

# Midterm Review Synthesis Report

2016

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CBPF – Main Streams of Life (MSL):  
Wetland PA System Strengthening for Biodiversity Conservation

GEF Program ID: 4646

UNDP Program ID: 4857

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|                             |   |
|-----------------------------|---|
| <b>Country:</b>             | China   |
| <b>Region:</b>              | Asia and the Pacific  |
| <b>Focal Area:</b>          | Biodiversity (GEF-5)  |
| <b>Implementing Agency:</b> | United Nations Development Programme  |
| <b>Executing Agencies:</b>  | State Forestry Administration<br>Anhui Province<br>Hainan Province<br>Heilongjiang Province<br>Hubei Province<br>Inner Mongolia Autonomous Region<br>Jiangxi Province<br>Xinjiang Autonomous Region |
| <b>Program Duration:</b>    | 84 months   |

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## Midterm Review Opening Page:

**Program Title:** CBPF-Main Streams of Life (MSL) – Wetland PA System Strengthening for Biodiversity Conservation

**GEF Program ID:** 4646

**UNDP Program ID:** 4847

**Country:** China

**Region:** Asia and the Pacific

**Focal Area:** Biodiversity (GEF-5)

**GEF-5 Strategic Program:** Objective BD-1: Improve Sustainability of Protected Area Systems  
 Outcome 1.1: Improved management effectiveness of existing and new protected areas  
 Outcome 1.2: Increased revenue for protected area systems to meet total expenditures required for management

**PFD Submission Date:** 19 September 2011

**Program Duration:** 84 months

**Lead GEF Agency:** United Nations Development Programme (UNDP)

**Other GEF Agency:** United Nations Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO)

**Executing Partners:** State Forestry Administration (SFA), Anhui Province, Hainan Province, Heilongjiang Province, Hubei Province, Inner Mongolia Autonomous Region, Jiangxi Province, Xinjiang Autonomous Region

**Indicative Financing:** USD 23,010,915 (as indicated in the program framework document, Sep 2011)

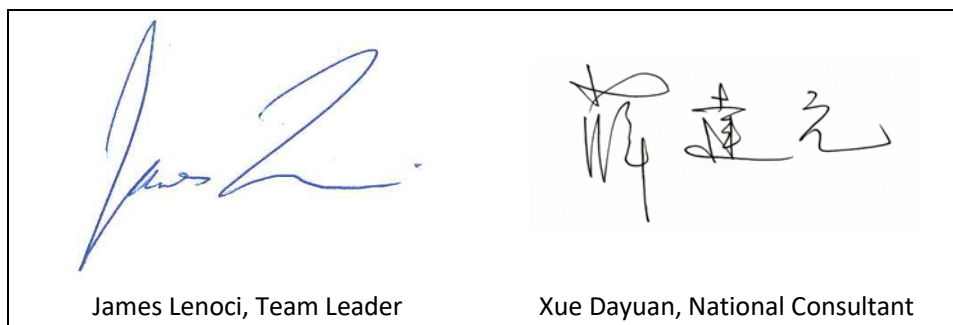
**Indicative Cofinancing:** USD 142,600,000 (as indicated in the program framework document, Sep 2011)

**Individual MSL Projects:**

| Project        | GEF Agency | GEF ID | GEF Grant, USD    | Cofinancing, USD   | Start    | Duration  |
|----------------|------------|--------|-------------------|--------------------|----------|-----------|
| National       | UNDP       | 4655   | 2,654,771         | 16,800,000         | Sep 2013 | 60 months |
| DXAL           | UNDP       | 4868   | 3,544,679         | 24,500,000         | Sep 2013 | 60 months |
| Xinjiang       | UNDP       | 4653   | 3,544,679         | 22,000,000         | Feb 2014 | 60 months |
| Anhui          | UNDP       | 4896   | 2,654,771         | 18,147,255         | Dec 2013 | 60 months |
| Hainan         | UNDP       | 4811   | 2,634,771         | 18,000,000         | Jun 2013 | 60 months |
| Hubei          | UNDP       | 4870   | 2,654,771         | 18,158,634         | Mar 2014 | 60 months |
| Jiangxi        | FAO        | 4662   | 5,289,000         | 26,692,000         | Delayed  | 60 months |
| <b>Totals:</b> |            |        | <b>22,977,442</b> | <b>144,297,889</b> |          |           |

