Financial risk analysis and projection.	• PIR/Annual progress reports and MTR. • Interviews with Task Manager and partners, especially at local level. • Direct field observations.
Has an exit strategy with a financial component been developed? Has it been initiated already?	• Financial risk analysis and projection.	• PIR/Annual progress reports and MTR. • Interviews with Task Manager and partners, especially at local level. • Direct field observations.
H3. Sustainability of the institutional framework		
To what extent is the maintenance and further development of Project outcomes after the closure of the Project depend on / sensible to institutional support?	• Institutional analysis and projection.	• PIR/Annual progress reports and MTR. • Interviews with Task Manager and partners, especially at local level. • Direct field observations.
What mechanisms are in place to sustain/support the institutionalization of the Project outcome (i.e. governance structures and processes, policies, partnership agreements, legal and accountability frameworks are in place favoring Parties to use synergies tools including DaRT Tool to support decision making processes)? Is the institutional framework solid enough to guarantee that Parties will use synergies tools including DaRT?	• Institutional analysis and projection.	• PIR/Annual progress reports and MTR. • Interviews with Task Manager and partners, especially at local level. • Direct field observations.
To what extent has the capacity of relevant individuals been enhanced? What is the likelihood that these relevant individuals will stay in their position or in a position where they can continue to support the Project outcome?	• Institutional analysis and projection.	• PIR/Annual progress reports and MTR. • Interviews with Task Manager and partners, especially at local level. • Direct field observations.

Has an exit strategy (with an institutional component) been developed? Has it been or will be discussed in the SC and agreed among Project partners? Are the activities, roles and responsibilities clearly described and agreed upon? Does the exit strategy include timeframes and any mechanism to monitor its implementation? Has it been initiated already?	● Institutional analysis and projection.	● PIR/Annual progress reports and MTR. ● Interviews with Task Manager and partners, especially at local level. ● Direct field observations.
I. Factors Affecting Project Performance		
<i>I1. Preparation and readiness</i>	Also see Annex A	
To what extent were appropriate measures taken to address weaknesses in Project design or respond to changes that took place between Project approval, securing funds and Project mobilisation?	● During the inception or mobilization stage of the Project (i.e. the time between Project approval and first disbursement) which of the following actions were done aiming at achieving a proper startup of the Project: a. A comprehensive inception meeting was held and reported on. b. An annual, costed workplan was developed with appropriate detail. c. A detailed and compliant procurement plan was developed. d. A Steering Committee was established with full, appropriate representation. e. A good ESE safeguards assessment was carried out, with stakeholder participation. f. Comprehensive and relevant stakeholder analysis was undertaken (complementing the one from Project Document). g. All partner's capacity was confirmed/addressed. h. Legal agreements were signed with partners in a timely manner. i. Staffing mobilization was undertaken in a timely manner. j. Appropriate and adequate governance arrangements were established. k. All necessary measures were taken to respond to contextual changes that took place during the inception period. These were timely and of good quality.	● PIR/Annual progress reports and MTR. ● Interviews with Task Manager and partners, especially at local level. ● Direct field observations.

	l. The period between Project approval and first disbursement is 6 months or less. m. Measures were taken during the inception period that noticeably strengthened the Project design (i.e. design of Communication Strategy and Plan, Stakeholder Engagement Plan, KM Strategy, Replication and Scaling-up Plan, etc.).	
<i>12. Quality of Project Management and Supervision</i>		
How effective was the Project management performance of the executing agency and the technical backstopping and supervision provided by UNEP?	● Level of intended outputs and outcomes.	● PIR/Annual progress reports and MTR. ● Interviews with Task Manager and partners, especially at local level. ● Direct field observations.
How well was the Steering Committee functioning (frequent meetings, relevant issues discussed, leadership provided)?	● Level of intended outputs and outcomes.	● PIR/Annual progress reports and MTR. ● Interviews with Task Manager and partners, especially at local level. ● Direct field observations.
How well managed were the teams involved in the implementation of the Project?	● Level of intended outputs and outcomes.	● PIR/Annual progress reports and MTR. ● Interviews with Task Manager and partners, especially at local level. ● Direct field observations.
To what extent the working relationship between the PM/TM and Project partners has been constructive and/or effective?	● Level of intended outputs and outcomes.	● PIR/Annual progress reports and MTR. ● Interviews with Task Manager and partners, especially at local level. ● Direct field observations.
How well were the turnover of staff handled? To what extent were there effective (i.e. systematized, complete and ensured smooth transition) handover processes and information exchange (supported by good documentation) between outgoing and incoming staff?	● Level of intended outputs and outcomes.	● PIR/Annual progress reports and MTR. ● Interviews with Task Manager and partners, especially at local level. ● Direct field observations.
To what extent the capacity of Project staff, including some key members, was aligned with Project requirements?	● Level of intended outputs and outcomes.	● PIR/Annual progress reports and MTR. ● Interviews with Task Manager and partners, especially at local level. ● Direct field observations.
To what extent were Project staff, including some key members, located appropriately for efficient Project implementation?	● Level of intended outputs and outcomes.	● PIR/Annual progress reports and MTR. ● Interviews with Task Manager and partners, especially at local level. ● Direct field observations.
How regular and constructive information exchange between Project team, PM/TM and UNEP colleagues had taken place?	● Level of intended outputs and outcomes.	● PIR/Annual progress reports and MTR.

		● Interviews with Task Manager and partners, especially at local level. ● Direct field observations.
To what extent had the Implementation Agency and/or Executing Agency provided strategic, timely and effectively leadership towards achieving the planned outcomes?	● Level of intended outputs and outcomes.	● PIR/Annual progress reports and MTR. ● Interviews with Task Manager and partners, especially at local level. ● Direct field observations.
How fast and effective were the responses of Project team to execution challenges or contextual changes? (adaptative management)	● Level of intended outputs and outcomes.	● PIR/Annual progress reports and MTR. ● Interviews with Task Manager and partners, especially at local level. ● Direct field observations.
How adequate was the management response to any financial shortfalls, changes and unforeseen situations (i.e. response shows clear prioritization and movement of funds to meet implementation and accountability requirements)? (adaptative management)	● Level of intended outputs and outcomes.	● PIR/Annual progress reports and MTR. ● Interviews with Task Manager and partners, especially at local level. ● Direct field observations.
How relevant and timely was the advice provided by PM/TM to deal with known problems, risks or challenges? (adaptative management)	● Level of intended outputs and outcomes.	● PIR/Annual progress reports and MTR. ● Interviews with Task Manager and partners, especially at local level. ● Direct field observations.
<i>1.3 Stakeholder Participation and Cooperation</i>		● PIR/Annual progress reports and MTR. ● Interviews with Task Manager and partners, especially at local level. ● Direct field observations.
To what extent did the implementation begin, and was undertaken, with a relevant and useful analysis of stakeholder groups?	● Participation and involvement, ownership, Stakeholder awareness of outcomes and impact.	● PIR/Annual progress reports and MTR. ● Interviews with Task Manager and partners, especially at local level. ● Direct field observations.
What efforts were made by Project team to promote stakeholder ownership (specially by government bodies / NFP) of processes and outcomes of the Project? How effective were these efforts?	● Participation and involvement, ownership, Stakeholder awareness of outcomes and impact.	● PIR/Annual progress reports and MTR. ● Interviews with Task Manager and partners, especially at local level. ● Direct field observations.
How effective, regular, and timely were consultations and communication made with stakeholder groups during the life of the Project?	● Participation and involvement, ownership, Stakeholder awareness of outcomes and impact.	● PIR/Annual progress reports and MTR. ● Interviews with Task Manager and partners, especially at local level. ● Direct field observations.
How adequate (or relevant) was the support given by the Project to maximize collaboration or collective action between stakeholder groups (e.g. sharing plans, pooling resources, exchanging learning and expertise)?	● Participation and involvement, ownership, Stakeholder awareness of outcomes and impact.	● PIR/Annual progress reports and MTR. ● Interviews with Task Manager and partners, especially at local level. ● Direct field observations.
To what extent linkages to poverty alleviation or impact on economic livelihoods have been considered and addressed in the	● Participation and involvement, ownership, Stakeholder awareness of outcomes and	● PIR/Annual progress reports and MTR.

Project to assess and mitigate negative effects on sustainability of livelihoods, equity of opportunities and the protection of human rights for populations directly or indirectly affected by the Project	impact.	• Interviews with Task Manager and partners, especially at local level. • Direct field observations.
I.4. Responsiveness to Human Rights and Gender Equity		
To what extent has the Project design, implementation and monitoring fully considered Human Rights, Gender Equality and Social Inclusion (including indigenous people), and Leaving No-One Behind?	• Project design, implementation, monitoring, and reporting.	• PIR/Annual progress reports and MTR. • Interviews with Task Manager and partners, especially at local level. • Direct field observations.
To what extent has the intervention promoted positive changes in Human Rights, Gender Equality and Social Inclusion (including indigenous people), and Leaving No-One Behind?	• Project design, implementation, monitoring, and reporting.	• PIR/Annual progress reports and MTR. • Interviews with Task Manager and partners, especially at local level. • Direct field observations.
I.5. Environmental and social safeguards		
To what extent safeguarding considerations are demonstrated in the items below regarding quality, detail and consistency: a. management plan for addressing safeguarding b. review(s) of risk ratings c. monitoring of Project implementation for safeguarding issues d. response (where relevant) to safeguarding issues e. reporting on safeguarding issues/reporting that no safeguarding issues arose	• Type of stakeholders benefited by the Project at all Project levels.	• PIR/Annual progress reports and MTR. • Interviews with Task Manager and partners, especially at local level. • Direct field observations.
To what extent the Project considered and/or addressed environmental, social and economic impacts to the key stakeholders and, in particular, to the most vulnerable groups?	• Presence of environmental footprint calculation and examples measures.	• PIR/Annual progress reports and MTR. • Interviews with Task Manager and partners, especially at local level. • Direct field observations.
I.6. Country Ownership and Driven-ness		
To what extent did government ministries / public sector agencies that were essential for moving from outputs to direct outcomes or from direct outcomes to intermediate states took a leadership role in: a. Strategic guidance of project delivery b. Driving or advocating for change to achieve higher level results c. Endorsing / accepting project results d. Initiating non-cost complementary or additional activities	• Project design, implementation, monitoring, and reporting	• PIR/Annual progress reports and MTR. • Interviews with Task Manager and partners, especially at local level. • Direct field observations.

e. Provision of in-kind and / or cash co-financing contributions; making provisions in forward-looking budgetary plans or securing additional external resources		
I.7. Communication and Public Awareness		
What was the level of awareness that the key audiences (the ones driving desired change from outputs to impact) had about the Project, its main messages and goals?	• Level of awareness.	• PIR/Annual progress reports and MTR. • Interviews with Task Manager and partners, especially at local level. • Direct field observations.
To what extent were communication activities and channels: a. Well-targeted towards all key audiences b. Continuous over the life of the Project c. Always interactive / responsive to audience feedback d. Very well monitored for evidence of effect e. Fully budgeted/financed	• Level of events, event impact.	• PIR/Annual progress reports and MTR. • Interviews with Task Manager and partners, especially at local level. • Direct field observations.
How effectively were communication/public awareness efforts in driving change towards results beyond outputs?	• Level of communication and awareness.	• PIR/Annual progress reports and MTR. • Interviews with Task Manager and partners, especially at local level. • Direct field observations.
How effective was the Project in the communication of learning and experience sharing between Project partners and interested groups?	• Level of experience sharing among Project partners.	• PIR/Annual progress reports and MTR. • Interviews with Task Manager and partners, especially at local level. • Direct field observations.
How solid and comprehensive was the communication plan/strategy? Was it fully financed, implemented and monitored during the life of the Project?	• Quality of the communication strategy.	• PIR/Annual progress reports and MTR. • Interviews with Task Manager and partners, especially at local level. • Direct field observations.
How have gender differentiated roles and levels of influence as well as marginalized groups been integrated into communication channels so that all voices are heard?	• Demographics of communication.	• PIR/Annual progress reports and MTR. • Interviews with Task Manager and partners, especially at local level. • Direct field observations.

ANNEX III. STAKEHOLDERS CONSULTED DURING THE REVIEW

Table 13: Stakeholders consulted during the Review

Organisation	Name	Position	Role in the project	Gender
Hubei Provincial Forestry Department (HFD)	Mr. Wei Zhang	Deputy Head	Representative in the PSC	M
Hubei Bureau of Finance (BOF)	Mr. Jun Yu	Division Head	Representative in the PSC	M
Hubei Provincial Agricultural Department	Mrs. Lina Wang	Division Head	Representative in the PSC	F
Hubei Provincial Ecological and Environmental Department	Mrs. Yan Zhu	Division Head	Representative in the PSC。	F
Hubei Provincial Culture and Tourism Department	Mr. Hebao, Zhang	Division Head	Representative in the PSC。	M
PMU, HFD	Mr. Lianhe Zheng	Former Head	Project Implementation	M
PMU, HFD	Mr. Zijing Xu	Head	Project Implementation	M
PMU, HFD	Mr. Yunhai Pu	Deputy Head	Project Implementation	M
PMU, HFD	Mrs. Li Wang	Officer	Project Implementation	F
PMU, HFD	Mrs. Ying Liu	Officer	Project Implementation	F
Division of Finance, HFD	Mr. Wentao Lei	Head	Representative in the PSC	M
Division of Wetland, HFD	Mr. Renjun Yuan	Deputy Head	Representative in the PSC	M
Division of NR, HFD	Mr. Zelong Pan	Head	Representative in the PSC	M
Science and Technology	Mr. Xiangrong Xia	Deputy Head	Representative in the PSC	M
Minzu University of China	Mr. Yuandao Xue	Professor	CTA	M
Botanical Garden, Chinese Academic of Science	Mr. Xiang Li	Associate Professor	Technical Advisor	M
Botanical Garden, Chinese Academic of Science	Mr. Xiaodong	Professor	Technical Advisor	M
Duheyuan NR	Mr. Bin Shao	Head	Project Implementation	M
Duheyuan NR	Mrs. Shanshan Gong	Officer	Project Implementation	F
Duheyuan NR	Mrs. Fei Li	Officer	Project Implementation	F
Bailihe Village, Baidu Town, Zhushan County	Mr. Liukui Chen	Governor	Project Implementation	M
Bailihe Village, Baidu Town, Zhushan County	Mr. Gaopeng Zou	Farmer	Project Implementation	M
Shennongjia District Consultive Conference	Mr. Wenhua Wang	Chairman	Former Deputy Governor in charge of the Project on behalf of local government	M
Qingtian Village, Muyu Town, Shennongjia District	Mr. Mingxue Tan	Counselor	Village supported by the Project on the pilot economic development	M
Qingtian Village, Muyu Town, Shennongjia District	Mr. Tinghong Lin	Villager	Pilot ecological protector Supported by the Project	M

Organisation	Name	Position	Role in the project	Gender
Qingtian Village, Muyu Town, Shennongjia District	Mr. Minghua Yang	Villager	Pilot ecological protector Supported by the Project	M
Shennongjia National Park	Mr. Wei Feng	Deputy Head and Project Manager	Project Implementation	M
Field Implementation Unit, Shennongjia National Park	Mr. Longqiang Deng	Deputy Project Manager	Project Implementation	M
Field Implementation Unit, Shennongjia National Park	Mr. Zijian Yuan	Officer	Project Implementation	M
Field Implementation Unit, Shennongjia National Park	Mrs. Guanrong Liu	Officer	Project Implementation	F
Field Implementation Unit, Shennongjia National Park	Mr. Ronghu Shao	Officer	Project Implementation	M
Communication Division, Shennongjia National Park	Mr. Hua Du	Head	Project Implementation	M
Finance Division, Shennongjia National Park	Mr. Changhua Cai	Head	Project financial management	M
Finance Division, Shennongjia National Park	Mrs. Huiping Liu	Accountant	Project financial management	F
Finance Division, Shennongjia National Park	Mrs. Jingran Liang	Cashier	Project financial management	F
Research Institute, Shennongjia National Park	Mr. Linshen Yang	Senior Engineer	Technical Advisor	M
Botanical Lab, Shennongjia National Park	Mr. Zhiguo Jiang	Head	Project Implementation	M
Administration Division, Shennongjia National Park	Mr. Hui Meng	Officer	Project Implementation	M
Administration Division, Shennongjia National Park	Mr. Jinxin Chen	Officer	Project Implementation	M
Administration Division, Shennongjia National Park	Mr. Hongrong Xiang	Officer	Project Implementation	M
Administration Division, Shennongjia National Park	Mr. Yongjun Mei	Officer	Project Implementation	M
Golden Snub-nosed Monkey National Nature Reserve	Mr. Kui chen	Project Manager	Project Implementation	M
Shibalichangxia National Nature Reserve	Mrs. Pei Xia	Project Manager	Project Implementation	F
Shibalichangxia National Nature Reserve	Mr. Liangfu Guan	Senior Engineer	Project Implementation	M
Wudaoxia Provincial Nature Reserve	Mr. Wenjing Zhou	Project Manager	Project Implementation	M
Yerengu Provincial Nature Reserve	Mr. Yongquan Liu	Project Manager	Project Implementation	M
Wanchaoshan Provincial Nature Reserve	Mrs. Zhaorong Bie	Project Manager	Project Implementation	F
Tianziping Village, Nanyang Town, Xingshan County	Mr. Yulong Wang	Villager	Project Implementation	M
Tianziping Village, Nanyang Town, Xingshan County	Mr. Changfa Zhang	Villager	Project Implementation	M

Organisation	Name	Position	Role in the project	Gender
Tianziping Village, Nanyang Town, Xingshan County	Mr. He Pan	Villager	Project Implementation	M
Tianziping Village, Nanyang Town, Xingshan County	Mr. Guangbing Huang	Villager	Project Implementation	M
Tianziping Village, Nanyang Town, Xingshan County	Mr. Hua Liu	Villager	Project Implementation	M
Tianziping Village, Nanyang Town, Xingshan County	Mr. Xianfeng Xu	Villager	Project Implementation	M
UNEP	Kavita Sharma	Task Manager	Project oversight and technical guidance	F
UNEP	Allyson Rivera	Coordination Consultant (interim Task Manager)	Project oversight and technical guidance	F
UNEP	Arshad Hussain	Budget/Finance Officer	Financial oversight	M
UNEP	Ruth Irungu	Budget/Finance Officer (former)	Financial oversight (former)	F
UNEP	Serah Shaiya	Finance Assistant	Financial oversight support	F
UNEP	Peerayot Sidonrusmee	Programme Management Assistant	Administrative and Programme support	M

ANNEX IV. KEY DOCUMENTS CONSULTED

Project planning and reporting documents

- GEF4865 Project Document
- CEO Endorsement Request
- Appendix 1_GEF Budget
- Appendix 2_Co-funding
- Appendix 3_ICA_for CE
- Appendix 4_Results framework
- Appendix 5_Workplan_for CEO
- Appendix 6_Deliverables_for CEO
- Appendix 7_Indigenous People Plan
- Appendix 8_Costed M&E plan_for CEO
- Appendix 9_Reporting requirements_for CEO
- Appendix 10_Standard Terminal Evaluation TOR - for CEO
- Appendix 11_Shennongjia Organogram_for CEO
- Appendix 12_TORs_for CEP
- Appendix 13 Co-Finance letters - for CEO
- Appendix 14_CHINA OFP ENDORSEMENT LETTER- for CEO
- Appendix 16a_GEF BD TT Objective 1_Section1&2_Baseline 2014- for CEO
- Appendix 16b_GEF BD TT Obj 2 Mainstreaming and IAS_Baseline 2014- for CEO

Project outputs – Overall

- Self-assessment report
- Inception Report
- PIR, 2019-2024

Project outputs work package 1: Capacity Building for Improved Development Planning

- Output 1.1.1: Improved capacity of provincial and local DRC personnel of the importance of the integration of biodiversity conservation and ecosystem services in development planning
- B DRC personnel in place, Month 9, Year1 to Month 12 Year 3
- B Training on mainstreaming biodiversity and ecosystem services conducted at provincial level, Month 9, Year 1 to Month 12 Year 3
- B Pre-research for development of the 13th FYP, with special focus on Ecological civilization related areas, and integration of biodiversity conservation and ecological civilization construction commissioned, Month 6 Year 1 to Month 12 Year 2
- B Reviews on HB PBSAP commissioned, Month 3, Year 1 to Month 12 Year 3
- B Review of existing strategic environment impact assessment decree and guidelines commissioned, Month 6, Year 1 to Month 12, Year 3
- B Study on Payment for Ecosystem Services in Greater Shennongjia Area commissioned, Month 3, Year 1
- B A cross-sectorial coordination mechanism for integration of biodiversity conservation and ecosystem services in local legislation process and political performance assessment system established, and first meeting hold in Month 9, Year 1

- D Training materials on importance of the integration of biodiversity conservation and ecosystem services in development planning developed, Month 6, Year 1
- D 9 training workshops, Month 9 to Month 12 Year 3
- D 4 preparatory -research reports for development of the 13th FYP completed and endorsed by DRC, Month 9 Year 1 to Month 12 Year 2
- D Review reports on HB PBSAP completed and endorsed by EPB, Month 6, Year 2 to Month 12 Year 3
- D Review report of existing environment impact assessment decree and guidelines completed and endorsed by EPB, Month 3 Year 2 to Month 12 Year 3
- D A protocol for a cross-sectorial coordination mechanism for integration of biodiversity conservation and ecosystem services in local legislation process and political performance assessment system issued at provincial level, Month 9, Year 1
- Output 1.1.2: Development of guidelines for use by provincial DRC to promote integration of biodiversity assessment in sector planning and decision-making
- B Review and analysis on planning and implementation process of sectorial development plans, e.g. transportation, agricultural and animal husbandry, pasture and tourism, commissioned, Month 9, Year 1 to Month 12, Year 3
- D A practical guidelines and procedures for use by provincial DRC to promote integration of biodiversity assessment in sector planning and decision-making developed, Month 3, Year 2
- D The guidelines and procedures for use by provincial DRC to promote integration of biodiversity assessment in sector planning and decision-making refined by using experiences and lessons learnt from county level pilot, Month 12 Year, Year 3
- Output 1.1.3: Two county-level 13th, 5-year development plans incorporate biodiversity considerations and ecosystem services.
- B Establishment of Site Leading Committees and Technical Working Group in Baokang County and Shennongjia Forestry District, Month 9, Year1 to Month 12, Year 3
- B 15 training workshops organized in Baokang County and Shennongjia Forestry District, Month 9, Year 1 to Month 6 Year 2;
- B Development of the two-county level 13th FYP incorporating biodiversity and ecosystem services consideration, commissioned in Month 9, Year 1, and completed in Month 12, Year 3
- B Implementation plan for joint pilot on conservation of unique species and ecosystems in Greater Shennongjia Area for developing a master conservation plan for Greater Shennongjia Area developed, Month 12 Year 1, completed, Month 12, Year 3
- D Training materials in place, Month 9, Year 1
- D 2 county level 13th FYP incorporating biodiversity and ecosystem services consideration endorsed by local DRC and local People's Congresses, Month 6, Year 2
- D Workplan for implementing joint pilot on conservation of unique species and ecosystems in Greater Shennongjia Area for developing a master conservation plan for Greater Shennongjia Area implemented, commencing 12 Year 1 to Month 12, Year 3
- Output 1.2.1: Assessment of IAS presence, impacts and anticipated spread in GSA
- B 5 training workshops on IAS assessment, prevention and control, organized from Month 6 Year 1 ongoing
- B Survey and climate change vulnerability assessment in GSA, commissioned, Month 6, Year 1, completed in Month 12, Year 2
- D Training material in place, Month 5, Year 1
- D IAS survey and climate change vulnerability assessment reports, Month 12, Year 2
- Output 1.2.2: IAS Strategy and action plan
- B Development of IAS prevention and control strategy and plan in GSA commissioned, Month 3 Year 2

- D IAS prevention and control strategy and plan in GSA developed and endorsed by key line agencies in GSA, e.g. forestry, agriculture, transportation, and tourism, Month 12, Year 2
- Output 1.2.3 Seven county-level policies and funding for mainstreaming IAS mitigation
- B 5 Training on IAS assessment, prevention and control organized, commencing Month 9, Year 1, ongoing
- B Development of 7 county-level IAS mitigation policies commissioned Month 9, Year 1
- B Pilot on IAS prevention and control plan launched, Month 3 Year 2
- B IAS monitoring sites identified, Month 10, Year 1
- D Training materials in place, Month 9, Year 1
- D 8 county-level IAS mitigation policies endorsed by county government, Month 12 Year 2
- D Monitoring report from IAS monitoring sites, Month 12, Year 1, ongoing

Project outputs work package 2: Strengthening and Expanding GSA NR Network and Ecological Monitoring

- Output 2.1.1: Development of management plans for three GSA nature reserves
- B1 Establishment of Site Leading Committees and Technical Working Group of management plan development. Month5, Year1.
- B2 Supplement biophysical and social economic surveys. Month6, Year1. On-going.
- B3 First drafted management plans been developed. Month6, Year2. On-going.
- B4 Second drafted management plans been developed. Month9, Year2. On-going
- B5 Three Management plans been finalized, adopted and authorized. Month12, Year2. Completed.
- D1 Technical guidelines and detailed work plan for the management plan development in GSA. Month6, Year1.
- D2 Technical results of supplement biophysical and social economic surveys, study and workshop reports, relevant base-maps and first drafted management plans (3). Month6, Year2. On-going.
- D3 Second drafted management plans (incorporate the technical reviews on the first drafted). Month9, Year2. On-going.
- D4 Final version of management plans (incorporates the consultation comments of stakeholders on the first and second drafted). Month12, Year2. Completed.
- D5 Documentation of lessons-learned and practices on management planning in GSA NRs.
- Output 2.1.2: Development of four NR-specific co-management plans supported by pilot activities in local communities
- B1 Establishment of Site Committees and Technical Working Group of NR-specific co-management. Month5, Year1.
- B2 Co-management plans developed and adopted in four GSA NRs. Month6-12, Year1.
- B3 Pilot co-management communities identified and contracted. Month1, Year2.
- B4 Pilot co-management plans formulated and initiated. Month 2, Year2. On-going.
- B5 Success co-management models and practices documented and replicated into other communities of GSA NRs. Month8, Year3. On-going
- D1 Technical guidelines for co-management in GSA NRs. Month6, Year1.
- D2 Four NR-specific co-management plans in GSA NRs. Month12, Year1.
- D3 Four pilot co-management work plans and contracts. Month2, Year2.
- D4 Four pilot co-management models and their replication in GSA NRs. Month8, Year3. On-going.

- D5 Documentation of lessons-learned and practices on co-management in GSA NRs.
- Output 2.1.3: Development of 24 biodiversity conservation pilot research grants
- B1 Establishment and formulation of the small grants steering committee and technical advisory group. Month10, Year1.
- B2 The small grants application guidelines and management procedures developed. Month11, Year1.
- B3 Call for application of small grant program started in GSA NRs. Month1, Year2. On-going.
- B4 First round of grants approved and contracted. Month4, Year2.
- B5 Second round of grants approved and contracted. Month8, Year2.
- B6 Third round of grants approved and contracted. Month12, Year2.
- D1 The small grants application guidelines and management procedures. Month11, Year1.
- D2 Granted application forms, technical comments/suggestions and contracts. Month4, Year2. On-going.
- D3 Technical progress reports, M&E and results/achievements of 24 granted pilot projects. Month7, Year2. On-going.
- D4 Final appraisal reports of the small research program. Month12, Year4. Completed.
- D5 Documentation of the lessons-learned and achievements.
- Output 2.1.4: Training of NR and PMO staff (420 participant times over 14 course-specific thematic topics)
- B1 Formulation of technical advisory and working group for the training program. Month6, Year1.
- B2 Development of thematic curriculum and training materials. Month8, Year1. On-going.
- B3 Delivering of 14 training courses for NR and PMO staff. Month9, Year1. On-going.
- D1 Thematic curriculum and training materials. Month8, Year1. On-going.
- D2 Delivering of 14 training courses and the appraisals. Month9, Year1. On-going.
- D3 Documentation of lessons-learned and practices.
- Output 2.2.1: The establishment of one new county-level NR (SFD) covering a total area of 120,000 ha.
- B1 Establishment of the Leading Committee and Technical Working Group of establishing new nature reserve. Month5, Year1.
- B2 Biophysical and social economic surveys for the new nature reserve establishment. Month6, Year1 to Month5, Year2. Completed.
- B3 Functional zoning for new nature reserve. Month7, Year2 to Month 11, Year2. Completed.
- B4 Development and adoption of master plan of new nature reserve. Month7, Year2 to Month12, Year2. Completed.
- B5 Boundary demarcation and politicizing of new nature reserve; Month1, Year3 to Month6, Year3. Completed
- D1 Technical reports of biophysical and social economic surveys. Month6, Year2.
- D2 Master plan of new nature reserve. Month12, Year2.
- D3 Declaration of the new nature reserve establishment. Month1, Year3.
- D4 Boundary demarcation and publicizing of the new nature reserve. Month1, Year3 to Month6, Year3. Completed.
- Output 2.2.2: Creation of ecological corridor connecting 2 NRs in GSA.
- B1 Establishment of the Leading Committee and Technical Working Group of Jiudao ecological corridor initiative. Month4, Year2.

- B2 Development of the management action plan of Jiudao corridor. Month5, Year2 to Month11, Year2. Completed
- B3 Implementation of management actions of enforcing the forest habitats protection and restoration for Jiudao corridor. Month12, Year2. On-going.
- B4 Development and implementation of fundraising strategy plan for Jiudao corridor. Month6, Year3. On-going.
- D1 The management action plan of Jiudao corridor. Month12, Year2.
- D2 Enforcement of protection and restoration of 20,000 ha forest habitats. Month1, Year3. On-going
- D3 Fundraising strategy plan for Jiudao corridor. Month6, Year3.
- D4 Pilot community-based conservation and sustainable development initiated. Month1, Year4. On-going
- D5 Documentation of the lessons-learned on the ecological corridor initiative. Month1, Year5.
- Output 2.3.1: Development and implementation of 2 GSA NR system-wide conservation action plans covering the following Class I and II species/groups: (i) primate species (2), (ii) large & middle size mammals (10).
- B1 Surveys and field data collection/analysis of the 2 primate species (especially the Macaque monkey) and 10 large & middle size mammals in GSA. Month10, Year1. On-going.
- B2 Development and implementation of the GSA species conservation action plans for 2 primate species and 10 large & middle size mammals. Month1, Year3 to Month12, Year3. Completed.
- B3 The GSA species conservation action plans be incorporated into provincial and national biodiversity conservation program. Month1, Year4. On-going.
- B4 The experiences and good practices of species conservation action plans disseminated and extended in Hubei province.
- D1 Technical progress reports of the field surveys and data analysis of the 2 primate species (especially the Macaque monkey) and 10 large & middle size mammals in GSA. Month10, Year1 to Month12, Year3.
- D2 Species conservation action plans of the 2 primate species (especially the Macaque monkey) and 10 large & middle size mammals in GSA. Month10, Year1 to Month12, Year3.
- D3 Incorporation of the GSA species conservation action plans by GSA NRs, provincial and national biodiversity conservation program.
- D4 Documentation of lessons-learned and good practices.
- Output 2.3.2: Development and implementation of 2 GSA NR system-wide conservation action plans for unique vegetation communities/formations (8) and rare & endangered plant species (8).
- B1 Surveys and field data collection/analysis for unique vegetation communities/formations (8) and rare & endangered plant species (8). Month10, Year1. On-going.
- B2 Development and implementation of the conservation action plans for GSA unique vegetation communities/formations (8) and rare & endangered plant species (8). Month1, Year3 to Month12, Year3. Completed.
- B3 The conservation action plans of GSA vegetation communities/formations and rare & endangered plant species be incorporated into provincial and national biodiversity conservation program. Month1, Year4. On-going.
- B4 The experiences and good practices of vegetation communities/formations and plant species conservation action plans disseminated and extended in Hubei province.
- D1 Technical progress reports of the field surveys and data analysis of the unique vegetation communities/formations (8) and rare & endangered plant species (8) in GSA. Month10, Year1 to Month12, Year3.

- D2 Conservation action plans of the unique vegetation communities/formations (8) and rare & endangered plant species (8) in GSA. Month10, Year1 to Month12, Year3.
- D3 Incorporation of the GSA unique vegetation communities/formations and rare & endangered plant species conservation action plans by GSA NRs, provincial and national biodiversity conservation program.
- D4 Documentation of lessons-learned and good practices.
- Output 2.3.3: Establishment of a spatial data base and ecological monitoring program in the 8 GSA nature reserves.
- B1 Formation of the technical working group of the GSA NRs ecological monitoring program. Month6, Year1.
- B2 Designation and development of the GSA NRs ecological monitoring system and protocol. Month7, Year1. On-going
- B3 Establishment and operation of the field ecological monitoring system (including transects and plots etc). Month8, Year1. On-going.
- B4 Establishment of spatial database for GSA NRs and regular data collecting & processing. Month9, Year1. On-going.
- B5 The analysis and recommendations of the ecological monitoring program incorporated into the management planning and decision making in GSA NRs.
- D1 The GSA NRs ecological monitoring protocol. Month7, Year2.
- D2 The GSA NRs ecological monitoring field system (64 transects and related plots). Month7, Year2.
- D3 The spatial database for GSA NRs and ecological monitoring program. Month12, Year2.
- D4 Documentation and dissemination of lessons-learned and practices of the spatial data base and ecological monitoring program in GSA NRs.

Project outputs work package 3: Education, Awareness & Communication

- Output 3.1.1: Establishment and institutionalization of a GSA-wide environmental education information exchange and coordination mechanism.
- B A study on the feasibility the establishment of a GSA-wide environmental education information exchange and coordination mechanism commissioned, Month 3, Year 1
- B Training on establishment of GSA-wide environmental education information exchange and coordination mechanism, Month 6, Year 1, completed Month 12 Year 2
- B Design of GSA-wide environmental education information exchange and coordination mechanism, commissioned Month 6 Year 1, completed Month 12 Year 1
- B Establishment of GSA-wide environmental education information exchange and coordination mechanism, Month 6, Year 2
- B Organization annual conference with participation from individuals representing relevant education agencies from counties and natural reserves in GSA, Month 6 Year 1, ongoing
- B International Study Tour on environment education and awareness promotion organized, Month 9 Year 2
- D A feasibility study report on GSA-wide environmental education information exchange and coordination mechanism, Month 5, Year 1
- D Operational protocol for GSA-wide environmental education information exchange and coordination mechanism in place and endorsed by key stakeholders, Month 12 Year 1,
- D Annual workplan for GSA-wide environmental education information exchange and coordination mechanism in place and endorsed by key stakeholders, Month 12 Year 1, Training materials on establishment of GSA-wide environmental education information exchange and coordination mechanism in place, Month 12, Year 1
- D Annual conference minutes and experiences and lessons learnt materials, Month 6 Year, ongoing

- D International study tour report, Month 10, Year 2
- Output 3.1.2: Development of a 5-year comprehensive environment education plan for GSA
- B Training on development of education plan commissioned, Month 3, Year 2, completed, Month 6 Year 2
- B Development of guidelines for environment education, commissioned, Month 6, Year 2
- B Training of trainers' workshops to implement the relevant aspects of the plan in each of the 8 GSA nature reserves organized, Month 9 Year 2 and Year 4
- B 12 training workshops on biodiversity communications organized, Month 6 Year 1, ongoing
- B Design of Biodiversity Campaigns, Month 6 Year 1, refined Month 12, Year 2
- B Preparation of training materials to support the implementation of the Biodiversity Campaigns, Month 9, Year 1, ongoing
- D Training materials on biodiversity communications in place, Month 5, Year 1;
- D Guidelines for environment education, Month 7, Year 2, refined, Month 9 in Year 2
- D Training material on implementation of the relevant aspects of the plan in each of the 8 GSA nature reserves in place, Month 9, Year 2 and refined Month 9, Year 2
- D Training materials on biodiversity campaign in place, Month 6 Year 1,
- D Biodiversity campaign Plan in place, Month 6, Year 1, refined Month 12, Year
- D Training material for supporting implementation of Biodiversity campaign, Month 10 Year 1, ongoing
- Output 3.1.3: Establishment of a public education and awareness center in the Shennongjia UNESCO Reserve
- B Training on development of biodiversity education modules organized, Month 6, Year 1, ongoing
- B Development of rotating public education modules for the center, commissioned in Month 9 Month, Year 1, refined Month 6 Year 2 and Year 3
- B Training on Establishment of Education and Awareness Promotion Center, organized in Month 9, Year 1, ongoing
- B Design and building out of selected exhibition halls in the newly finished public environmental education and awareness promotion center in GSA, commissioned in Month 9, Year 1, completed in Month 12, Year 2
- B Development of plants collection and exhibition plan, commissioned, Month 10, Year 1, refined in Month 6 in Year 2 and Year 3;
- B Development of training plan for cicerone of the center, commissioned, Month 6 Year 1 and refined Month 3 Year 2
- D Training materials on development of biodiversity education modules in place Month 2, Year 1
- D Rotating public education modules for the centre in place, Month 3, Year 2, refined Month 6 Year 3
- D Training materials on establishment of education and awareness promotion Center in place, Month 12 Year 1,
- D Design and building out of selected exhibition halls in the newly finished public environmental education and awareness promotion centre in GSA in place, Month 12, Year 1, completed Month 12 Year 2
- D Plants collection and exhibition plan in place, Month 9, Year 1 refined Month 6 in Year 2 and Year 3
- D Training plan for cicerone of the center in place, Month 9, Year 1 and refined Month 3 Year 2

- Output 3.1.4: Establishment and operationalization of a Plant Breeding Centre (55 ha) in the SNNR.
- B Development of protocol and management regulations for operations and maintenance of the interpretative botanical garden, commissioned, Month 6 in Year 1
- B Collection of rare plants to supplement the existing collection, commencing Month 11 in Year one, ongoing
- B Breeding and repopulation of selected species of rare plants in the SNNR and other GSA NRs, commencing Month 3 Year 2, ongoing
- B Development of interpretative materials to highlight and increase public awareness of these plant species along designated trail, commissioned, Month 9, Year 1
- B Construction of environmental sanitation infrastructure (public sanitation facilities) and landscape infrastructures including facilities for rests, retails, road lights, greening areas etc., commencing Month 3, Year 1, ongoing
- B Training to management and technical staff on the operations of the plant breeding and public awareness center, commencing Month 10 in Year 1, ongoing
- D A protocol and management regulations for operations and maintenance of the interpretative botanical garden in place Month 8 in Year 1
- D Number of rare plants collected to supplement the existing collection, Month 12 Year 1, ongoing
- D Number of breeding and repopulation of selected species of rare plants in the SNNR and other GSA NRs, Month 3 Year 2, ongoing
- D Interpretative materials to highlight and increase public awareness of these plant species along designated trails, Month 12 Year 1
- D Environmental sanitation infrastructure (public sanitation facilities) and landscape infrastructures including facilities for rests, retails, road lights, greening areas etc., Month 3, Year one, ongoing
- D Training materials for management and technical staff on the operations of the plant breeding and public awareness center, Month 9 Year 1
- Output 3.2.1: Design and implementation of a Hubei province-wide biodiversity conservation communications and outreach strategy.
- B Development and implementation of a provincial wide communications and outreach campaign commissioned, Month 7 Year 1
- B Training to support the implementation of communication and outreach strategy, commencing Month 6 Year 1
- D A provincial wide communications and outreach campaign in place, Month 12 Year 1
- D Training materials on the implementation of communication and outreach strategy in place, Month 5 Year 1, ongoing
- D Training reports, Month 5, Year 1, ongoing
- Output 3.2.2: Establishment of a bi-lingual website on biodiversity conservation and ecosystem services covering all 8 natural reserves in the GSA.
- B A feasibility study on the establishment of a bi-lingual website for the GSA commissioned, Month 3, Year 1
- B Design and develop a bi-lingual website for the GSA commissioned, Month 6, Year 1
- B Outfitting of an office located in the SNNR education center to host the website with supporting equipment, Month 6, Year 1
- B Operation and maintenance of the website, Month 7, Year 1, ongoing
- B Training for IT staff members assigned by 8 natural reserves for the website operations and maintenance, Month 8, Year 1, ongoing
- D A feasibility study report on the establishment of a bi-lingual website for the GSA commissioned, Month 4, Year 1

- D Design of a bi-lingual website for the GSA, Month 6, Year 1
- D Website operational report, Month 10, Year 1, quarterly, ongoing
- D Training manual development, Month 7, Year 1
- D Training report, Month 9, Year 1, ongoing

Project outputs work package 4: Monitoring & Evaluation

- B Project personnel, infrastructure and processes in place. Month 4, Year 1.
- B Inception Workshop planned and implemented. Month 3, Year 1.
- B Project Steering Committee established and first meeting held. Month 3, Year 1 – ongoing.
- B Site committees established. Month 6 - ongoing.
- B Mid-term evaluation completed with recommendations for project performance improvement. Month 6, Year 3.
- D Project M&E Framework developed. Month 4, Year 1 – ongoing.
- D Participatory M&E framework developed. Month 8, Year 1 – ongoing.
- D Reporting systems developed and implemented. Month 3, Year 1.
- D Reports submitted. Commencing Month 64, Year 1 – ongoing.
- D Project final evaluation completed. Month 6, Year 6

Previous reviews/evaluations

- Mid-term Review, 2021
- Project Mid-Term Self-assessment report (by PIU)

Reference documents

- UNEP / Evaluation Office (2024, October 01). 00e TR Main TR Report Template (FOR USE BY CONSULTANTS).
- <https://communities.unep.org/display/EOU/MANAGEMENT-LED+REVIEW+TOOLS>
- • UNEP / Evaluation Office (2024, October 01). 02 TR Review Criteria Ratings Table.
- <https://communities.unep.org/display/EOU/MANAGEMENT-LED+REVIEW+TOOLS>
- • UNEP / Evaluation Office (2024, October 01). 03 TR Criterion Rating Descriptions Matrix. <https://communities.unep.org/display/EOU/MANAGEMENT-LED+REVIEW+TOOLS>
- • UNEP / Evaluation Office (2024, October 01). 04 TR Weighted Ratings Table.
- <https://communities.unep.org/display/EOU/MANAGEMENT-LED+REVIEW+TOOLS>
- • UNEP / Evaluation Office (2024, October 01). 06 TR Main Review Report Guidance Note. <https://communities.unep.org/display/EOU/MANAGEMENT-LED+REVIEW+TOOLS>
- • UNEP / Evaluation Office (2024, October 01). 11 TR Addressing Gender Guidance Note. <https://communities.unep.org/display/EOU/MANAGEMENT-LED+REVIEW+TOOLS>
- • UNEP / Evaluation Office (2024, October 01). 13 TR Use of Theory of Change in Reviews Guidance Note.

- <https://communities.unep.org/display/EOU/MANAGEMENT-LED+REVIEW+TOOLS>
- • UNEP / Evaluation Office (2024, October 01). 14 TR Financial Tables – these go
- into the main review report and will guide you on the evidence to look for under
- Financial Management Criteria.
- <https://communities.unep.org/display/EOU/MANAGEMENT-LED+REVIEW+TOOLS>
- • UNEP / Evaluation Office (2024, October 01). 15 TR Likelihood of Impact Flow
- Chart. [https://communities.unep.org/display/EOU/MANAGEMENT-](https://communities.unep.org/display/EOU/MANAGEMENT-LED+REVIEW+TOOLS)
- LED+REVIEW+TOOLS
- • UNEP / Evaluation Office (2024, October 01). 15a TR Likelihood of Impact Flow
- Chart Test Case. [https://communities.unep.org/display/EOU/MANAGEMENT-](https://communities.unep.org/display/EOU/MANAGEMENT-LED+REVIEW+TOOLS)
- LED+REVIEW+TOOLS
- • UNEP / Evaluation Office (2024, October 01). 16 Recommendations Quality
- Guidance Note. [https://communities.unep.org/display/EOU/MANAGEMENT-](https://communities.unep.org/display/EOU/MANAGEMENT-LED+REVIEW+TOOLS)
- LED+REVIEW+TOOLS
- • UNEP / Evaluation Office (2024, October 01). 16a TR Presenting Recs and LL
- Template– use these to formulate the recommendations and lessons learned.
- <https://communities.unep.org/display/EOU/MANAGEMENT-LED+REVIEW+TOOLS>
- • UNEP / Evaluation Office (2024, October 01). 17 TR Recommendation Impl Plan
- Template. [https://communities.unep.org/display/EOU/MANAGEMENT-](https://communities.unep.org/display/EOU/MANAGEMENT-LED+REVIEW+TOOLS)
- LED+REVIEW+TOOLS

ANNEX V. REVIEW ITINERARY

Review Itinerary

Working/Travel Days: Monday, 6 July – Friday, 12 July 2025

Travelers:

- Langnan CHEN, Terminal Review Expert
- 2 PMU staff (Yunhai Pu and Li Wang) and 3 PIU Staff (Wei Feng, Longqiang Deng, and Ronghu Shao)

Date	City	By	Agenda
06 July (Sunday)	Wuhan	Air Domestic flight	Arrive in Wuhan.
07 July (Mon.)	Wuhan	Walk	Morning: Meeting with Project Steering Committee (PSC) members in Wuhan
07 July (Mon.)	Wuhan	Walk	Afternoon: Meeting with Divisions in HFD; Meeting with technical support teams.
08 July (Tue.)	Shennongjia Forestry District	Car	Morning: Leaving for Shennongjia Forestry District.
08 July (Tue.)	Shennongjia Forestry District	Car	Afternoon: Visiting Duheyuan National Nature Reserve and meeting with the vice governor of Zhushan County, staff members of the nature reserve.
09 July (Wed.)	Shennongjia Forestry District	Car	Morning: Visiting Shennongjia Forestry District Government and Meeting with Mr. Wenhua Wang, Former Deputy Governor; Visiting National Park, Ecological Corridor.
09 July (Wed.)	Shennongjia Forestry District	Car	Afternoon: Visiting Shennongjia co-management village (Qingtian Village) and meeting with Mr Tian Mingxue (Head), Mr Lin Tinghong, and Mr. Yang Minghua (villager representatives).
10 July (Thu.)	Shennongjia Forestry District	Car	Morning: Visiting Patrolling Station, Monitoring Station and Surveillance Points, Guanmenshan Botanical Garden, Exhibition Hall, and Academy of Science; and Meeting the staff in these agencies.
10 July (Thu.)	Shennongjia Forestry District	Car	Afternoon: Meeting with the staff in various division in Shennongjia National Park; Meeting with PMU/PIU teams from Shennongjia National Park, Badong NR, ShibaliChangxie NR, Yerengu NR and Wudaoxia NR.
11 July (Fri.)	Shennongjia Forestry District	Car	Morning: Visiting Wanchaoshan Nature Reserve, visit co-management village (Dianziping village), and Meeting with nature reserve managers; Villager representatives: Mr Wang Yulong, Mr

			Zhou Jiayi, Mr Zhang Changfa, Ms Chen Yan, Mr Wan Linzhi, Mr. Li Jichao, and Mr Deng.
11 July (Fri.)	Wuhan	Car	Afternoon: - Leaving for Wuhan.
12 July (Sat.)		Air Domestic flight	Early morning flight departure Wuhan.

ANNEX VI. ENVIRONMENTAL AND SOCIAL SAFEGUARDS ASSESSMENT

ESS PLANNING AT PROJECT DESIGN	
List any ESS issues identified at project design (e.g. SS 1.7, SS 2.3, etc.) ¹⁵	<u>Environmental safeguards</u> (GEF4865 Project Document) No issue <u>Social safeguards</u> (GEF4865 Project Document) - respect internationally proclaimed human rights: L - property rights on resources such as land tenure: L - affected stakeholders' information and consultation: L - A safe and healthy working environment: L - corruption: L
For any ESS issues identified at project design, were <u>mitigation strategies</u> developed (Y/N)? (If yes, briefly describe)	Y, the risk mitigation strategies for the ESS issues include: - The relevant Chinese laws will regulate the human rights of ethnic minorities in China. - A voluntary resettlement program based on financial incentives will be used. - A mechanism for supporting participatory stakeholder consultation has been incorporated in the project design. - Adequate technical tools and equipment, e.g. safety clothes/shoes and patrolling equipment, will be provided. - Annual audits will be conducted.
Were any <u>gaps</u> in ESS issues identified at the review inception phase (Y/N)? (If yes, briefly describe)	N

ESS MONITORING AT PROJECT IMPLEMENTATION	
Is there evidence that the potential emergence of ESS issues was actively <u>monitored</u> during project	Y, as the risks were low, the emergence of ESS issues was monitored in cooperation with the national programmes during the project implementation.

¹⁵ Select from the list of Environmental and Social Safeguards Risks in Table 1 of the template (tool 14, Safeguards Assessment Template).

implementation (Y/N)? ¹⁶ (If yes, briefly describe)	
Is there a justification for the absence of ESS monitoring (Y/N)? (If yes, briefly describe ¹⁷)	N

MANAGEMENT RESPONSIVENESS DURING PROJECT IMPLEMENTATION	
Identify the ESS issues/events triggered ¹⁸ by the project. ¹⁹	N/A
Describe consequences of ESS issues/events during project implementation.	N/A

¹⁶ **Low risk:** Negative impacts minimal or negligible: no further study or impact management required.

Moderate risk: Potential negative impacts, but limited in scale, not unprecedented or irreversible and generally limited to programme/project area; impacts amenable to management using standard mitigation measures; limited environmental or social analysis may be required to develop an Environmental and Social Management Plan (ESMP). Straightforward application of good practice may be sufficient without additional study.

High risk: Potential for significant negative impacts (e.g. irreversible, unprecedented, cumulative, significant stakeholder concerns); Environmental and Social Impact Assessment (ESIA) (or Strategic Environmental and Social Assessment (SESA)) including a full impact assessment may be required, followed by an effective comprehensive safeguard management plan.

¹⁷ For instance, during COVID, access to the field may have been restricted

¹⁸ 'Triggered' refers to environmental or social issues/events that are caused or exacerbated—directly or indirectly—as a result of the project's activities, interventions, or presence.

¹⁹ Select from the list of Environmental and Social Safeguards Risks in Table 1 of the template (tool 14, Safeguards Assessment Template).

Describe the management response and identify supporting documentation. ^{20, 21}	N/A
Were negative ESS effects offset by management response (Y/N)? (If yes, briefly describe)	N/A

²⁰ For most low-moderate risk projects, good practice approach may be sufficient. Project should demonstrate safeguard management approach in the project activities, budget, risks management, stakeholder engagement or/and monitoring segments of the project document to avoid or minimize the identified potential risks without preparing a separate safeguard management plan.

²¹ E.g., GEF Project Implementation Report (PIR), Progress Report, Minutes, etc.

ANNEX VII. PROJECT BUDGET AND EXPENDITURES

Table 14: Project Funding Sources Table (IF NOT ALREADY WITHIN THE REPORT)

Funding source	Planned funding	% of planned funding	Secured funding	% of secured funding
All figures as USD				
Cash				
Funds from the Environment Fund	2,657,534		2,050,059.75	
Funds from the Regular Budget	1,628,950		5,776,551	
Extra-budgetary funding (SFD):	8,650,155		8,811,444	
Sub-total: Cash contributions	12,936,639		16,638,054.75	
In-kind				
Environment Fund staff-post costs	182,265		0	
Regular Budget staff-post costs	4,630,435		1,967,857	
Extra-budgetary funding for staff-posts (listed per donor)				
Sub-total: In-kind contributions	4,812,700		1,967,857	
Co-financing*				
Co-financing cash contribution	10,279,105		14,587,995	
Co-financing in-kind contribution	4,812,700		1,967,857	
Sub-total: Co-financing contributions	15,091,805		16,555,852	
Total	17,749,339		18,605,911.75	

*Funding from a donor to a partner which is not received into UNEP accounts but is used by a UNEP partner or collaborating centre to deliver the results in a UNEP – approved project.

Table 15: Expenditure by Outcome/Output

Component/sub-component/output	Estimated cost at design	Actual Cost/ expenditure
All figures as USD		
Component 1 / Outcome 1	2284865	2587792.87
Component 2 / Outcome 2	11,695,800	11079107.92
Component 3 / Outcome 3	3,175,540	4364115.24
Project Management	593,134	574895.24
Total	17,749,339	18,605,911.75

ANNEX VII. FINANCIAL MANAGEMENT

Table 16: Financial Management Table (IF NOT ALREADY WITHIN THE REPORT)

Financial management components:		Rating	Evidence/ Comments
1. Adherence to UNEP's policies and procedures:		HS	
Any evidence that indicates shortcomings in the project's adherence ²² to UNEP or donor policies, procedures or rules		No	The Project followed both UNEP and Chinese Government's policies, procedures and rules.
2. Completeness of project financial information²³:			
Provision of key documents to the reviewer (based on the responses to A-H below)		HS	All financial statements and reports were available upon requested.
A.	Co-financing and Project Cost's tables at design (by budget lines)	Yes/No or N/A	By component and expenditure
B.	Revisions to the budget	N/A	Remain unchanged
C.	All relevant project legal agreements (e.g. SSFA, PCA, ICA)	Yes	available
D.	Proof of fund transfers	Yes	available
E.	Proof of co-financing (cash and in-kind)	Yes	available
F.	A summary report on the project's expenditures during the life of the project (by budget lines, project components and/or annual level)	Yes	As detailed as needed
G.	Copies of any completed audits and management responses (<i>where applicable</i>)	Yes	available
H.	Any other financial information that was required for this project (list):	Yes	available
3. Communication between finance and project management staff		HS	
Project Manager and/or Task Manager's level of awareness of the project's financial status.		HS	High level
Fund Management Officer's knowledge of project progress/status when disbursements are done.		HS	Full knowledge
Level of addressing and resolving financial management issues among Fund Management Officer and Project Manager/Task Manager.		HS	High level
Contact/communication between by Fund Management Officer, Project Manager/Task Manager during the preparation of financial and progress reports.		HS	Frequent contact/communication
Project Manager, Task Manager and Fund Management Officer responsiveness to financial requests during the review process		HS	promptly
Overall rating		HS	All above

²² If the review raises concerns over adherence with policies or standard procedures, a recommendation may be given to cover the topic in an upcoming audit, or similar financial oversight exercise.

²³ See also document 'Criterion Rating Description' for reference

ANNEX IX. COMMUNICATION AND OUTREACH TOOLS



UNEP China2.pptx

ANNEX X. GEF Co-FINANCE

Confirmed sources of Co-financing for the project by name and by type

Please complete for all projects at MTR and TE Stages

Please include evidence for co-financing for the project with this form (please add rows as necessary)

Sources of Co-financing	Name of Co-financier	Type of Cofinancing	Investment Mobilized	Amount (\$) at CEO	Amount (\$) at MTR	Amount (\$) at TE
	Hubei Bureau of Finance (BOF)			1628950	5776551	5776551
	Hubei Bureau of Finance (BOF)			4630435	1967857	1967857
	Shennongjia Forestry District (SFD)			8650155	8811444	8811444
	UNEP			182265	-	-
Total Co-financing				15,091,805	16,555,852	16,555,852

ANNEX XI. BRIEF CV OF THE REVIEWER

Langnan Chen

Profession	Consultant and Academic Researcher
Nationality	
Country experience	- Europe: UK, Italy, Ukraine, Azerbaijan, Albania, Bosnia, Serbia - Africa: South Africa, Tunisia, Morocco, Tanzania, Gabon, Libya, Belize, Kenya, Gambia, Zimbabwe, Somalia, Benin, Burkina Faso, Chad, Ghana, Mali, Mozambique, Niger, Nigeria, Senegal, Togo - Americas: USA, Canada, Haiti, Brazil, Columbia, OECS, St. Vincent & the Grenadines, Barbados - Asia: China, India, Pakistan, Thailand, Sri Lanka, Viet Nam, Cambodia, Lao PDR, Indonesia, Malaysia, Nepal, Bangladesh, Afghanistan, Turkey, Tajikistan, Kyrgyzstan, Turkmenistan, Uzbekistan, Kazakhstan, Maldives, Timor, Saudi, Myanmar, Jordan, Lebanon, Mongolia - Oceania: Fiji, Solomon, Kiribati, 14 Pacific states
Education	- PhD in economics - MBA in finance

Mr Langnan Chen is an principle independent evaluation specialist, economist/finance specialist and professor of economics and finance with more than 43 years of academic and consulting experience in environment, climate change, energy, agriculture, forestry, water, transportation, finance, education and other sectors, especially on the recent more than 120 projects supported by UNEP, UNDP, UNCDF, UNICEF, UN, UNFPA, UNOCT, UNESCO, EU, World Bank, ADB and many other international organizations in more than 50 countries (see above). The projects, in which he has been involved, range from project design, feasibility study and advisory TA to midterm review, project completion evaluation, and loan implementation/capacity building. In addition, he was contracted by UNEP, UNDP, UN, UNICEF, UNOCT, UNESCO, ADB, AFD, OECS and EU to conduct project/program evaluation (project completion report or PCR in development banks) for 30 projects. Finally, he has 26 papers published in the leading peer reviewed journals (including 16 A-level journals) in economics and finance, and more than 100 academic papers and 10 books (in Chinese) published in China.

In particular, (i) he has been contracted by UNDP Evaluation Office to assess the evaluation reports under UNDP: Quality Assessment of Decentralized Evaluations. He has also been contracted by ADB Evaluation Office to conduct similar works on the evaluation reports (PCR) under ADB TA SC 101411 REG: Project Completion Report (PCR) Validation Reports. He might know how to produce a better evaluation report. (ii) He has conducted evaluation for UNEP, UN, UNDP, UNICEF, UNOCT, UNESCO, AFD, EU, OECS and ADB and has in-dept knowledge of evaluation methodologies for various international organizations particularly UN. (iii) He has undertaken all types of evaluation projects, such as programme/project evaluation, thematic evaluation, CPD/country programme evaluation, GEF/UNEP/UNDP/ADB evaluation, and evaluability assessment (for UNICEF). (iv) Finally, he has been involved in 22 UN projects and 30 project evaluations including 13 UN project evaluations.

Key specialties and capabilities cover:

- More than 120 international development projects covering almost all development sectors including environment, climate change, energy, agriculture, forestry, water/waste water/solid waste, transport, finance, education; and humanitarian operations.

Selected assignments and experiences

Independent reviews/evaluations: 30 evaluation projects including 13 UN evaluation projects and 5 GEF evaluation projects:

- UNEP/GEF: Mid-Term Review of Reducing uses and releases of chemicals of concern, including Persistent Organic Pollutants (POPs) in the textiles sector for Bangladesh, Indonesia, Pakistan and Vietnam (GEF ID: 10523), not updated in cv.

- UNEP/GEF: Terminal Review for Expansion and Improvement of Biodiversity Conservation and Sustainable Use of Natural Resources in the Greater Shennongjia Area, Hubei Province, China (GEF Project ID 4865)
- UNESCO: Evaluation for Accelerating Carbon Neutrality: Innovative Actions for Sustainable Development
- UNOTC (Benin, Burkina Faso, Chad, Ghana, Libya, Mali, Mozambique, Niger, Nigeria, Senegal, and Togo): Final Evaluation for Strengthening the Counter-Terrorism Capacity of Member States in Africa, Through the Development of National Training Programmes and Counter-Terrorism Training Curricula
- Mid-Term Evaluation for the OECS Programme for Educational Advancement and Relevant Learning (OECS PEARL)
- ADB (Mongolia): Project Evaluation/Project Completion Report
- UNDP: Final Evaluation for Support to Payroll Management Project (SPM) for Afghanistan
- UN Pacific Strategy Fund (PSF) Mid-Term Review (MTR)
- UNICEF: Support to the evaluation portfolio of EAPRO
- UNDP: Final Evaluation of Inclusive Budgeting and Financing for Climate Resilience (IBFCR) Project
- EU: DEL CN - FWC Final Evaluation For EU SME Centre Project
- UNDP/GEF: Achieving Low Carbon Growth in Cities through Sustainable Urban Systems Management in Thailand
- UNDP: Evaluation on Kiribati Trade Capacity Development and Institutional Strengthening Project
- SC 108545 PRC: Project Completion (Post Evaluation) - Loan 2607 PRC Shanxi Integrated Agriculture Development Project
- ADB TA-8653 REG: Selected Evaluation Studies for 2014-CAPE (Country Assistance Program Evaluation) PRC
- UNDP: (China) Country Programme Document (CPD) Review
- ADB/GEF TA Loan No L2157 (China): Sanjiang Plain Wetlands Protection Project - Project Completion Mission
- ADB Mid Term Review on Loan No 2607-PRC (China) Shanxi Integrated Agricultural Development Project
- ADB TA: SC 101411 REG: Project Completion Report (PCR) Validation Reports
- UNDP: Quality Assessment of Decentralized Evaluations
- UNDP (USA, Tunisia, Morocco, Tanzania, Gabon, Haiti, Brazil, Columbia, Turkey, South Africa, Cambodia, Thai, India and China): Evaluation of UNDP contribution to South-South Cooperation
- AFD/EU (China) Ex-post Evaluation of Dali Zhemoshan Wind Power Project
- ADB Loan1919-PRC (China): Songhua River Flood Management Sector Project, Post Evaluation and Project Completion Evaluation Report
- ADB/GEF Mid Term Review Mission (China): Sanjiang Plain Wetlands Protection Project
- ADB TA No. 4831-PRC (China): the PPTA Final Review and Loan Fact Finding Mission Henan Ecological Agriculture and Rural Productivity Improvement Project
- ADB Loan No. 1347-PRC (China): Second Agricultural Bank of China (ABC): Post Evaluation and Project Completion Report
- ADB Loan 1242-PRC (China): Guangzhou Pumped Storage Stage II Project: Post Evaluation and Project Completion Report
- ADB Loan 1205-PRC (China): Qingdao Environmental Improvement Project: Post Evaluation and Project Completion Report
- ADB Loan No. 1304 - PRC (China): Yunnan - Simao Forestation and Sustainable Wood Utilization Project: Mid Term Review
- ADB Loan No. 1178, Post Evaluation and Project Completion Report-PRC (China): Industrial Energy Conservation and Environment Improvement Project

ANNEX XII. REVIEW TORs (WITHOUT ANNEXES)

Terminal Review of the UNEP project

“Expansion and Improvement of Biodiversity Conservation and Sustainable Use of Natural Resources in the Greater Shennongjia Area, Hubei Province” and “GEF Project ID Number 4865”

Section 1: PROJECT BACKGROUND AND OVERVIEW

1. Project General Information

Table 1. Project summary

UNEP PIMS ID/SMA ²⁴ ID:	37259	Grant ID ²⁵ (if applicable):	S1-32GFL-000617
UNEP Management (Division/Branch/Unit):	Ecosystems Division/Biodiversity and Land Branch/GEF Biodiversity and Land Degradation Unit		
Implementing Partners:	Hubei Provincial Department of Forestry		
Sources of Funding:	Country ²⁶ (ies): China	Institution ²⁷ Name/Type: Government Entity	
Relevant SDG(s):	SDG 15		
MTS (all that apply):		UNEP approval date:	_____09/05/2018
POW Direct Outcome(s) number/reference (applicable for projects approved from 2022): OR	POW Direct Outcome: N/A	MTS 2025 Outcome(s) number/reference (applicable for projects approved from 2022): OR	MTS 2025 Outcome: N/A
POW Output(s) number/reference	POW Output: Work (PoW) for 2018-2019, 2020-2021	POW Expected Accomplishment(s)	POW Expected Accomplishment: Ecosystem Management sub-program: under EA (a)

²⁴ SMA refers to the ID provided by the Integrated Planning, Management and Reporting Solution (IPMR) system, which was introduced by UNEP in July 2023.

²⁵ For example, ID references from EC, IKI, UNDA, Adaptation Fund, GCF.

²⁶ Where applicable, list countries who have provided project funds and/or co-finance.

²⁷ Indicate where funding institutions are any/all of the following: Foundation/NGO; Private Sector; UN Body; Multilateral Fund; Environment Fund; Other.

<i>(applicable for projects approved pre-2022)</i>		) number/reference <i>(applicable for projects approved pre-2022):</i>	
Sub-programme:	Nature Action	Programme Coordination Project:	<i>Conservation, Restoration and Sustainable Use of Biodiversity</i>
Expected start date:	24/12/2015	Actual start date:	25/05/2018
Planned completion date:	31/05/2023	Actual operational completion date:	31/05/2024
Planned total project budget ²⁸ at approval:	US\$ 2,657,534	Actual total expenditures reported as of [date]:	US\$ 2,041,408.3
Planned Extra-budgetary Funds ²⁹ :	Cash: US\$ 10,279,105 In-kind: US\$ 4,812,700	Secured Extra-budgetary Funds:	Cash: US\$ 14,587,995 In-kind: US\$ 1,967,857
		Actual Extra-budgetary Funds expenditures reported as of [date]:	Cash: _____ 16,555,852 _____
First disbursement:	US\$ 350,000	Planned date of financial closure:	<i>Estimated 1 year after operational completion 31.05.2025</i>
No. of formal project revisions:	0	Date of last approved project revision:	N/A
No. of Steering Committee meetings:	5	Date of Last Steering Committee meeting:	11/11/2021

²⁸ Total budget may include; Regular Budget, Environment Fund, Extra-Budgetary, including 'softly-earmarked' etc.

²⁹ Extra-budgetary funds may include co-finance (cash/in-kind)

Mid-term Review/ Evaluation (<i>planned date</i>):	25/05/2021	Mid-term Review/ Evaluation (actual date):	15/06/2021
Terminal Evaluation (<i>planned date</i>):	November 2024	Terminal Evaluation (actual date):	
Coverage – Implementing Country(ies):	China	Coverage – Implementing Region(s):	Asia Pacific
Dates of previous project phases:		Status of future project phases:	

2. Project Rationale³⁰

The Greater Shennongjia Area (GSA) is an administratively bounded planning area located in the northwest of China's Hubei province. With a total area of 2,402,807 ha of which some 1,286,645 ha (53 %) is covered by natural forest, the GSA represents the eastern most part of Daba Mountain Range, the latter which was identified by the China National Biodiversity Strategy and Action Plan (NBSAP) as one of the 16 key biodiversity areas in China. In response to the rapid loss of much of the natural forests and other biological resources in the GSA, the Hubei provincial government created the Shennongjia Provincial Nature Reserve (SPNR) in 1982. This was followed by the creation of an additional 7 nature reserves in the Shennongjia Forestry District (SFD) and adjacent counties that *in toto* represent the main means to conserve biodiversity in this globally important mountainous ecosystem. Despite these measures and the global significance of the area there exist a number of major threats to GSA biodiversity. These include conversion of forest to agriculture, hunting and collecting of wild plants and animals and more recently tourism development, roads, mines, hydro-electric development and other efforts designed to expand and diversify the local economy that in the absence of adequate safeguards, are contributing to additional pressures on the ecosystem. There is also concern over the threat of invasive alien species (IAS) in combination with the potential growing vulnerability of the GSA forests to the effects of climate change though there are few data to assess the degree of threat from which to base informed decision-making leading to its mitigation. Main constraints impeding present efforts to conserve biodiversity in GSA include: (i) absence of integrated planning and the failure to incorporate biodiversity considerations into local development planning processes; (ii) an absence of human (both in numbers and training) and financial resources in the remaining NRs; (iii) poor data and capacity to use what data there are to make more informed decisions in support of improved reserve management; (iv) failure of local government to see biodiversity conservation as a priority; and (v) absence of education among local people about the value of protecting wildlife.

The project goal is to enhance (conservation) management effectiveness of NNRs in Hubei province, as well as the mainstreaming of biodiversity conservation and value of ecosystem services in economic development plans and sectors. The project objective is to enhance biodiversity conservation and sustainable use of natural resources through the expansion and strengthening of the protected area network in the GSA. This will be achieved through activities supported under the following three mutually reinforcing technical components: (i) capacity building for improved development planning; (ii) strengthening and expanding GSA NR network and ecological monitoring; and (iii) education awareness & communication. These will be complemented with project management and monitoring & evaluation sub-components. The main project outcomes will be: (i) an improved policy and regulatory framework for development planning of production sectors in GSA; (ii) reduced impact to local biodiversity from invasive alien species (IAS) in GSA; (iii) improved management effectiveness in existing GSA nature reserves; (iv) increased habitat integrity of areas

³⁰ Grey =Info to be added

under protection in the GSA; (v) improved landscape-based species- and habitat protection through better planning, population monitoring and targeted actions in GSA; (vi) improved awareness of decision-makers and the general public on the importance of protecting biodiversity and ecosystem services to sustainable development in GSA; and (vii) improved biodiversity conservation communications in Hubei Province with a focus on GSA.

The associated global environmental benefits (GEBs) are: (i) strengthened efforts for the conservation of biodiversity of global significance totaling 113 plant and animal species categorized as Category I or II species (in China) in 8 national and provincial nature reserves covering a total area of 243,835 ha in the GSA; (ii) creation of one, new nature reserve and declaration of a corridor providing additional protection to these same plant and animal species and their respective habitats totaling 140,000 ha in area; (iii) contribution to the reduction in habitat fragmentation characteristic of the GSA's existing 8 nature reserves through the creation of the new NR and corridor cited in (ii) above; (iv) reducing external threats to biodiversity and habitat protected in existing GSA nature reserves through support to provincial 13th FYP planning process and the "mainstreaming" of biodiversity considerations into two county level, 13th FYP sector plans (four sectors each) covering a total aggregate area of the two counties of SFD (county-equivalent) and Baokang county of 633,947 ha; (v) reducing risk to local biodiversity from invasive species (IAS) in the GSA through improvement of planning capacity in IAS prevention and control in 7 project counties; (vi) improved functioning of forest ecosystems and processes that will result in increased carbon sequestration and ultimately positive contributions to the mitigation of global warming; and (vii) the better identification, valuation and incorporation of ecosystems services in the economic development of sectors in the landscape, as well as the management practices of the GSA. This 5-year project will be executed under China's National Implementation Modality (NIM) with Hubei's Provincial Department of Forestry as the designated National Executing Agency (NEA). Project financing of this USD 17.67 million project consists of USD 2.66 million GEF grant and confirmed co- financing of USD 15.01 million from Hubei Bureau of Finance, Provincial Forestry Department, Shennongjia National Nature Reserve and UNEP.

3. Project Results Framework

[Present the project objective(s), components, outputs, outcomes and long-lasting impacts as per the Project Document (i.e. the results framework). Include the Theory of Change diagram, where available. Use tables as appropriate.]

4. Executing Arrangements

[Specify UNEP Branch and Unit responsible for project implementation and project execution partners. Briefly describe role and composition of management and supervision structures of the project. Use table or diagram as appropriate. NOTE: For GEF-funded projects highlight internally executed projects, providing details on reporting lines for implementation and execution.]

Institutional context

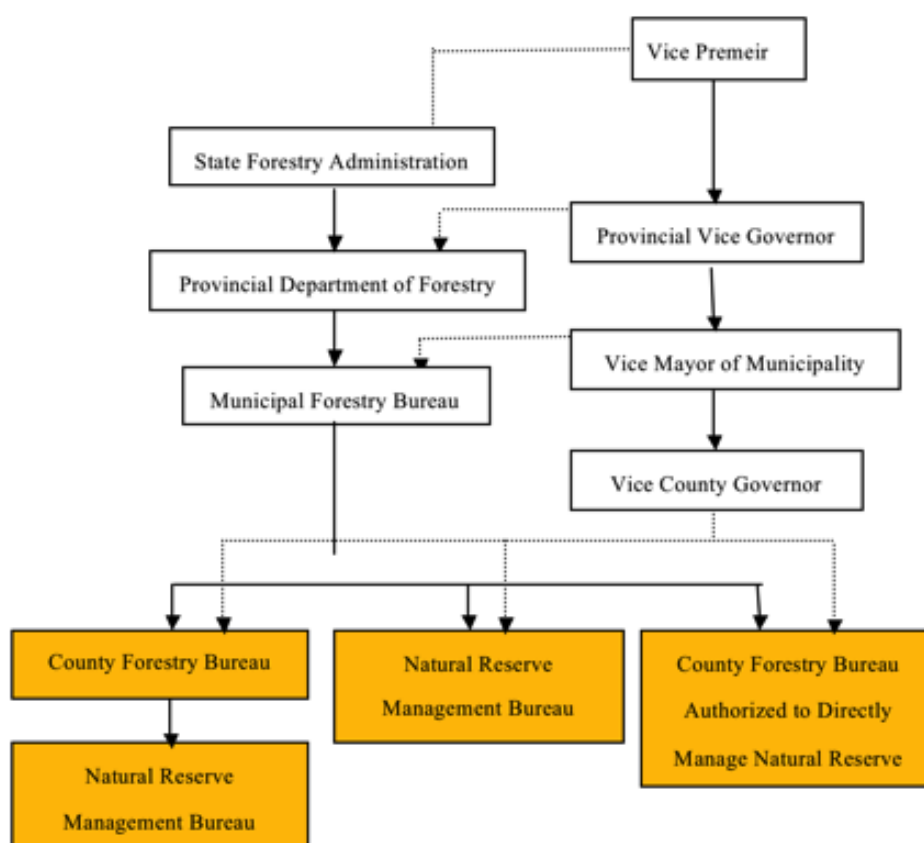
In China there exist a number of State public agencies responsible for the management and conservation of nature reserves (NR). The remit of China's State Forestry Administration (SFA) is the management and conservation of the country's forests and wetlands. This was greatly expanded and diversified following the decision to ban forest production and the conversion of many of China's forest farms to nature reserves.

Because of lack of specificity in China's natural reserves legislation there is wide scope for what constitutes a nature reserve, management objectives, staffing and other management fundamentals. As a result, most nature reserves in China can be classified into one of the following three management modalities: (i) a specific and independent agency under the supervision of provincial government and/or department responsible for the management of the reserve, (ii) a specific agency under the supervision of prefecture government and/or department responsible for the management of more than nature reserve or (iii) an agency and/or department responsible for law enforcement, management, operations and other functions simultaneously.

State mandate and the division of responsibilities for managing the country's nature reserves pass directly down to the respective, corresponding department or bureau at the provincial and county / district levels. Reporting is in the opposite direction originating from the specific reserve to the county / district department / bureaus followed by the municipal / provincial levels and finally reporting back to the State level. Figure 1 illustrates the parallel supervision (top down) and reporting (bottom up) management structure characteristic of China's NR system.

In most cases reserves have no independent source of funding and must rely on local government finances to support daily operations. As a result, even when instructions are received from the respective supervising body there is no guarantee that the additional financial resources will be made available by local government for their implementation, in particular when reserve management actions conflict with the local government's economic development priorities. In part due to the legacy of many of the country's nature reserves harking back to their initial establishment as forestry farms, many of the country's reserves suffer from lack of capacity in particular at the local level (e.g., county and provincial level reserves).

Figure 1. Nature Reserves Administration System in China



Hubei Provincial People's Government is fully responsible for the development of Hubei Province. Total area of Hubei province is 185,900 square kilometers, and total population is 57.79 million (2012), of which the urban population is 30.91 million. In Hubei Province, there are a total of 13 prefecture-level administrative units (of which: 12 prefecture-level cities, 1 autonomous prefecture), 103 county-level administrative units (of which: 38 municipal districts, 24 counties level cities, 38 counties, 2 autonomous counties, a forest district).

Hubei Provincial People's Congress and the Legislative Affairs Office of Provincial Government are the highest-level agency responsible for issuing policy, legislation and regulations in Hubei Province. However, in fact they rely on provincial departments to fulfill their legislative responsibilities in legislation. Majority of provincial legislation and policies are proposed and drafted by various sectoral departments or agencies, and issued by Provincial People's Congress or Legislative Affairs Office of the Province government after consultation with the relevant departments or agencies.

5. Project Cost and Financing

	USD	%
Cost of GEF Trust Fund	2,657,534	15
Co- financing Cash		
Hubei BOF	1,628,950	11
Shennongjia Forestry District	8,650,155	57
Subtotal	10,279,105	68
Co-financing in-kind		
Hubei BOF	4,630,435	31
UNEP	182,265	1
Sub-Total	4,812,700	32
Project Total	17,749,339	100

Recent figures on disbursement: Total disbursement as of 30 June 2024: \$ 2,357,580.00

Sources of Co-financing	Name of Co-financier	Type of Cofinancing	Investment Mobilized	Amount (\$)
Local government	Hubei provincial department of finance	cash	(select)	\$5,776,551
Local government	Hubei provincial department of finance	In-kind	(select)	\$1,967,857
Local government	Shennongjia Forestry District	cash	(select)	\$8,811,444
(select)		(select)	(select)	
(select)		(select)	(select)	
(select)		(select)	(select)	
(select)		(select)	(select)	
(select)		(select)	(select)	
(select)		(select)	(select)	
Total Co-financing				16,555,852

6. Implementation Issues

The project ran into significant delays during the COVID 19 lockdown in China. The project has received one no cost extension, moving forward the technical completion date of the project to 31/05/2024. Whereas several of the outcomes of the project have been achieved the project has to be prematurely closed due to funding issues. While funds have been sent to the Hubei Finance Dept. by UNEP, as per the PCA, the Hubei Finance Dept. refused to acknowledge the no cost extension and has blocked funds disbursement to the Forestry Dept. This has meant that staff have not been paid and the project will not finish all activities. This is an internal issue between two departments of the provincial government and therefore the project will not receive another no cost extension and will close.

Section 2. OBJECTIVE AND SCOPE OF THE REVIEW

7. Objective of the Review

In line with the UNEP Evaluation Policy³¹ and the UNEP Programme and Project Management Manual³², the Terminal Review (TR) is undertaken at operational completion of the project to assess project performance (in terms of relevance, effectiveness and efficiency), and determine outcomes and impacts (actual and potential) stemming from the project, including their sustainability. The Review has two primary purposes: (i) to provide evidence of results to meet accountability requirements, and (ii) to promote operational improvement, learning and knowledge sharing through results and lessons learned among UNEP and [main project partners]. Therefore, the Review will

³¹ <https://wedocs.unep.org/handle/20.500.11822/41114>

³² <https://wedocs.unep.org/20.500.11822/42752>

identify lessons of operational relevance for future project formulation and implementation, especially for future phases of the project, where applicable.

8. Key Review principles

Review findings and judgements will be based on **sound evidence and analysis**, clearly documented in the Review Report. Information will be triangulated (i.e. verified from different sources) as far as possible, and when verification is not possible, the single source will be mentioned (whilst anonymity is still protected). Analysis leading to evaluative judgements should always be clearly spelled out.

The “Why?” Question. As this is a Terminal Review and a follow-up project is likely [or similar interventions are envisaged for the future], particular attention will be given to learning from the experience. Therefore, the “why?” question should be at the front of the consultant(s)’ minds all through the review exercise and is supported by the use of a theory of change approach. This means that the consultant(s) need to go beyond the assessment of “*what*” the project performance was and make a serious effort to provide a deeper understanding of “*why*” the performance was as it was (i.e. what contributed to the achievement of the project’s results). This should provide the basis for the lessons that can be drawn from the project.

Attribution, Contribution and Credible Association: In order to *attribute* any outcomes and impacts to a project intervention, one needs to consider the difference between what has happened with, and what would have happened without, the project (i.e. take account of changes over time and between contexts in order to isolate the effects of an intervention). This requires appropriate baseline data and the identification of a relevant counterfactual, both of which are frequently not available for reviews. Establishing the *contribution* made by a project in a complex change process relies heavily on prior intentionality (e.g. approved project design documentation, results framework) and the articulation of causality (e.g. narrative and/or illustration of the Theory of Change). Robust evidence that a project was delivered as designed and that the expected causal pathways developed supports claims of contribution and this is strengthened where an alternative theory of change can be excluded. A *credible association* between the implementation of a project and observed positive effects can be made where a strong causal narrative, although not explicitly articulated, can be inferred by the chronological sequence of events, active involvement of key actors and engagement in critical processes.

Communicating Review Results. A key aim of the Review is to encourage reflection and learning by UNEP staff and key project stakeholders. The consultant should consider how reflection and learning can be promoted, both through the review process and in the communication of review findings and key lessons. Clear and concise writing is required on all review deliverables. Draft and final versions of the main review report will be shared with key stakeholders by the UNEP Project Manager³³. There may, however, be several intended audiences, each with different interests and needs regarding the report. The consultant will plan with the UNEP Project Manager which audiences to target and the easiest and clearest way to communicate the key review findings and lessons to them. This may include some or all of the following: a webinar, conference calls with relevant stakeholders, the preparation of a review brief or interactive presentation.

9. Key Strategic Questions

In addition to the review criteria outlined in Section 10 below, the Review will address the **strategic questions**³⁴ listed below (no more than 5 questions are recommended). These are questions of interest to UNEP and to which the project is believed to be able to make a substantive contribution:

- (a) What evidence is available that the project has strengthened protection - and improved the management - of Shennongjia National Park, and through which mechanisms?

³³ For GEF funded projects, UNEP Project Manager refers to the Task Manager.

³⁴ The strategic questions should not duplicate questions that will be addressed under the standard review criteria described in section 10.

- (b) What evidence is available to suggest that the project has increased capacity of and trained human resources for greater protection and improved management of the Park?
- (c) What evidence is available to suggest an increase in awareness of the National Park amongst local communities in the region?
- (d) What evidence is available to suggest an increased institutionalization of park management within local and provincial policy?
- (e) (Where relevant) What changes were made to adapt to the effects of COVID-19 and how might any changes affect the project's performance?

For GEF-funded projects there are a series of questions that need to be uploaded to the GEF Portal. The consultant should complete the table in Annex 5 of these TOR and append it to the Final Review report.

10. Review Criteria

All review criteria will be rated on a six-point scale. Sections A-I below, outline the scope of the review criteria. The set of review criteria are grouped in nine categories: (A) Strategic Relevance; (B) Quality of Project Design; (C) Nature of External Context; (D) Effectiveness, which comprises assessments of the availability of outputs, achievement of outcomes and likelihood of impact; (E) Financial Management; (F) Efficiency; (G) Monitoring and Reporting; (H) Sustainability; and (I) Factors Affecting Project Performance.

A suite of various tools, templates and guidelines that can help Review Consultant(s) to follow a thorough review process that meets all of UNEP's needs is available via the UNEP Project Manager.

A. Strategic Relevance

The Review will assess the extent to which the activity is suited to the priorities and policies of the donors, implementing regions/countries and the target beneficiaries. The Review will include an assessment of the project's relevance in relation to UNEP's mandate and its alignment with UNEP's policies and strategies at the time of project approval. Under strategic relevance an assessment of the complementarity of the project with other interventions addressing the needs of the same target groups will be made. This criterion comprises four elements:

i. *Alignment to the UNEP's Medium-Term Strategy³⁵ (MTS), Programme of Work (POW) and Strategic Priorities*

The Review should assess the project's alignment with the MTS and POW under which the project was approved and include, in its narrative, reflections on the scale and scope of any contributions made to the planned results reflected in the relevant MTS and POW. UNEP strategic priorities include the Bali Strategic Plan for Technology Support and Capacity Building³⁶ (BSP) and South-South Cooperation (S-SC). The BSP relates to the capacity of governments to: comply with international agreements and obligations at the national level; promote, facilitate and finance environmentally sound technologies and to strengthen frameworks for developing coherent international environmental policies. S-SC is regarded as the exchange of resources, technology and knowledge between developing countries.

ii. *Alignment to Donor/Partner Strategic Priorities*

³⁵ UNEP's Medium Term Strategy (MTS) is a document that guides UNEP's programme planning over a four-year period. It identifies UNEP's thematic priorities, known as Sub-programmes (SP), and sets out the desired outcomes, known as *POW Outcomes* and *POW Direct Outcomes*, of the Sub-programmes. <https://www.unenvironment.org/about-un-environment/evaluation-office/our-evaluation-approach/un-environment-documents>

³⁶ <http://www.unep.fr/ozonaction/about/bsp.htm>

Donor strategic priorities will vary across interventions. The Review will assess the extent to which the project is suited to, or responding to, donor priorities. In some cases, alignment with donor priorities may be a fundamental part of project design and grant approval processes while in others, for example, instances of ‘softly-earmarked’ funding, such alignment may be more of an assumption that should be assessed.

iii. Relevance to Global, Regional, Sub-regional and National Environmental Priorities

The Review will assess the alignment of the project with global priorities such as the SDGs and Agenda 2030. The extent to which the intervention is suited, or responding to, the stated environmental concerns and needs of the countries, sub-regions or regions where it is being implemented will also be considered. Examples may include: UN Sustainable Development Cooperation Framework (UNSDCF) or, national or sub-national development plans, poverty reduction strategies or Nationally Appropriate Mitigation Action (NAMA) plans or regional agreements etc. Within this section consideration will be given to whether the needs of all beneficiary groups are being met and reflects the current policy priority to leave no-one behind.

iv. Complementarity with Relevant Existing Interventions/Coherence³⁷

An assessment will be made of how well the project, either at design stage or during the project inception or mobilization³⁸, took account of ongoing and planned initiatives (under the same sub-programme, other UNEP sub-programmes, or being implemented by other agencies within the same country, sector or institution) that address similar needs of the same target groups. The Review will consider if the project team, in collaboration with Regional Offices and Sub-Programme Coordinators, made efforts to ensure their own intervention was complementary to other interventions, optimized any synergies and avoided duplication of effort. Examples may include work within Cooperation Frameworks or One UN programming. Linkages with other interventions should be described and instances where UNEP’s comparative advantage has been particularly well applied should be highlighted.

Adaptation Fund	To encourage utilization, each review should optimize <u>relevance</u> by ensuring (i) that the primary intended users of the evaluation and their intended uses are clearly identified and engaged at the beginning of the evaluation process; (ii) that “intended users” include funding, implementing, and beneficiary stakeholders; and (iii) that evaluators ensure these intended users contribute to decisions about the evaluation process.
Green Climate Fund	<u>Coherence</u> in climate finance delivery with other multilateral entities.

B. Quality of Project Design

The quality of project design is assessed using an agreed template during the review inception phase. Ratings are attributed to identified criteria and an overall Project Design Quality rating is established. The complete Project Design Quality template should be annexed in the Review Inception Report. Later, the overall Project Design Quality rating³⁹ should be entered in the final review ratings table (as item B) in the Main Review Report and a summary of the project’s strengths and weaknesses at design stage should be included within the body of the Main Review Report.

C. Nature of External Context

³⁷ This sub-category is consistent with the new criterion of ‘Coherence’ introduced by the OECD-DAC in 2019.

³⁸ A project’s inception or mobilization period is understood as the time between project approval and first disbursement. Complementarity during project implementation is considered under Efficiency, see below.

³⁹ In some instances, based on data collected during the review process, the assessment of the project’s design quality may change from Inception Report to Main Review Report.

At review inception stage a rating is established for the project's external operating context (considering the prevalence of conflict, natural disasters and political upheaval⁴⁰). This rating is entered in the final review ratings table as item C. Where a project has been rated as facing either an *Unfavourable* or *Highly Unfavourable* external operating context, and/or a negative external event has occurred during project implementation, the ratings for Effectiveness, Efficiency and/or Sustainability may be increased at the discretion of the Review Consultant and UNEP Project Manager together. A justification for such an increase must be given.

D. Effectiveness

i. Availability of Outputs⁴¹

The Review will assess the project's success in producing the programmed outputs and making them available to the intended beneficiaries as well as its success in achieving milestones as per the project design document (ProDoc). Any formal modifications/revisions made during project implementation will be considered part of the project design. Where the project outputs are inappropriately or inaccurately stated in the ProDoc, reformulations may be necessary in the reconstruction of the Theory of Change (TOC). In such cases a table should be provided showing the original and the reformulation of the outputs for transparency. The availability of outputs will be assessed in terms of both quantity and quality, and the assessment will consider their ownership by, and usefulness to, intended beneficiaries and the timeliness of their provision. It is noted that emphasis is placed on the performance of those outputs that are most important to achieve outcomes. The Review will briefly explain the reasons behind the success or shortcomings of the project in delivering its programmed outputs and meeting expected quality standards.

ii. Achievement of Project Outcomes⁴²

The achievement of project outcomes is assessed as performance against the project outcomes as defined in the reconstructed⁴³ Theory of Change. These are outcomes that are intended to be achieved by the end of the project timeframe and within the project's resource envelope. Emphasis is placed on the achievement of project outcomes that are most important for attaining intermediate states. As with outputs, a table can be used to show where substantive amendments to the formulation of project outcomes is necessary to allow for an assessment of performance. The Review should report evidence of attribution between UNEP's intervention and the project outcomes. In cases of normative work or where several actors are collaborating to achieve common outcomes, evidence of the nature and magnitude of UNEP's 'substantive contribution' should be included and/or 'credible association' established between project efforts and the project outcomes realised.

iii. Likelihood of Impact

Based on the articulation of long-lasting effects in the reconstructed TOC (*i.e. from project outcomes, via intermediate states, to impact*), the Review will assess the likelihood of the intended, positive impacts becoming a reality. Project objectives or goals should be incorporated in the TOC, possibly as

⁴⁰ Note that 'political upheaval' does not include regular national election cycles, but unanticipated unrest or prolonged disruption. The potential delays or changes in political support that are often associated with the regular national election cycle should be part of the project's design and addressed through adaptive management of the project team. From March 2020 this should include the effects of COVID-19.

⁴¹ Outputs are the availability (for intended beneficiaries/users) of new products and services and/or gains in knowledge, abilities and awareness of individuals or within institutions (UNEP, 2023)

⁴² Outcomes are the change at institutional level, or changes in behaviors, attitudes or conditions achieved from the use (*i.e.*, uptake, adoption, application) of outputs by intended beneficiaries (UNEP, 2023) (UNEP, 2023)

⁴³ UNEP staff are currently required to submit a Theory of Change with all submitted project designs. The level of 'reconstruction' needed during a review will depend on the quality of this initial TOC, the time that has lapsed between project design and implementation (which may be related to securing and disbursing funds) and the level of any formal changes made to the project design. In the case of projects pre-dating 2016 the intervention logic is often represented in a results framework and a TOC will need to be constructed in the inception stage of the review.

intermediate states or long-lasting impacts. The Evaluation Office's approach to the use of TOC in project reviews is outlined in a guidance note available and is supported by an excel-based flow chart, 'Likelihood of Impact Assessment Decision Tree'. Essentially the approach follows a 'likelihood tree' from project outcomes to impacts, taking account of whether the assumptions and drivers identified in the reconstructed TOC held. Any unintended positive effects should also be identified and their causal linkages to the intended impact described.

The Review will also consider the likelihood that the intervention may lead, or contribute to, unintended negative effects (e.g. will vulnerable groups such as those living with disabilities and/or women and children, be disproportionately affected by the project?). Some of these potential negative effects may have been identified in the project design as risks or as part of the analysis of Environmental and Social Safeguards.

The Review will consider the extent to which the project has played a catalytic role⁴⁴ or has promoted scaling up and/or replication as part of its Theory of Change (either explicitly as in a project with a demonstration component or implicitly as expressed in the drivers required to move to outcome levels) and as factors that are likely to contribute to greater or long-lasting impact.

Ultimately UNEP and all its partners aim to bring about benefits to the environment and human well-being. Few projects are likely to have impact statements that reflect such long-lasting or broad-based changes. However, the Review will assess the likelihood of the project to make a substantive contribution to the long-lasting changes represented by the Sustainable Development Goals, and/or the intermediate-level results reflected in UNEP's Expected Accomplishments and the strategic priorities of funding partner(s).

Adaptation Fund	The Review should consider, under Effectiveness, the extent to which the evaluand is reaching Strategic Results Framework indicator targets.
Adaptation Fund	The Review should consider, under Effectiveness, the extent to which the intervention demonstrates that Climate Change Adaptation can be increased or replicated at a broader scale, as well as in other contexts.
Green Climate Fund	The Review should consider, under Effectiveness, the project's <u>Innovativeness</u> in result areas – the extent to which interventions may lead to paradigm shift towards low-emission and climate-resilient development pathways.
Global Environment Facility	The Review should consider, under Effectiveness, the extent to which the evaluand is reaching Core Indicator targets (from GEF-6 onwards).
Global Environment Facility	The Review will determine, under Effectiveness, the project's <u>additionality</u> by comparing the benefits of GEF support to a scenario without GEF support. It will identify specific areas where GEF support has contributed additional results and what these additional results were. It will provide quantitative and qualitative evidence to support the findings.

E. Financial Management

Financial management will be assessed under three themes: *adherence* to UNEP's financial policies and procedures, *completeness* of financial information and *communication* between financial and

⁴⁴ The terms catalytic effect, scaling up and replication are inter-related and generally refer to extending the coverage or magnitude of the effects of a project. Catalytic effect is associated with triggering additional actions that are not directly funded by the project – these effects can be both concrete or less tangible, can be intentionally caused by the project or implied in the design and reflected in the TOC drivers, or can be unintentional and can rely on funding from another source or have no financial requirements. Scaling up and Replication require more intentionality for projects, or individual components and approaches, to be reproduced in other similar contexts. Scaling up suggests a substantive increase in the number of new beneficiaries reached/involved and may require adapted delivery mechanisms while Replication suggests the repetition of an approach or component at a similar scale but among different beneficiaries. Even with highly technical work, where scaling up or replication involves working with a new community, some consideration of the new context should take place and adjustments made as necessary.

project management staff. The Review will establish the actual spend across the life of the project of funds secured from all donors. This expenditure will be reported, where possible, at output/component level and will be compared with the approved budget. The Review will verify the application of proper financial management standards and adherence to UNEP's financial management policies. Any financial management issues that have affected the timely delivery of the project or the quality of its performance will be highlighted. The Review will record where standard financial documentation is missing, inaccurate, incomplete or unavailable in a timely manner. The Review will assess the level of communication between the UNEP Project Manager and the Fund Management Officer as it relates to the effective delivery of the planned project and the needs of a responsive, adaptive management approach.

Global Environment Facility	The Review will determine, under Financial Management, i) time from CEO endorsement (FSP) / CEO approval (MSP) to first disbursement; ii) disbursement balance; iii) whether the project has secured co-financing higher than 35% and iv) time between CEO Endorsement and (likely) end of Terminal Review.
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F. Efficiency

Under the efficiency criterion, the Review will assess the extent to which the project delivered maximum results from the given resources. This will include an assessment of the cost-effectiveness and timeliness of project execution.

Focusing on the translation of inputs into outputs, *cost-effectiveness* is the extent to which an intervention has achieved, or is expected to achieve, its results at the lowest possible cost. *Timeliness* refers to whether planned activities were delivered according to expected timeframes as well as whether events were sequenced efficiently. The Review will also assess to what extent any project extension could have been avoided through stronger project management and identify any negative impacts caused by project delays or extensions. The Review will describe any cost or time-saving measures put in place to maximise results within the secured budget and agreed project timeframe and consider whether the project was implemented in the most efficient way compared to alternative interventions or approaches.

The Review will give special attention to efforts made by the project teams during project implementation to make use of/build upon pre-existing institutions, agreements and partnerships, data sources, synergies and complementarities⁴⁵ with other initiatives, programmes and projects etc. to increase project efficiency.

The factors underpinning the need for any project extensions will also be explored and discussed. Consultants should note that as management or project support costs cannot be increased in cases of 'no cost extensions', such extensions represent an increase in unstated costs to UNEP and implementing parties.

G. Monitoring and Reporting

The Review will assess monitoring and reporting across three sub-categories: monitoring design and budgeting, monitoring implementation and project reporting.

i. Monitoring Design and Budgeting

Each project should be supported by a sound monitoring plan that is designed to track progress against SMART⁴⁶ results towards the provision of the project's outputs and achievement of project outcomes, including at a level disaggregated by gender, marginalisation or vulnerability, including those living with disabilities. In particular, the Review will assess the relevance and appropriateness of the project indicators as well as the methods used for tracking progress against them as part of

⁴⁵ Complementarity with other interventions during project design, inception or mobilization is considered under Strategic Relevance above.

⁴⁶ SMART refers to results that are specific, measurable, achievable, relevant and time-oriented. Indicators help to make results measurable.

conscious results-based management. The Review will assess the quality of the design of the monitoring plan as well as the funds allocated for its implementation. The adequacy of resources for Mid-Term and Terminal Evaluation/Review should be discussed, where applicable.

ii. Monitoring of Project Implementation

The Review will assess whether the monitoring system was operational and facilitated the timely tracking of results and progress towards project objectives throughout the project implementation period. This assessment will include consideration of whether the project gathered relevant and good quality baseline data that is accurately and appropriately documented. This should include monitoring the representation and participation of disaggregated groups, including gendered, marginalised or vulnerable groups, such as those living with disabilities, in project activities. It will also consider the quality of the information generated by the monitoring system during project implementation and how it was used to adapt and improve project execution, achievement of outcomes and ensure sustainability. The Review should confirm that funds allocated for monitoring were used to support this activity.

iii. Project Reporting

UNEP has a centralised project information management system⁴⁷ in which project managers upload six-monthly progress reports against agreed project milestones. This information will be provided to the Review Consultant(s) by the UNEP Project Manager. Some projects have additional requirements to report regularly to funding partners, which will be supplied by the project team. The Review will assess the extent to which both UNEP and donor reporting commitments have been fulfilled. Consideration will be given as to whether reporting has been carried out with respect to the effects of the initiative on disaggregated groups.

Global Environment Facility	For internally executed projects the Review Consultant should review the quality of regular reports and confirm they have been submitted on a timely basis.
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H. Sustainability

Sustainability⁴⁸ is understood as the probability of the benefits derived from the achievement of project outcomes being maintained and developed after the close of the intervention. The Review will identify and assess the key conditions or factors that are likely to undermine or contribute to the endurance of achieved project outcomes (i.e. 'assumptions' and 'drivers'). Some factors of sustainability may be embedded in the project design and implementation approaches while others may be contextual circumstances or conditions that evolve over the life of the intervention. Where applicable an assessment of bio-physical factors that may affect the sustainability of direct project outcomes may also be included.

i. Socio-political Sustainability

The Review will assess the extent to which social or political factors support the continuation and further development of the benefits derived from project outcomes. It will consider the level of ownership, interest and commitment among government and other stakeholders to take the project achievements forwards. In particular the Review will consider whether individual capacity development efforts are likely to be sustained.

ii. Financial Sustainability

⁴⁷ Prior to 2022 it was the Project Information Management System (PIMS) and from 2022 UNEP has the Integrated Planning Monitoring and Reporting (IPMR) solution.

⁴⁸ As used here, 'sustainability' means the long-lasting maintenance of outcomes and consequent impacts, whether environmental or not. This is distinct from the concept of sustainability in the terms 'environmental sustainability' or 'sustainable development', which imply 'not living beyond our means' or 'not diminishing global environmental benefits' (GEF STAP Paper, 2019, Achieving More Enduring Outcomes from GEF Investment)

Some project outcomes, once achieved, do not require further financial inputs, e.g. the adoption of a revised policy. However, in order to derive a benefit from this outcome further management action may still be needed e.g. to undertake actions to enforce the policy. Other project outcomes may be dependent on a continuous flow of action that needs to be resourced for them to be maintained, e.g. continuation of a new natural resource management approach. The Review will assess the extent to which project outcomes are dependent on future funding for the benefits they bring to be sustained. Secured future funding is only relevant to financial sustainability where the project outcomes have been extended into a future project phase. Even where future funding has been secured, the question still remains as to whether the project outcomes are financially sustainable.

iii. Institutional Sustainability

The Review will assess the extent to which the sustainability of project outcomes (especially those relating to policies and laws) is dependent on issues relating to institutional frameworks and governance. It will consider whether institutional achievements such as governance structures and processes, policies, sub-regional agreements, legal and accountability frameworks etc. are robust enough to continue delivering the benefits associated with the project outcomes after project closure. In particular, the Review will consider whether institutional capacity development efforts are likely to be sustained.

Adaptation Fund	The Review should consider, under <u>Human and ecological sustainability and security</u> – the extent to which the intervention is likely to generate continued positive or negative, intended and unintended impacts beyond its lifetime, taking into consideration, social, institutional, economic, and environmental systems. Is the intervention sensitive to conflict and fragility, i.e., to what extent does it consider the political context and the sharing of natural resources? Is it contributing towards targeted communities' livelihoods and to the health or well-being of the ecosystems on which they depend?
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I. Factors Affecting Project Performance and Cross-Cutting Issues

i. Preparation and Readiness

This criterion focuses on the inception or mobilisation stage of the project (i.e. the time between project approval and first disbursement). The Review will assess whether appropriate measures were taken to either address weaknesses in the project design or respond to changes that took place between project approval, the securing of funds and project mobilisation. In particular, the Review will consider the nature and quality of engagement with stakeholder groups by the project team, the confirmation of partner capacity and development of partnership agreements as well as initial staffing and financing arrangements. *(Project preparation is included in the template for the assessment of Project Design Quality).*

ii. Quality of Project Management and Supervision

In some cases 'project management and supervision' may refer to the supervision and guidance provided by UNEP to implementing partners and national governments while in others it may refer to the project management performance of an implementing partner and the technical backstopping and supervision provided by UNEP. The performance of parties playing different roles should be discussed and a rating provided for both types of supervision (UNEP/Implementing Agency; Partner/Executing Agency) and the overall rating for this sub-category established as a simple average of the two.

The Review will assess the effectiveness of project management with regard to: providing leadership towards achieving the planned outcomes; managing team structures; maintaining productive partner relationships (including Steering Groups etc.); maintaining project relevance within changing external and strategic contexts; communication and collaboration with UNEP colleagues; risk management; use of problem-solving; project adaptation and overall project execution. Evidence of adaptive management should be highlighted.

Adaptation Fund	The Review should consider the extent to which the evaluand was <u>adapted in response to lessons and reflections during implementation</u> ; and the extent to which the intervention supported the use, development, or diffusion of innovative practices, tools, or technologies to improve or accelerate Climate Change Adaptation.
Global Environment Facility	For internally executed projects the Review Consultant should review whether the segregation of responsibilities met the GEF requirements ⁴⁹ (the GEF Agency must separate its project implementation and execution duties and establish each of the following: (a) A satisfactory institutional arrangement for the separation of implementation and executing functions in different departments of the GEF Agency; and (b) Clear lines of responsibility, reporting and accountability within the GEF Agency between the project implementation and execution functions.

iii. Stakeholder Participation and Cooperation

Here the term ‘stakeholder’ should be considered in a broad sense, encompassing all project partners, duty bearers with a role in delivering project outputs, target users of project outputs and any other collaborating agents external to UNEP and the implementing partner(s). The assessment will consider the quality and effectiveness of all forms of communication and consultation with stakeholders throughout the project life and the support given to maximise collaboration and coherence between various stakeholders, including sharing plans, pooling resources and exchanging learning and expertise. The inclusion and participation of all differentiated groups, including gender groups, should be considered.

iv. Responsiveness to Human Rights and Gender Equality

The Review will ascertain to what extent the project has applied the UN Common Understanding on the human rights-based approach (HRBA) and the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous People. Within this human rights context the Review will assess to what extent the intervention adheres to UNEP’s Policy and Strategy for Gender Equality and the Environment⁵⁰.

The report should present the extent to which the intervention, following an adequate gender analysis at design stage, has implemented the identified actions and/or applied adaptive management to ensure that Gender Equality and Human Rights are adequately taken into account. In particular the Review will consider to what extent project design, implementation and monitoring have taken into consideration: (i) possible inequalities (especially those related to gender) in access to, and the control over, natural resources; (ii) specific vulnerabilities of disadvantaged groups (especially women, youth and children and those living with disabilities) to environmental degradation or disasters; and (iii) the role of disadvantaged groups (especially women, youth and children and those living with disabilities) in mitigating or adapting to environmental changes and engaging in environmental protection and rehabilitation.

Adaptation Fund	The Review should consider the extent to which the project’s design and implementation includes input of the designated authority (DA) and vulnerable groups such as women, youth, persons with disability, Indigenous Peoples, minorities, and other potentially marginalized groups or locations. It also encompasses the degree to which the intervention reduced or perpetuated inequalities, and how equitably benefits were accrued to vulnerable groups.
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Note that the project’s effect on equality (i.e. promoting human rights, gender equality and inclusion of those living with disabilities and/or belonging to marginalised/vulnerable groups) should be included within the TOC as a general driver or assumption where there is no dedicated result within

⁴⁹ GEF Minimum Fiduciary Standards: Separation of Implementation and Execution Functions in GEF Partner Agencies (2019).

⁵⁰ The Evaluation Office notes that Gender Equality was first introduced in the UNEP Project Review Committee Checklist in 2010 and, therefore, provides a criterion rating on gender for projects approved from 2010 onwards. Equally, it is noted that policy documents, operational guidelines and other capacity building efforts have only been developed since then and have evolved over time. https://wedocs.unep.org/bitstream/handle/20.500.11822/7655/-Gender_equality_and_the_environment_Policy_and_strategy-2015Gender_equality_and_the_environment_policy_and_strategy.pdf.pdf?sequence=3&isAllowed=y

the results framework. If an explicit commitment on this topic is made within the project document then the driver/assumption should also be specific to the described intentions.

v. *Environmental and Social Safeguards*

UNEP projects address environmental and social safeguards primarily through the process of environmental and social screening at the project approval stage, risk assessment and management (avoidance, or mitigation of potential environmental and social risks and impacts associated with project and programme activities. The Review will confirm whether UNEP requirements⁵¹ were met to: *review* risk ratings on a regular basis; *monitor* project implementation for possible safeguard issues; *respond* (where relevant) to safeguard issues through risk avoidance, minimization, mitigation or offsetting and *report* on the implementation of safeguard management measures taken. UNEP requirements for proposed projects to be screened for any safeguarding issues; for sound environmental and social risk assessments to be conducted and initial risk ratings to be assigned, are reviewed above under Quality of Project Design).

The Review will also consider the extent to which the management of the project minimised UNEP's environmental footprint.

vi. *Country Ownership and Driven-ness*

The Review will assess the quality and degree of engagement of government / public sector agencies in the project. While there is some overlap between Country Ownership and Institutional Sustainability, this criterion focuses primarily on the forward momentum of the intended projects results, i.e. either: a) moving forwards from outputs to project outcomes or b) moving forward from project outcomes towards intermediate states. The Review will consider the involvement not only of those directly involved in project execution and those participating in technical or leadership groups, but also those official representatives whose cooperation is needed for change to be embedded in their respective institutions and offices (e.g. representatives from multiple sectors or relevant ministries beyond Ministry of Environment). This factor is concerned with the level of ownership generated by the project over outputs and outcomes and that is necessary for long term impact to be realised. Ownership should extend to all gender and marginalised groups.

vii. *Communication and Public Awareness*

The Review will assess the effectiveness of: a) communication of learning and experience sharing between project partners and interested groups arising from the project during its life and b) public awareness activities that were undertaken during the implementation of the project to influence attitudes or shape behaviour among wider communities and civil society at large. The Review should consider whether existing communication channels and networks were used effectively, including meeting the differentiated needs of gendered or marginalised groups, and whether any feedback channels were established. Where knowledge sharing platforms have been established under a project the Review will comment on the sustainability of the communication channel under either socio-political, institutional or financial sustainability, as appropriate.

Section 3. REVIEW APPROACH, METHODS AND DELIVERABLES

The Terminal Review will be an in-depth review using a participatory approach whereby key stakeholders are kept informed and consulted throughout the review process. Both quantitative and qualitative review methods will be used as appropriate to determine project achievements against the expected outputs, outcomes and impacts. It is highly recommended that the consultant(s) maintains close communication with the project team and promotes information exchange throughout the review implementation phase in order to increase their (and other stakeholder) ownership of the review findings. Where applicable, the consultant(s) should provide a geo-referenced map that demarcates the area covered by the project and, where possible, provide geo-reference photographs

⁵¹ For the review of project concepts and proposals, the Safeguard Risk Identification Form (SRIF) was introduced in 2019 and replaced the Environmental, Social and Economic Review note (ESERN), which had been in place since 2016. In GEF projects safeguards have been considered in project designs since 2011.

of key intervention sites (e.g. sites of habitat rehabilitation and protection, pollution treatment infrastructure, etc.)

The findings of the Review will be based on the following: [This section should be edited for each Review]

(a) A **desk review** of:

Relevant background documentation, inter alia: UNEP project document, CEO-Endorsement Document, Progress reports, PIRs, MTR report

Project design documents (including minutes of the project design review meeting at approval); Annual Work Plans and Budgets or equivalent, revisions to the project (Project Document Supplement), the results framework and its budget;

Project reports such as six-monthly progress and financial reports, progress reports from collaborating partners, meeting minutes, relevant correspondence and any other monitoring materials etc.;

Project deliverables (e.g. publications, assessments etc): public awareness materials and the dissemination and up-scaling of project outputs, research articles for scientific publications and policy briefs

Mid-Term Review or Mid-Term Evaluation of the project; Middle-term Review on September 2021 Evaluations/Reviews of similar projects.

(b) **Interviews** (individual or in group) with:

UNEP Project Manager⁵² [add people as appropriate]:

Project management team;

UNEP Fund Management Officer (FMO);

Sub-Programme Coordinator;

Project partners, including [list];

Relevant resource persons.

Representatives from civil society and specialist groups (such as women's, farmers and trade associations etc).

(c) **Surveys** Ubon Ratchathani Thailand

(d) **Field visits** [provide details, where appropriate] Ubon Ratchathani Thailand

(e) **Other data collection tools** [provide details, where appropriate]

11. Review Deliverables and Review Procedures

See Annex 1 of these TOR for a list of tools and guidance available, see Annex 2 for a list of review criteria and sub-categories to be assessed. The Review Consultant will prepare:

Inception Report: (see Annex 3 of these TOR) containing an assessment of project design quality, a draft reconstructed Theory of Change of the project, project stakeholder analysis, review framework and a tentative review schedule.

Preliminary Findings Note: typically in the form of a PowerPoint presentation, the sharing of preliminary findings is intended to support the participation of the project team, act as a means to ensure all information sources have been accessed and provide an opportunity to verify emerging findings.

Draft and Final Review Report: (See Annex 4 of these TOR) containing an Executive Summary that can act as a stand-alone document; detailed analysis of the review findings organised

⁵² For GEF funded projects, UNEP Project Manager refers to the Task Manager.

by review criteria and supported with evidence; lessons learned and recommendations and an annotated ratings table.

A **Review Brief** (a 2-page overview of the evaluation and review findings) for wider dissemination through the UNEP website may be required. This will be discussed with the UNEP Project Manager no later than during the finalization of the Inception Report.

Review of the Draft Review Report. The Review Consultant will submit a draft report to the UNEP Project Manager and revise the draft in response to their comments and suggestions. The UNEP Project Manager will then forward the revised draft report to other project stakeholders, for their review and comments. Stakeholders may provide feedback on any errors of fact and may highlight the significance of such errors in any conclusions as well as providing feedback on the proposed recommendations and lessons. Any comments or responses to draft reports will be sent to the UNEP Project Manager for consolidation. The UNEP Project Manager will provide all comments to the Review Consultant for consideration in preparing the final report, along with guidance on areas of contradiction or issues requiring an institutional response.

The UNEP Evaluation Office provides templates and tools to support the review process and provides a formal assessment of the quality of the final Terminal Review report, which is provided within this report's annexed material. In addition, the Evaluation Office formally validates the report by ensuring that the performance judgments made are consistent with evidence presented in the Review report and in-line with the performance standards set out for independent evaluations. As such the project performance ratings presented in the Review report may be adjusted by the Evaluation Office.

At the end of the review process, the UNEP Project Manager will prepare a **Recommendations Implementation Plan** in the format of a table, to be completed and updated at regular intervals, and circulate the **Lessons Learned**.

12. The Review Consultant

The Review Consultant will work under the overall responsibility of the UNEP Project Manager, Kavita Sharma, in consultation with the Fund Management Officer Paul Vrontamitis, the Head of Unit, Johan Robinson and the Sub-programme Coordinator of the Nature Action UNEP Sub-programmes, Marieta Sakalian.

The Review Consultant will liaise with the UNEP Project Manager on any procedural and methodological matters related to the Review. It is, however, the consultants' individual responsibility (where applicable) to arrange for their visas and immunizations as well as to plan meetings with stakeholders, organize online surveys, obtain documentary evidence and any other logistical matters related to the assignment. The UNEP Project Manager and project team will, where possible, provide logistical support (introductions, meetings etc.) allowing the consultants to conduct the Review as efficiently and independently as possible.

The Review Consultant will be hired over a period of 6 months [6 months [2 May 2025 to 28 Oct 2025]] and should have the following: - An advanced University degree in environmental sciences, international development or other relevant political or social sciences area is required. A University degree in the same areas is acceptable with two additional years of relevant experience.; - A minimum of 7 years of technical / evaluation experience is required, preferably of evaluation and management of Global Environment Facility (GEF) projects and using a Theory of Change approach is required. English and French are the working languages of the United Nations Secretariat. - Fluency in oral and written English is required. - Fluency in oral and written Chinese is required.

- A good/broad understanding of Biodiversity Conservation and Sustainable Use of Natural Resources is desired. Working knowledge of the UN system and specifically the work of UNEP is an added advantage. The work will be home-based with possible field visits.

The Review Consultant will be responsible, in close consultation with the UNEP Project Manager, for overall quality of the review and timely delivery of its outputs, described above in Section 11 Review

Deliverables, above. The Review Consultant will ensure that all review criteria and questions are adequately covered.

13. Schedule of the Review

The table below presents the tentative schedule.

Table 3. Tentative schedule for the Review

Milestone	Tentative Dates
Deliverable 1: Inception Report	7 May 2025
Review Mission	10-19 June 2025
E-based interviews, surveys etc.	1 May 2025 - 31 June 2025
PowerPoint/presentation on preliminary findings and recommendations	14 July 2025
Deliverable 2: Draft Review Report to UNEP Project Manager	1 Aug 2025
Draft Review Report shared with wider group of stakeholders	7 July 2025
Draft Final Main Review Report	7 Aug 2025
Final Main Review Report submitted to the UNEP Evaluation Office for validation and quality assessment	3 Aug 2025
Deliverable 3: Final Main Review Report shared with all respondents	3 Sep 2025

14. Contractual Arrangements

The Review Consultant(s) will be selected and recruited by the UNEP Project Manager under an individual Special Service Agreement (SSA) on a “fees only” basis (see below). By signing the service contract with UNEP/UNON, the consultant certifies that they have not been associated with the design and implementation of the project in any way which may jeopardize their independence and impartiality towards project achievements and project partner performance. In addition, they will not have any future interests (within six months after completion of the contract) with the project’s executing or implementing units. All consultants are required to sign the Code of Conduct Agreement Form.

Fees will be paid on an instalment basis, paid on acceptance and approval by the UNEP Project Manager of expected key deliverables. The schedule of payment is as follows:

Schedule of Payment:

Deliverable	Percentage Payment
Approved Inception Report (<i>as per Guidance Note</i>)	30%
Approved Draft Main Review Report (<i>as per Guidance Note</i>)	30%
Approved Final Main Review Report (<i>as per Report Template</i>)	40%

Fees only contracts: Where applicable, air tickets will be purchased by UNEP and 75% of the Daily Subsistence Allowance for each authorised travel mission will be paid up front. Local in-country travel will only be reimbursed where agreed in advance with the UNEP Project Manager and on the production of acceptable receipts. Terminal expenses and residual DSA entitlements (25%) will be paid after mission completion.

The consultant may be provided with access to UNEP's information management systems (e.g. PIMS, IPMR, Anubis, SharePoint, etc.) and, if such access is granted, the consultants agree not to disclose information from that system to third parties beyond information required for, and included in, the Review Report.

In case the consultant is not able to provide the deliverables in accordance with these guidelines, and in line with the expected quality standards by the UNEP Project Manager, payment may be withheld at the discretion of the Head of Branch/Unit until the consultants have improved the deliverables to meet UNEP's quality standards.

If the consultant fails to submit a satisfactory final product to the UNEP Project Manager in a timely manner, i.e. before the end date of their contract, UNEP reserves the right to employ additional human resources to finalize the report, and to reduce the consultant's fees by an amount equal to the additional costs borne by the project team to bring the report up to standard or completion.

ANNEX XIII. GEF PORTAL INPUTS (for GEF funded projects)

The following table contains text to be uploaded to the GEF Portal. **It will be drawn from the Review Report, either as copied or summarised text.** In each case, references should be provided for the paragraphs and pages of the report from which the responses have been copied or summarised.

Table 17: GEF portal inputs

Question: What was the performance at the project's completion against Core Indicator Targets? (For projects approved prior to GEF-7⁵³, these indicators will be identified retrospectively and comments on performance provided⁵⁴).

Response: (Might be drawn from Monitoring and Reporting section)

There were no impact indicators for this Project. The project goal is to enhance (conservation) management effectiveness of NNRs in Hubei province, as well as the mainstreaming of biodiversity conservation and value of ecosystem services in economic development plans and sectors. The project objective is to enhance biodiversity conservation and sustainable use of natural resources through the expansion and strengthening of the protected area network in the GSA.

The performance at the project's completion against Core Indicator Targets is conducted through outcome indicators. The Project has 3 components and 8 outcomes with indicators. The review results are summarised in Table 8, 9 and 10.

Table 8 Review results of outcomes under Component 1

Outcome	Indicator	End Target	End Value	% of Completion	Results	Rating
1.1. Improved policy and regulatory framework for development planning of production sectors in GSA.	1.1.a. Number of relevant institutions adapt and implement best practices for mainstreaming biodiversity and ecosystem services considerations into development planning	9 (provincial plans, and all 7 county plans)	9	100%	14 th 5-year National Development Plans, Hubei Provincial Government; 14 th 5 year plan, Hubei Ecological and Environmental Department; 14 th 5-year Plans, HFD; 14 th 5-year Plans, Shennongjia District Government; and 14 th Five-Year Plans of all 6 counties (Baokang, Xingshan, Badong, Fangxian Zhuxi, Zhushan).	
	1.1.b. Number of coherent sets of economic and regulatory tools and incentives that promote and reward integration;	4	3	75%	Baokang County has established a subsidy system for ecological restoration of former mining sites. Shennongjia Tourism Group gives back ticket-box income to Shennongjia National Park Authority at a certain percentage (paused due to the very low income caused by the COVID-19 pandemic); and	

⁵³ The GEF is currently operating under the seventh replenishment period of the GEF Trust Fund covering the period July 1, 2018 to June 30, 2022. The GEF Portal Reporting Guide for FY20 Reporting Process indicates that GEF-6 projects that have yet to map existing indicators to GEF-7 Core Indicators need to do so at MTR stage or (if already there) at the time of the TE. (i.e. not GEF projects approved before GEF-6)

⁵⁴ This is not applicable for Enabling Activities

					Agricultural insurance purchased by the Project to compensate the wildlife damage in the GSA.	Satisfactory
	1.1.c. Increased area of biodiversity conservation friendly production landscape	2,402,807 ha	2,402,807 ha	100%	The GSA areas have been transferred to biodiversity conservation friendly production landscape, reflected in the improved eco-tourism, ban of logging nature forests, and etc. due to the Project. However, no additional area has been increased.	
s1.2. Reduced risk to local biodiversity from invasive species (IAS) in the GSA	1.2.a. Improvement of planning capacity in invasive alien species prevention and control measured in 7 project counties	29	25	86%	The GEF IAS Tracking Tool was updated in early 2022. The Project has generally implemented the IAS prevention and control mechanism. The central government has issued the Management Methods of AIS (https://www.gov.cn/zhengce/zhengceku/2022-06/17/content_5696171.htm). In GSA, 7 Project counties and various provincial government departments have integrated IAS into the 14th 5 year plans. The Project has achieved most other indicators except that the Project still needs to collect evidence on habitat restoration and establish a mechanism to plan the IAS.	
	1.2.b. # of IAS management & action plans integrated in NR Management (Plans?) and their control started"	7	7	100%	7 Project counties have integrated IAS into the 14 th 5 year plans. The 7 NRs have integrated IAS management and action plans into their management plans and started evaluation, prevention and monitoring of IAS in GSA.	
	1.2.c. # of County level IAS management plans operationalized/enabled with core government agencies	7	7	100%	The 7 county level IAS management plans started implementation. At the same time, HFD and HAD initiated the IAS surveys from their perspectives.	

Table 9: Review results of outcomes under Component 2

Outcome	Indicator	End Target	End Value	Verification	Results	Rating
2.1: Improved management effectiveness in existing GSA nature reserves	2.1a. Increase in average management effectiveness among 8 GSA NRs	84	85	100%	The Average METT score of all 7 protected areas was 85 as of late 2023.	
	2.1.b. Nature Reserve management in GSA benefitting through actual payments from eco-tourism PES schemes	3NRs	4NRs	100%	Shennongjia Tourism Group pays RMB 10 million annually as franchise fee to Shennongjia National Park. In Yerengu NR and Wudaoxia NR, the income generated from eco-tourism	

					was collected by the local governments, and the latter further invested in the nature reserves through funds. The local government pays each resident around Dajiu 3,000 CNY annually to cover their costs on electricity as a compensation for not chopping woods for burning. The government in Shennongjia Forestry District paid 3.79 m CNY to 928 households in 3 years for protecting forests in nature reserves as some forests were still owned by the local communities as public welfare forests.		
	2.1.c. Increase in adoption of inclusive and gender sensitive co-management principles and practices in GSA NRs.	4NRs	2NRs	50%	The Shennongjia Forestry District and National Park (including 2 NRs) have completed their studies on how women participated in the environment protection and how gender mainstreaming was promoted.		
	2.1.d. Increased # and staff capacity in new PA management skills: landscape-based conservation, sustainable finance/PES, IAS control, co-management, flora & fauna monitoring, a.o. (incl. production sectors).	Capacity enhanced of 400 trainees, out of which 25% are female	Capacity enhanced of 400 trainees, out of which 25% are female	90%	During the Project period, 25 training sessions were organized for NR staff, public and government officials, 1,982 people times were trained. Among the trainees, 402 were women, accounting for around 20% of the total.		
2.2: Increased habitat integrity of areas under protection in the GSA	2.2.a. Integrity index measured from the 8 GSA NRs.	61	61	100%	As the number of protected areas is reduced from 8 to 7, the original baseline and target should also change. As all planned activities and outputs were completed, it was reasonable to regard this indicator target was met.		
	2.2.b. Increase at least 120,000 ha new protected areas in GSA.	120,000ha gazette as new PA	120,600ha gazette as new PA	100%	The Project established a new NR or Shennongjia Nature Reserve or Forestry District with 120,000 ha. It was noted that not only the two former reserves were merged, but also an area of forestry with 47,933 ha and a new area of orchids with 72,667 ha were added to the new NR after the acquisition.		
	2.2.c. Enhanced forest connectivity – as measured through area (ha) and	20,000 ha newly planted forest effectively	20,000 ha newly planted forest effectively	100%	Jiudao Ecological Corridor was established, with 20,000 ha of newly planted		

Satisfactor
y

	sustained governance of reforestation in Hectares	connecting NRs	connecting NRs		forest areas effectively connecting the two NRs.		
2.3: Improved landscape-based species- and habitat protection through better planning, population monitoring and targeted actions in GSA.	2.3a. A coordinated management decision among participating NRs on at least one species with geographic range beyond a single GSA reserve based on the information management system	Conservation action plan(s) up and running	Conservation action plan(s) up and running	100%	The Western Hubei and Eastern Chongqing Conservation Area Alliance was established, and annual alliance meetings were held continuously. The alliance agreement was signed and a joint monitoring on IAS was carried out. The Project established a cross sectoral coordination mechanism between Shennongjia and Baokang (led by HFD with other government departments). The species included <i>Rhinopithecus roxellana</i> and <i>Macaca mulata</i> . The plant species include <i>Taxus wallichiana</i> var. <i>chinensis</i> , <i>Davidia involucre</i> , <i>Ginkgo biloba</i> , <i>Berchemiella wilsonii</i> , <i>Triaenophora rupestris</i> , <i>Torreya fargesii</i> , <i>Emmenopterys henryi</i> , and <i>Liriodendron chinensis</i> .		
	2.3b Population numbers of at least one primate and one middle-sized mammal (Class I & II species) stable or improving – as measured through newly developed monitoring protocols in the GSA landscape (2.3.1)	Population # stable or having increased (on at least 2 species)	Population # stable or having increased (on at least 2 species)	100%	Snub-nosed monkey and black bear were selected as two species. Monitoring network was under establishment. Preliminary studies showed that black bear appeared in all nature reserves and the population of snub-nosed monkey increased from 1400 to 1600 during the Project period.		
	2.3c Increasing # of vegetation transects established & generating data. Target: Dajiuhe PNR-4; Shibailichangxia NNR-6; Yerengu PNR-6; Wudaoxia PNR-6; Wanchaoshan PNR-6; Shennongxi PNR-6; Duheyuan NNR-10; and Shennongjia NNR-20	All 64 sites in function, annual surveys & data produced in all 64 sites	All 67 sites in function, annual surveys & data are been produced	100%	Totally 67 sites have been achieved. 61 sites were located in National Park: (25ha * 1, 5ha * 1, 1ha * 6, 20m*20m * 53); Furthermore, there was 1 site in each of the 6 nature reserves.		

Table 10: Review results of outcomes under Component 3

Outcome	Indicator	End Target	End Value	Verification	Results	Rating
Outcome 3.1: Improved capacity of provincial and local governments to conduct environment	3.1a. Increased regularized/institutionalized environment education policies and programs in GSA	7 regularized environment education programs among 6 nature	7 regularized environment education programs among 6 nature	100%	The 7 NRs have developed environment education materials/programmes and implemented the education programmes by themselves.	

al education programs for promoting awareness of decision makers and the general public on the importance of protecting biodiversity and ecosystem services to sustainable development in GSA. Outcome 3.2: Improved communications and enhanced awareness in GSA landscape of Hubei Province on biodiversity, ecosystems conservation and sustainable development		reserves and national park in GSA	reserves and national park in GSA			Satisfactory
	3.2.a. Baseline established, gender analysis conducted and statistically representative sample of (a) decision makers and (b) general public showing increased awareness levels of biodiversity conservation, the value and benefit of ecosystem services, and links with sustainable development	20% of Targeted group show increase in awareness on the baseline parameters set; gender disaggregate data available.	50% of Targeted group show increase in awareness on the baseline parameters set; gender disaggregate data available.	100%	50% is from METT. Based on the awareness survey in 2021, around 50% of the people being interviewed were aware of the natural education.	
	3.2.b. Increase in 'users hits' for information on the bilingual GSA Website - biodiversity conservation in Hubei and GSA	20% average annual increase in user hits (over life of project)	20% average annual increase in user hits (over life of project)	100%	The bilingual website was designed in early 2020. The framework and news of this GEF Project have been updated, until the Project was concluded. The former English site was revamped to the bilingual national park site. The former site: http://www.snjpark.com/dsnjswdyx/GEFxm.h The current site: http://en.snjnationalpark.com . Before being revamped, there was a 20% YoY increase of the website hits.	
	3.2.c. Improved dissemination and exchange of best practices locally among the 8 GSA nature reserves, Hubei province and internationally	5 best practice guidelines produced-10 coordination meetings conducted involving all 6 NRs and NP	5 best practice guidelines produced-10 coordination meetings conducted involving all 6 NRs and NP	100%	5 GSA-wide 'best-practices' guidelines were developed, and 10 coordination meetings were conducted involving all 6 NRs and national park.	
	3.2.d. Increase in media coverage for biodiversity conservation in GSA on TV news broadcasts, radio, and newspapers (articles or features)	40% increase in media coverage for biodiversity conservation in GSA on TV news broadcasts, radio, and newspapers (articles or features)7 rotating	40% increase in media coverage for biodiversity conservation in GSA on TV news broadcasts, radio, and newspapers (articles or features)7 rotating	100%	Number of news articles: (National / provincial + local = total)2017: 9 + 18 = 27; 2018: 11 + 25 = 36; 2019: 20 + 39 = 59; 2020: 18 + 62 = 80; 2021: 24 + 125 = 149; 2022: 66 + 82 = 148; 2023: 186 CN + 63 EN = 249. "In China, iconic national park is redefining conservation" was published on UNEP website.	

		public education	public education			
	3.2.e. At least one government policy amended/adopted to conserve biodiversity and ecosystem services in GSA	1 time annually	1 time annually	100%	In May 2018, the Hubei Provincial Government issued the Shennongjia National Park Protection Regulations. In September 2019, the Shennongjia Forest District Government issued a new draft Plan of Shennongjia Biodiversity NR. "The 14th five-year plan for economic and social development of Hubei Province and the outline of long-term objectives for 2035" was released by Hubei Provincial government in April 2021. It was planned to better promote the Shennongjia National Park in next 5 year plan. Some areas around the SNJ National Park was selected to include in the future (There is no updates in 2020 and 2022, as Hubei Province was seriously hit by the COVID).	

See V.D for details.

Question: What were the progress, challenges and outcomes regarding engagement of stakeholders in the project/program as evolved from the time of the MTR? *(This should be based on the description included in the Stakeholder Engagement Plan or equivalent documentation submitted at CEO Endorsement/Approval)*

Response: *(Might be drawn from Factors Affecting Performance section)*

1. The stakeholder participation and cooperation in the Project were assessed from two phases. During the design phase, the stakeholders, being consulted, felt that their views were not adequately reflected in the final design. In addition, no updated participatory situation analysis, updated risk analysis or the theory of change and results framework was not collaboratively developed, undermining the early stakeholder alignment and support. As a consequence, the Project missed an opportunity to foster ownership and collaboration from the outset.
2. During the implementation phase, the stakeholder participations were improved. The Project Steering Committee, consisted of a group of key stakeholders, became a focal point for engagement. A total of six Project Steering Committee meeting minutes were reviewed and analyzed, occurring at average intervals of one year throughout the project. The participants at the Project Steering Committee meetings expressed their views, reflecting of their sustained interest. The minutes indicated the presence of number of participants each time. In all meetings, almost all entities represented on the Project Steering Committee were in attendance. However, these meetings primarily served as forums for information exchange and coordination, rather than platforms for strategic steering or design updates.
3. In addition to the formal meetings, the stakeholder participations were facilitated in the events and side meetings, particularly during the period of the constraints posed by the COVID-19 pandemic. These interactions allowed for supplementary participation and collaboration, although under limited conditions.
4. In practice, the Project implemented a moderate analysis of stakeholder groups, balancing inclusivity with feasibility through virtual platform. While efforts to promote stakeholder ownership were limited in the inception phase, the Project management team provided good support for participation and collaboration, particularly through WeChat, through which, the

Project also maintained mostly effective, though occasionally irregular communication with stakeholders.

5. Overall, although the stakeholder participation improved during implementation, the Project faced challenges in engagement, with limited but effective efforts to promote stakeholder ownership. The Project provided a virtual platform to facilitate participatory processes and thus strengthened the stakeholders' participation and cooperation, and finally the ownership throughout the Project.

See V.I for details.

Question: What were the completed gender-responsive measures and, if applicable, actual gender result areas? *(This should be based on the documentation at CEO Endorsement/Approval, including gender-sensitive indicators contained in the project results framework or gender action plan or equivalent)*

Response: *(Might be drawn from Factors Affecting Performance section)*

1. The final review analysed the extent to which these cross-cutting issues, such as human rights, gender equality and social inclusion, and LNOB, were taken into account and whether any dedicated interventions on these issues were delivered during the implementation.
2. During the Project design, UNEP's policies on human rights and gender equality integration were not yet fully developed. The Project only considered human rights, gender equality and other cross-cutting issues by developing an Indigenous People Plan (IPP), covering Section A: Current Status and Considerations, Section B: Indigenous people's Plan, c) Involvement in community-based activities including alternative livelihoods and conservation, and awareness promotion activities, d) Capacity Building, and e) Specific Measures.
3. The indigenous peoples, while considered as biodiversity beneficiaries through improved information access, were not directly involved in the Project design or implementation. Moreover, the extent to which Indigenous knowledge was valued and integrated into the project's tools and outputs was neither systematically monitored nor explicitly addressed.
4. The role of disadvantaged groups in environmental protection and rehabilitation was addressed primarily through promoting gender equity in participation. As indicated in the MTR, the Project consistently met or exceeded its target of at least 25% representation of women in the activities.⁵⁵
5. During the Project implementation, the Project has developed a Training Manual on Gender Mainstream, and a Training Manual on Facilitating Women in Ecological Conservation and Promoting Gender Mainstreaming during the Project implementation.
6. In addition, attendance records from the Project Steering Committee meeting minutes indicated that women's participation ratio ranged between approximately 20% and 30%, suggesting commendable progress in enhancing women's participation, although broader engagement of disadvantaged groups remained limited.
7. However, the Project did not mainstream human rights, gender equality and other cross-cutting issues into the activities, outputs, or outcomes, and reporting except for Outcome 2.1.d and Outcome 3.2.a. In particular, the Project did not conduct a detailed analysis on the vulnerabilities faced by disadvantaged groups, particularly women, children, and indigenous peoples. Although there was an annex called Indigenous People Plan in the Project Document, there was no systematic approach to incorporating these cross-cutting issues into implementation. In addition, the project did not demonstrate a good performance in addressing inequalities, vulnerabilities, and the role of disadvantaged groups in environmental management.

⁵⁵ MTR

8. Overall, the evidence suggested that human rights and gender considerations were not integrated into project implementation, result interpretation, and project reporting. Minor attention was given to human rights and gender in the project implementation. More importantly, the Project did not promote human rights and gender equality by designing special interventions in biodiversity conservation and ecosystem improvement.

See V.I for details

Question: What was the progress made in the implementation of the management measures against the Safeguards Plan submitted at CEO Approval? The risk classifications reported in the latest PIR report should be verified and the findings of the effectiveness of any measures or lessons learned taken to address identified risks assessed. *(Any supporting documents gathered by the Consultant during this review should be shared with the Task Manager for uploading in the GEF Portal)*

Response: *(Might be drawn from Factors Affecting Performance section)*

To address this requirement UNEP/GEF has developed a checklist which was included in the Project Document with the following guidance:

1. Executing Agency is responsible for completing the checklist with support from UNEP/GEF Task Manager.
2. Checklist shall initially be filled in during concept development to help guide in the identification of possible risks and activities that will need to be assessed and included in the project design.
3. The checklist shall accompany the PIF with the relevant column completed.
4. Checklist shall be updated during PPG phase and mitigation measures, including responsibility for addressing issues shall be indicated in relevant column
5. Final checklist shall be submitted with Project Package to PRC clearly showing what activities have been assessed and how negative impact will be avoided or mitigated, incl. responsibility for mitigation measures.
6. Checklist and planned mitigation measures shall be reviewed annually at PIR stage, to ensure that planned mitigation measures are taking place and that any previously unanticipated issues are identified and addressed.
7. Checklists and implementation will be reviewed by UNEP/GEF annually during PIR review, at Mid-term and at Terminal Evaluation stage.

The check list completed during the project design stage indicated that no significant environmental or social impacts were anticipated. As part of the GEF's evolving Fiduciary Standards, Implementing Agencies have to include and address 'Environmental and Social Safeguards'.

However, the Project established a management plan to address social and environmental issues. As a result, serious social and environmental issues were addressed as they emerged, but sometimes too late, e.g. wildlife damages, climate shocks such as flood and drought, fires and ice storms. Although some of the social issues were serious, most of the environmental issues would have benefited from detailed planning rather than reactive measures.

Overall, the environmental and social impacts on key stakeholders and in particular on the most vulnerable groups were considered or addressed, but to a limited extent although there was a management plan to address safeguards. The review of risk assessments tended to be oversight and the extent of the problems was under-reported.

See VI for details.

Question: What were the challenges and outcomes regarding the project's completed Knowledge Management Approach, including: Knowledge and Learning Deliverables (e.g. website/platform development); Knowledge Products/Events; Communication Strategy; Lessons Learned and Good

Practice; Adaptive Management Actions? (This should be based on the documentation approved at CEO Endorsement/Approval)

Response: (Might be drawn from Factors Affecting Performance section)

1. The project was designed at the three core components with associated outcomes and outputs. The third component Education, Awareness & Communication was directly associated with communication and public awareness. As a cross-cutting issue throughout the Project period, communication and public awareness were assessed at two complementary levels: site/community level and national/global level.
2. At the Project site and community level, there was effective communication of learning and exchange of experience among Project stakeholders. This communication activity was well targeted at the core audiences (local leaders, beneficiaries, the population at large, including the most marginalised groups) by utilising various and complementary tools such as newspaper, websites, radio, and TV. The local awareness-raising activities were effective in influencing the behaviour of the wider community. For example, local people eagerly planted targeted species in their own fields, and many more villages participated in the Project than originally targeted. At the subnational level, the Project benefited from the support from the HFD that published Project information in its website.
3. At the national, regional or international level, the Project conducted some tailor-made communication to a specialised environmental audience with several publications. The Project published environment materials and Project information in its bilingual website and once on the UNEP/GEF website. These were specific, scientifically based publications on the fringes of the project's main objective. The project also produced some short videos and a documentary that was broadcast on the website/TV.
4. However, the Project did not proactively employ communication channels such as X, Facebook, or newsletters and networks such as a pool of UN agencies, development aid, NGOs, and national government agencies. As a result, the Project's achievements were not well-known, even within the environmental sector at national and international level. This poor communication and public awareness strategy had serious consequences for realizing the overall Project's objectives.
5. Overall, the communication and public awareness had been conducted, but the results were not as effective as expected. It had been largely ineffective in driving change towards outcomes beyond outputs at the national and international levels.

See VI for details.

Question: What are the main findings of the evaluation?

The Project was aligned with UNEP's mandate and thematic priorities as presented in the MTS cycles 2018-2021 and 2022-2025, as well as their respective PoWs (2018-2019, 2020-2021, and 2022-2025). The Project was relevant to UNEP's BSP and SSC policies. Alignment were also identified for PoW Expected Accomplishment indicators (2018-2019 and 2020-2021) and Nature action subprogramme indicators (2022-2025). Despite limited evidence, Output 2.3.1, Output 2.3.2 and Output 2.3.3 were instrumental in promoting UNEP's knowledge products.

The Project was in line with one of Chinese government's priority: Improving the Ecosystem, under Chapter 37, 14th Five-Year Plan (2021-2025) for National Economic and Social Development and Vision 2035 of the People's Republic of China, National Ecosystem Protection and Development Plan for 2021-2035, National Forestry Nature Reserve Development Plan (2006-2030), and China's National Biodiversity Strategy and Action Plan (NBSAP) for the period 2011-2030. The Project was a response to capacity challenges and needs that were initially identified in the PD

However, the evidence from document review and consultations indicated that the Project focused more on implementing subnational-level decisions, but less on global, regional and national level cooperation, limiting its overall impact.

The project complemented the GEF-funded initiatives approved at the time of Project launch up to 2018. The Project did not complement any GEF-funded initiative or donor funded projects, but did implement several domestic non GEF-funded initiatives after the start of the Project.

The main strengths include: (a) The challenging operating context, covering conflict between conservation human resettlement, climate change, was well identified. (b) The preparation was adequate as the Project Document had an extensive analysis of the problems and gaps, stakeholders, and consultations. In addition, Project Document considered human rights, gender equality and other cross-cutting issues. (c) The Project was relevant to GEF strategic priorities. (d) The intended results and causality clearly described the causal pathways from Project outputs through outcomes towards impact. (e) The results framework and M&E framework captured some (not all) key elements of the ToC and provided a set of SMART indicators with baseline and target values for each outcome and was generally appropriate for management and implementation at the outcome level. (f) The Project governance and supervision structure was comprehensive, clear and appropriate for implementation. (g) The Project had a clear and adequate knowledge management approach, and identified appropriate methods for communication with key stakeholders, including gendered/minority groups.

The main weaknesses included: (a) There was no a Theory of Change (ToC) with underlying assumptions and drivers. (b) A set of intermediate targets needed to be added in order to establish a good ToC. (c) The work plan was not well designed and did not provide sufficient details for planning and implementation. (d) Both the results framework and M&E framework did not capture outputs, which were the key elements of the ToC. (e) The Project was not appropriately designed/adapted in relation to the duration since it did not take into account the external shocks that might have impact on the timely delivery of Project outputs. (f) The value for money strategies was not mentioned in the Project Document. (g) Only part of the environmental, economic and social risks were identified and the related mitigation strategies were not adequate. (h) There was no “sustainability strategy” or “exit strategy” explicitly mentioned and detailed in the Project Document. (i) Although the gender mainstreaming issues were considered in the context, implementation, results frame, and the budget, the Project Document did not design special interventions to promote gender equality and women empowerment. (j) The results framework and M&E framework did not provide a set of indicators with baseline and target values for each output and was not appropriate for management and implementation.

The project delivered all planned activities within the adjusted timeframe and budget and successfully achieved almost all outputs. However, there were no output indicators with baseline and target to assess the effectiveness of the Project in terms of outputs. For some outputs, the outputs delivered might not exactly match the intended outputs and needed detailed review on the content. The outcome assessment results suggested that most target values had been achieved and the assumptions for progress from project outputs to outcomes were mostly met, while drivers to support the transition from outputs to outcomes were in place.

The Project played a significant catalytic role by enhancing conservation management effectiveness of NNRs in Hubei province, as well as the mainstreaming of biodiversity conservation and value of ecosystem services in economic development plans and sector plans and contributing to the Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework.

The Project followed both UNEP and Chinese accounting standards, policies and procedures for GEF and counterpart funds respectively. The Project used the existing accounting system to record the financial transactions of the Project, and proved to be a good control, cost allocation, and reporting system. All required documents, including project budgets, disbursement records, expenditure sheets, and legal agreements, were completed and timely accessible for review. Both the PM and FMO were well-informed about the project's financial

conditions and physical progress, with regular contact between them. All these contributed to successful Project results.

The Project generally utilized resources efficiently and achieved cost-effective results despite challenges like the COVID-19 pandemic. The Project had one justified no-cost extension of one year and included justified amendments to the formally approaches for achieving Project's outcomes.

Throughout the implementation of the project, the indicator system was not updated to align with its original scope and objectives due to unchanged Project scope and activities. However, there were opportunities for improvement in the design of the project's indicators. The Project only considered process indicators at the outcome level while ignoring impact indicator and output indicators.

Some of the outcome indicators used showed limitations in their relevance for a comprehensive review of the Project. While outputs and impact, were documented in the monitoring plan and results framework, the Project lacked more indicators capable of effectively measuring outputs and concrete impact in Hubei Province, China.

Despite the completeness of Project life documentation, challenges arose in that the reports were generally gender-neutral, except for documents specifically addressing gender-sensitive interventions. The data disaggregation by vulnerable or marginalized groups was absent across reporting. Finally, almost all reports were in Chinese and have not been released to the public or published.

The sustainability of project outcomes has a low degree of dependency on social/political factors at the local levels. It builds on trust and stable socio-political relationships of people at the local level, and community level. It also relies on long-term relationships with stable partners, and finally it takes a strong objective scientific approach allowing to stay on the technical side and avoid getting involved in politics.

The project outputs/outcomes are reliant, to great extent, on future funding for continued success and sustainability. The short term required funding can be secured through a Phase II project, demonstrating substantial progress in addressing the project's financial needs. The project can ensure its long-term financial sustainability by integrating its results into provincial government development plan, which was one of the key outcomes.

A robust mechanism was in place to support the institutionalization of Project results. The capacity of relevant individuals was enhanced, and they were likely to remain in positions where they could sustain these results. Further, an exit strategy with an institutional component has been initiated to guide the transition and ensure the continuation of project achievements. However, there is a need for more substantial integration of Project results through the institutions other than the areas in biodiversity conservation and ecosystem services. In addition, the future projects must focus on outreach of institutional achievements at the national or international level to ensure the sustainable achievements.

The lack of a timely inception process limited the project's ability to fully capitalize on opportunities and mitigate foreseeable risks at the outset. The evidence indicated that a late inception meeting was held and the Project Document including an annual work plan and a procurement plan was not updated.

The Project has been managed and supervised effectively by a strong Project management team and a functioning Steering Committee, with an excellent working relationship with all Project partners. Regular and constructive communication between the PMU/PIU and UNEP staff has been maintained, and both UNEP and Executing Agency provided strong leadership. In addition, the Project demonstrated strong adaptive management, with prompt responses to changes of needs and priorities. However, there were double operating systems, double management systems, double financial management system and double monitoring systems with corresponding outcomes and outputs and indicators during the implementation in GSA. In addition, the document review and consultations indicated that staff turnover at UNEP and the implementing partners delayed the key activities and thus delayed timely delivery of Project outputs /outcomes.

Although the stakeholder participation improved during implementation, the Project faced challenges in engagement, with limited but effective efforts to promote stakeholder ownership. The Project provided a virtual platform to facilitate participatory processes and thus strengthened the stakeholders' participation and cooperation, and finally the ownership throughout the Project.

The evidence suggested that human rights and gender considerations were not integrated into project implementation, result interpretation, and project reporting. Minor attention was given to human rights and gender in the project implementation. More importantly, the Project did not promote human rights and gender equality by designing special interventions in the area of biodiversity conservation and ecosystem improvement.

The environmental and social impacts on key stakeholders and in particular on the most vulnerable groups were considered or addressed, but to a limited extent although there was a management plan to address safeguards. The review of risk assessments tended to be oversight and the extent of the problems was under-reported.

The provincial government and public sector agencies played a leadership role in driving change, endorsing Project results, and ensuring national ownership. The lack of strategic representation and involvement of key departments beyond the biodiversity sector limited the project's country ownership.

Communication and public awareness had been conducted, but the results were not as effective as expected. It had been largely ineffective in driving change towards outcomes beyond outputs at the national and international levels.

See V and VI for details.

ANNEX Xiv. IMPLEMENTATION PLAN OF RECOMMENDATIONS

Project Title and Reference No.: Expansion and Improvement of Biodiversity Conservation and Sustainable Use of Natural Resources in the Greater Shennongjia Area, Hubei Province, China PIMS ID: 37259/GEF ID: 4865

Contact Person (TM/PM): Kavita Sharma (Task Manager)

RECOMMENDATIONS	PLANS			
	ACCEPTED (YES/NO/PARTIALLY)	WHAT WILL BE DONE?	EXPECTED COMPLETION DATE	RESPONSIBLE OFFICER/ UNIT/ DIVISION/ AGENCY
It is recommended that future projects ensure the inclusion of representatives from various institutions in the Project Steering Committee to foster coherence and complementarity for planning, implementation and mainstreaming across institutions/ sectors.	Yes	Policy coherence will be an important criterion for SC formulation in future projects	Ongoing	UNEP
It is recommended that future projects use SMART indicators with “incremental” target values to be achieved by the end of the Project for each output and outcome for monitoring and evaluation purpose in the project results framework as now mandated by the GEF.	Yes	Latest GEF cycles emphasize SMART indicators for monitoring, and these are included in GEF 7 and 8 and future projects	Ongoing	UNEP
In order to ensure the mainstreaming of cross-cutting issues such as human rights, gender and vulnerable people in a project, it is crucial to include them in the project activities, and outputs/outcomes with clear	Yes	Geder and vulnerable communities will be mainstreamed in future projects	Ongoing	UNEP

	PLANS			
RECOMMENDATIONS	ACCEPTED (YES/NO/PARTIALLY)	WHAT WILL BE DONE?	EXPECTED COMPLETION DATE	REPOSIBLE OFFICER/ UNIT/ DIVISION/ AGENCY
indicators in the results framework as well as part of reporting requirements in the quarterly and annual reports.				

The following is a summary of lessons learned from some of the project's experiences and based upon explicit findings of the review. They briefly describe the context from which the lessons are derived, and the potential for wider application:

Lesson Learned #1:	Consistent alignment of the Project activities and outputs with the UNEP Medium Term Strategy (MTS), Programme of Work (POW), persisting national needs, and GEF Strategic Priorities ensure the sustainability of the Project's results.
Context/comment:	An intervention that is aligned with the UNEP Medium Term Strategy (MTS), Programme of Work (POW), and GEF Strategic Priorities will ensure the sustainability of the intervention results. Response to and meet the development demand and priorities of national partner is among the most important factors that have successfully contributed to the sustainability of achieved results. (V.A and D)

Lesson Learned #2:	It is extremely difficult to measure and verify the Project's effectiveness if the Project design does not include s set of output indicators.
Context/comment:	The effectiveness can only be assessed based on the comparison of actual indicator values against the target values for each output, which is not an appropriate method to verify and measure. (V.D)

Lesson Learned #3:	Sharing of the best practices from the implementation, successful achievements attained and challenges faced through appropriate regional cooperation arrangements increases the catalytic impact of intervention.
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Context/comment:	A coordinated management decision among participating NRs on the species with geographic range beyond a single GSA reserve was established based on the information management system. In particular, the Western Hubei and Eastern Chongqing Conservation Area Alliance were established, and annual alliance meetings were held continuously. The alliance agreement was signed and a joint monitoring on IAS was carried out. In addition, the Project established a cross sectoral coordination mechanism between Shennongjia and Baokang (led by HFD with other government departments). (Outcome 2.3.a, V.D)
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Lesson Learned #4:	Coherence is a good criterion to review a regional project funded by GEF.
Context/comment:	A regional project normally involves different types of international development partners and different levels of national partners and UN agencies. Coherence is an appropriate criterion to evaluate a regional project such as the GEF funded project. (V.A)

Lesson Learned #5:	A well-functioning Project Steering Committee/board linked to an executing agency and a professional Project Management Team linked to an implementing agency will ensure the project efficiency and a good national ownership.
Context/comment:	A well-functioning PSC/board that supervises the project through providing a strategic direction and guidance and a professional Project Management Team that undertakes the routine daily activities will ensure an implementation efficiency and sustainability of Project outputs. (V.E and F)

Lesson Learned #6:	A results framework equipped with a logical chain from activities to outputs and outcomes/impacts, and a logical chain from activities to outputs/outcomes indicators with baseline and target values based on the Theory of Change enhances the effectiveness and efficiency of Project implementation.
Context/comment:	The effectiveness and efficiency are measured through results framework and monitoring and evaluation plan. (V.B and G).

Lesson Learned #7:	Adaptive management is a crucial management tool for the project supported by international donors.
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Context/comment:	It offers the necessary flexibility to review and update the approach to implementing the Project as needed to ensure the project outcomes while sticking to the original project design. (V.C)
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Lesson Learned #8:	Establishment of a sector (biodiversity and ecosystem service) policy and integration into national development plan is complicated and not a linear process due to its mixture with political agendas.
Context/comment:	A 5-year project timeframe is too short and does not provide enough time contingency for risks related to changing environmental, political and economic conditions, and does not provide enough time to realize the project achievements before the Project is completed. (V.D).

Lesson Learned #9:	In order to ensure mainstreaming of cross-cutting issue in a project, it is central that cross-cutting based expected results be part of the project strategy to become part of the implementation of activities as well as part of reporting project progress.
Context/comment:	The Project included cross-cutting issues only in 2 outcome indicators and was not able to ensure a mainstreaming of the issues in the Project.

ANNEX XV. QUALITY ASSESSMENT OF THE REVIEW REPORT

Quality Assessment of the Terminal Review Report

Review Title: Terminal Review of the UNEP-GEF Project 'Expansion and Improvement of Biodiversity Conservation and Sustainable Use of Natural Resources in the Greater Shennongjia Area, Hubei Province, China (GEF ID 4865)' 2018-2024

Consultant: Langnan Chen

All UNEP Reviews are subject to a quality assessment by the UNEP Evaluation Office. This is an assessment of the quality of the review product (i.e. Main Review Report).

Report Quality Criteria	UNEP Evaluation Office Comments	Final Report Rating
Section A: Executive Summary	Assessment	
1. Does the Executive Summary act as a concise, accurate standalone section, especially to inform decision-making? Consider how clearly and concisely the report presents: - a clear summary of the review object - review objectives, scope and methodology - the overall project review rating - a summary of main review findings, including key features of performance (strengths and weaknesses) - summary responses to key strategic review questions - summary of main conclusions, lessons learned and recommendations	<u>Coverage/omissions:</u> All elements have been adequately addressed. <u>Strengths/weaknesses:</u> The executive summary has been well written, with limited use of abbreviations and largely free of technical jargon, making it easier to read and follow.	6
Section B: The Project	Assessment	
2. Does the report clearly describe the key parameters, scale and complexity of the evaluand? Consider how well the report presents: - an overview of the main issue that the project is trying to address - timeline, including dates of project approval, duration and number of phases (where appropriate) - geographic coverage (regions/countries) - total secured budget and project financing, including a table with funding sources - implementing and funding partners - institutional context (i.e. UNEP sub-programme, Division, Branch etc) - implementation structure with diagram - UNEP results frameworks to which it contributes (e.g. PoW Direct Outcome) - summary of results framework as stated in the ProDoc (or as officially revised) - stakeholder groups organised according to relevant common characteristics - whether the project has been evaluated in the past (e.g. mid-term, by an external agency, etc.) - substantive or significant changes in design during implementation	<u>Coverage/omissions:</u> All elements have been covered well. <u>Strengths/weaknesses:</u> Use of the map showing the geographic coverage improved the readability of the report.	6
Section C: Review Methods and Theory of Change	Assessment	

Report Quality Criteria	UNEP Evaluation Office Comments	Final Report Rating
3. Does the report present a clear, comprehensive and adequate description of the <i>review methodology</i>? Consider how well it presents the following elements, and their adequacy based on the scope of the review: • statement of the purpose of the review and the key intended audience for the review findings • data collection methods and information sources • justification for methods used (e.g. electronic/face-to-face interviews, qualitative/quantitative analysis) • criteria and sampling strategies used to select stakeholders for consultations, and for sites/countries visited • number and types of respondents (<i>including in a table broken down by gender</i>) • strategies used to increase stakeholder engagement and response rate • methods used to include the voices/experiences of different and potentially excluded groups (e.g. women, marginalised) • data verification methods (e.g. triangulation) • data analysis methods (e.g. scoring, thematic analysis) • review limitations and mitigation measures (e.g. how these were addressed by the evaluator) • consideration for ethics and human rights issues, including how anonymity and confidentiality were protected	<u>Coverage/omissions:</u> Most elements have been adequately covered. <u>Strengths/weaknesses:</u> The report provides a detailed description of the key intended audience for the review findings. No methods were described that include the voices/experiences of women.	5.5
4. Does the report describe an assessment and reformulation of the <i>Theory of Change</i>, and present an adequate articulation of the TOC causal pathways that were used to assess project performance (<i>narratively and diagrammatically</i>)? Consider how well the report presents: • whether the project design included a TOC • how the <i>TOC at review</i> ⁵⁶ was designed (e.g. who was involved, etc) • confirmation/reconstruction of results in accordance with UNEP definitions (<i>including reformulation table, which may have initially been presented in the Inception Report and should appear in the Main Review report.</i>) • articulation of causal pathways • identification of drivers and assumptions • identification of key actors in the change process	<u>Coverage/omissions:</u> Most elements of this section have been adequately addressed. However, the identification/formulation of assumptions and drivers are not in accordance with UNEP's Glossary of Results Definition document. The following assumptions read like achievement of results of the output/outcome/intermediate states, and are also within the influence of the project and its partners: A3: management effectiveness in the existing GSA nature has been improved. A4: habitat integrity of areas under protection has increased in the GSA.	4.5

⁵⁶ During the Inception Phase of the review process a *TOC at review Inception* is created based on the information contained in the approved project documents (these may include either logical framework or a TOC or narrative descriptions), formal revisions and annual reports etc. During the review process this TOC is revised based on changes made during project intervention and becomes the *TOC at review*.

Report Quality Criteria	UNEP Evaluation Office Comments	Final Report Rating
	A5: landscape-based species- and habitat protection have been improved. A6: capacity of provincial and local governments in environmental education has been improved. A7: communications have been improved and awareness has been enhanced. A8: capacity of provincial and local DRC personnel, guidelines and 13th 5-year development plans have been established. A9: assessment of IAS presence, impacts and anticipated spread has been completed and seven county-level policies and funding have been established. A10: co-management plans, four NR-specific co-management contracts, 24 small-scale biodiversity conservation tools, and training of NR and PMO staff have been completed. A11 one new county-level NR (SFD) and ecological corridor have been established. A12 two landscape-based species conservation action plans, 2 GSA NR system-wide conservation action plans, and a spatial database and ecological monitoring program have been developed and implemented A13: GSA-wide environmental education, a 5-year comprehensive environment education plan and a public education and awareness center have been established. A14: a Hubei province-wide biodiversity conservation communications and outreach strategy and a bi-lingual website on biodiversity conservation and ecosystem services have been established. The following drivers should be stated as assumptions as they are beyond the influence of the project and its partners: D1: stable macroeconomic performance D6: support from multiple types of partners at all levels	

Report Quality Criteria	UNEP Evaluation Office Comments	Final Report Rating
	<u>Strengths/weaknesses:</u> The consultant has described the causal pathways in both narrative form and made good use of tables and visuals to reconstruct the ToC at Review. The report could have been made stronger if the consultant had also identified key actors in the change process.	
Section D: Evidence and Analysis	Assessment	
5. Is the report based on sufficient and adequate data and clear and credible evidence? Consider how well the report presents: • sufficient evidence that is consistent throughout the report • evidence that is supported by data sources (e.g. quotes, reports, etc) • evidence that is explicitly triangulated, unless noted as having a single source • gaps in data are explained and justified • data sources that are reliable, adequate, sufficient for the scope of the review	<u>Coverage/omissions:</u> All elements have been adequately addressed. <u>Strengths/weaknesses:</u> It's not always clear that evidence presented is triangulated.	5
6. Does the report include rigorous analysis and logical findings? Consider the extent to which the findings are: • supported by clear analysis that is consistent with the evidence presented • logical, clear and coherent • aligned with UNEP's Criteria Ratings Matrix • aligned with the review framework • more than descriptions and provide insights into 'how' and/or 'why' the project performed a certain way • balanced, presenting both successes and weaknesses	<u>Coverage/omissions:</u> Most elements have been adequately addressed. <u>Strengths/weaknesses:</u> The how and/or why insights are missing, especially in the Availability of Outputs sub section.	5
Section E: Review Findings	Assessment	
7. Does the report present evidence and analysis of project Strategic Relevance with respect to UNEP, partner and geographic policies and strategies at the time of project approval? Consider how well the report addresses: • Alignment to the UNEP Medium Term Strategy (MTS), Programme of Work (POW) and Strategic Priorities • Alignment to Donor/GEF/Partners Strategic Priorities • Relevance to Regional, Sub-regional and National Environmental Priorities • Complementarity with Existing Interventions: complementarity of the project at design (or during inception/mobilisation⁵⁷), with other interventions addressing the needs of the same target groups.	<u>Coverage/omissions:</u> All elements were adequately addressed. <u>Strengths/weaknesses:</u> The narrative describes a balanced approach and brings up areas where the project could have had better complementarity with other similar GEF interventions	6

⁵⁷ A project's inception or mobilization period is understood as the time between project approval and first disbursement. Complementarity during project implementation is considered under Efficiency, see below.

Report Quality Criteria	UNEP Evaluation Office Comments	Final Report Rating
8. Does the report present a summary of the strengths and weaknesses of the Quality of Project Design , based on the detailed assessment presented in the Inception Report?	<u>Coverage/omissions:</u> All elements have been adequately covered. <u>Strengths/weaknesses:</u> A summary on the strengths and weaknesses of each of the quality criteria covered in the inception report has been presented, along with the weighted ratings table.	⁵⁸ NOT RATED
9. Does the report recognise and describe, when appropriate, key features of the Nature of the External Context under which the project was implemented that limited the project's performance (e.g. conflict, natural disaster, political upheaval ⁵⁹), and how they affected performance?	<u>Coverage/omissions:</u> All elements have been adequately addressed. <u>Strengths/weaknesses:</u> Nature of external context is rated on the scale from highly unfavourable to highly favourable - in this section it has been erroneously rated as moderately satisfactory instead of moderately favourable.	⁶⁰ NOT RATED
10. Does the report present a well-reasoned, complete and evidence-based assessment of the Availability of Outputs to the intended beneficiaries? Consider how well the report presents: • a convincing, evidence-supported and clear presentation of the outputs made available by the project compared to its approved plans and budget • assessment of the nature and scale of outputs versus the project indicators and targets • assessment of the timeliness, quality and utility of outputs to intended beneficiaries • identification of positive or negative effects of the project on disadvantaged groups, including those with specific needs due to gender, vulnerability or marginalisation (e.g. through disability).	<u>Coverage/omissions:</u> Most elements were adequately addressed. There was no discussion on the positive or negative effects of the project on disadvantaged groups. <u>Strengths/weaknesses:</u> The report lacked analysis/depth on the assessments of quality and utility of the outputs to intended beneficiaries.	4

⁵⁸ The Quality of Project Design criterion is not rated in this table because the majority of the analysis is presented in the Inception Report and the Final Terminal Review report only contains a summary.

⁵⁹ Note that 'political upheaval' does not include regular national election cycles, but unanticipated unrest or prolonged disruption. The potential delays or changes in political support that are often associated with the regular national election cycle should be part of the project's design and addressed through adaptive management of the project team.

⁶⁰ The Nature of External Context is not rated in this table because it is not consistently applicable across all projects. Some review reports will simply record that there was no unexpected unfavourable external factors, while others may have to describe critical external events.

Report Quality Criteria	UNEP Evaluation Office Comments	Final Report Rating
11. Does the report present a well-reasoned, complete and evidence-based assessment of the Achievement of Outcomes, as a result of the uptake, adoption and/or implementation of outputs by the intended beneficiaries? This may include behaviour changes at an individual or collective level. Consider how well the report presents: - a convincing and evidence-supported analysis of the uptake of outputs by intended beneficiaries - assessment of the nature, depth and scale of outcomes versus the project indicators and targets - discussion of the contribution, credible association and/or attribution of outcome level changes to the work of the project itself - any constraints to attributing effects to the projects' work - identification of positive or negative effects of the project on disadvantaged groups, including those with specific needs due to gender, vulnerability or marginalisation (e.g. through disability).	<u>Coverage/omissions:</u> All elements have been adequately addressed in this section. <u>Strengths/weaknesses:</u> The consultant made use of tables to show which outcomes have been achieved and provided more in-depth analysis. However, the consultant used the indicators and targets of the Project Document (which were more aligned with availability of outputs) rather than assessment against the outcomes of the TOC at Review.	4.5
12. Does the report present an integrated analysis, guided by the causal pathways represented by the TOC, of all evidence relating to Likelihood of Impact? Consider how well the report presents: - an explanation of how causal pathways emerged and the resulting change processes - an explicit discussion of how drivers and assumptions played out - an explanation of roles played by key actors and change agents - identification of any unintended negative effects of the project, especially on disadvantaged groups, including those with specific needs due to gender, vulnerability or marginalisation (e.g. through disability).	<u>Coverage/omissions:</u> Some elements were adequately addressed in this section. There was no explicit discussion on how the drivers and assumptions played out nor an explanation of roles played by key actors and change agents. <u>Strengths/weaknesses:</u>	4
13. Does the report present an integrated analysis of all dimensions evaluated under Financial Management and include a completed 'financial management' table? Consider how well the report addresses the following: <i>adherence</i> to UNEP's financial policies and procedures <i>completeness</i> of financial information, including the actual project costs and actual co-financing used and explanation of any variances between planned and actual expenditures	<u>Coverage/omissions:</u> All elements have been adequately addressed in this section. <u>Strengths/weaknesses:</u> Each component of the financial management of the project was well narrated and easy to follow	6
14. Does the report present an integrated analysis of all dimensions evaluated under Efficiency? Consider how well the report presents: - cost-effective or time-saving measures put in place to maximise results within the secured budget and agreed project timeframe - implications of any delays and no cost extensions - discussion of making use, during project implementation, of/building on pre-existing institutions, partnerships and complementarities	<u>Coverage/omissions:</u> Most elements have been adequately addressed in this section. However, there is no discussion on how the project minimised UNEP's environmental footprint. <u>Strengths/weaknesses:</u> Complementarities with other initiatives could have been cross referenced to the	5

Report Quality Criteria	UNEP Evaluation Office Comments	Final Report Rating
with other initiatives, programmes and projects etc. the extent to which the management of the project minimised UNEP's environmental footprint.	relevant paragraphs under Strategic Relevance.	
15. Does the report present a well-reasoned, complete and evidence-based assessment of the project's Monitoring and Reporting? Consider how well the report addresses the following: - the quality of <i>monitoring of project implementation</i> (including use of monitoring data for adaptive management) - the quality of <i>project reporting</i> (e.g. PIMS and donor reports)	<u>Coverage/omissions:</u> All elements have been adequately addressed in this section <u>Strengths/weaknesses:</u> A good summary of the strengths and weaknesses of monitoring and reporting.	5.5
16. Does the report present an integrated analysis of all dimensions evaluated under Sustainability (i.e. the endurance of benefits achieved at outcome level)? Consider how well the report addresses the following: - socio-political sustainability - financial sustainability - institutional sustainability	<u>Coverage/omissions:</u> All elements have been adequately addressed in this section <u>Strengths/weaknesses:</u> All dependencies and mitigation measures were well summarised	5.5
17. Does the report present a well-evidence analysis of the Factors Affecting Performance, <u>either in this section or in cross-referenced sections?</u> <i>These factors are not always discussed in stand-alone sections and may be integrated in the other performance criteria as appropriate. However, if not addressed substantively in this section, a cross reference must be given to where the topic is addressed, and that entry must be sufficient to justify the performance rating for these factors.</i> Consider how well the report addresses the following cross-cutting issues: - quality of project management and supervision⁶¹ - stakeholder participation and co-operation - responsiveness to human rights and gender equality - environmental and social safeguards - country ownership and driven-ness - communication and public awareness	<u>Coverage/omissions:</u> All elements have been adequately addressed in this section. <u>Strengths/weaknesses:</u> Some paragraphs were repeated and opportunities for cross referencing to other paragraphs were more detailed evidence is presented were missed.	5
Section F: Conclusions, Lessons Learned and Recommendations	Assessment	
18. Do the Conclusions present a summative assessment of the evaluand as a whole, reflecting on prominent aspects of the project's performance? Consider how well the conclusions: provide a compelling narrative and integrated assessment of project project's performance (i.e. achievements and limitations)	<u>Coverage/omissions:</u> Most elements have been adequately addressed. Deeper insights and analysis beyond the findings were not presented. <u>Strengths/weaknesses:</u>	5

⁶¹ In some cases, 'project management and supervision' will refer to the supervision and guidance provided by UNEP to implementing partners and national governments while in others, specifically for GEF funded projects, it will refer to the project management performance of the executing agency and the technical backstopping provided by UNEP. This includes providing the answers to the questions on Core Indicator Targets, stakeholder engagement, gender responsiveness, safeguards and knowledge management, required for the GEF portal.

Report Quality Criteria	UNEP Evaluation Office Comments	Final Report Rating
- add deeper insights and analysis beyond the findings under each individual criterion - are derived from the synthesized analysis of evidence gathered during the review process - provide clear and succinct response to the key strategic questions - address the human rights and gender dimensions of the intervention explicitly (e.g. how these dimensions were considered, addressed or impacted on) - provide lessons that are rooted in real project experiences, describe the context from which they are derived, and do not duplicate recommendations	Qualitative and/or quantitative responses to the key strategic questions would have added a deeper insight into the project's performance.	
19. Does the report present Recommendations for specific action to be taken by identified people/position-holders to resolve concrete problems affecting the project or the sustainability of its results? Consider how well the recommendations: - are clearly formulated and logically derived from the findings and/or conclusions - are feasible to implement within the timeframe and resources available (including local capacities) and specific in terms of who would do what and when - include at least one recommendation relating to strengthening the human rights and gender dimensions of UNEP interventions - represent a measurable performance target in order that the Evaluation Office can monitor and assess compliance with the recommendations. NOTES: (i) In cases where the recommendation is addressed to a third party, compliance can only be monitored and assessed where a contractual/legal agreement remains in place. Without such an agreement, the recommendation should be formulated to say that UNEP project staff should pass on the recommendation to the relevant third party in an effective or substantive manner. The effective transmission by UNEP of the recommendation will then be monitored for compliance. (ii) Where a new project phase is already under discussion or in preparation with the same third party, a recommendation can be made to address the issue in the next phase.	<u>Coverage/omissions:</u> Most elements have been adequately addressed. However, the timeframe proposed for each of the recommendations are not specific nor time bound. <u>Strengths/weaknesses:</u>	4
Section G: Report Structure and Presentation	Assessment	
20. Is the report well-structured and complete? Does it: - follow the Evaluation Office structure and formatting guidelines - include all required sections and annexes, as applicable - not exceed 50 pages in length from the Executive Summary to the end of the Conclusion Does the report present information clearly and appropriately? Is it written: - in clear and accessible language - largely free from grammar, spelling and punctuation errors - in an adequate and professional tone - with the use of visual aids, such as maps, graphs	<u>Coverage/omissions:</u> Most elements have been adequately addressed throughout the report. The report is 75 pages in length from the Executive Summary to the end of the Conclusions. <u>Strengths/weaknesses:</u> The appropriate use of maps and tables improved the legibility of the report.	5

Report Quality Criteria	UNEP Evaluation Office Comments	Final Report Rating
tables and photos		
OVERALL REPORT QUALITY RATING		5.1

A number rating 1-6 is used for each criterion: Highly Satisfactory = 6, Satisfactory = 5, Moderately Satisfactory = 4, Moderately Unsatisfactory = 3, Unsatisfactory = 2, Highly Unsatisfactory = 1. The overall quality of the review report is calculated by taking the mean score of all rated quality criteria.

Rating the Report Quality Criteria

Rating (1–6)	Description
6	Provides all content with high quality.
5	Provides all content with minor weaknesses.
4	Provides most content with minor weaknesses.
3	Provides most content with significant weaknesses.
2	Omits substantive content with significant weaknesses.
1	Omits almost all content with major weaknesses.