**MTR Timeframe:** June-September 2016

**Evaluation Team:**



**MTR Reporting Language:** English

The evaluation team would like acknowledge the information and feedback provided by interviewed project stakeholders, including chief engineer of the Office of Wetland Conservation and Management, the directors of the individual project PMOs, the UNDP Program Manager, the UNDP-GEF regional technical advisor, the project chief technical advisor, the project managers, the other MSL MTR team members, and the consultants and contractors working on the projects.

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Annex 5: Terms of Reference

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## **EXHIBITS**

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Exhibit 2: MTR Ratings of the Six Individual MSL Projects Implemented by UNDP

Exhibit 3: Program Level MTR Ratings and Achievement Summary Table

Exhibit 4: Map showing location of projects within the MSL Program

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Exhibit 6: Summary of MSL Project Costs Incurred by Midterm (30 June 2016)

## Executive Summary

General information on the MSL program and financial performance by midterm are summarized below in the information table presented as **Exhibit 1**.

| <b>Exhibit 1: Program Information Table</b> |   |                                  |  |
|---|---|----------------------------------|--|
| <b>Program Title:</b>                       | CBPF-Main Streams of Life (MSL) – Wetland PA System Strengthening for Biodiversity Conservation   |                                  |  |
| <b>UNDP Program ID:</b>                     | 4847  | <b>GEF Program ID:</b>           | 4646                                   |
| <b>Country(ies):</b>                        | China   | <b>Focal Area:</b>               | Biodiversity                           |
| <b>Region:</b>                              | Asia and the Pacific  | <b>GEF-5 Strategic Programs:</b> | BD-1, Outcome 1.1<br>BD-1, Outcome 1.2 |
| <b>PFD Submission Date:</b>                 | 19 September 2011   | <b>Trust Fund:</b>               | GEF TF                                 |
| <b>Executing Agencies:</b>                  | State Forestry Administration (SFA), Anhui Province, Hainan Province, Heilongjiang Province, Hubei Province, Inner Mongolia Autonomous Region, Jiangxi Province, Xinjiang Autonomous Region |                                  |  |
| <b>Program Financing*:</b>                  | <b>at CEO endorsement (USD)</b>   | <b>at Midterm Review (USD)**</b> |  |
| <b>[1] GEF financing:</b>                   | 17,688,442  | 6,456,142                        |  |
| <b>[2] UNDP contribution:</b>               | 5,000,000   | 2,500,000                        |  |
| <b>[3] Government:</b>                      | 112,605,089   | 124,271,226                      |  |
| <b>[4] Other partners:</b>                  | 0   | 0                                |  |
| <b>[5] Total cofinancing [2 + 3+ 4]:</b>    | 117,605,889   | 126,771,226                      |  |
| <b>PROJECT TOTAL COSTS [1 + 5]</b>          | <b>135,294,331</b>  | <b>133,227,368</b>               |  |

\*Excludes the Poyang Lake project (GEF ID 4662)

\*\*Actual expenditures and cofinancing contributions through 30 June 2016

## Program Description

The Main Streams of Life (MSL) Program supports national and subnational systems for managing wetland protected areas (PAs) covering 48,962,400 ha, improving the spatial design of the wetland PA sub-system and bringing an additional 1.7 million ha under protection, ensuring better terrestrial wetland ecosystem representation and filling ecosystem coverage gaps. This was envisaged to increase the resilience of the sub-system in the face of a fast changing climate by maintaining functional connectivity at landscape level, addressing non climate change related anthropogenic stressors that are undermining wetland resilience, and ensuring adequate protection of upstream non-wetland habitats such as forests and grasslands that serve as vital catchments for the wetlands themselves.

The program also aimed to consolidate and strengthen the enabling legal, planning and institutional framework for effective management of PAs with globally significant wetlands; and strengthening the capacity (strategies, tools, mechanisms, knowledge, skills and resources) to support the operational management and financing of wetland PAs system at the national, provincial and site levels.

Furthermore, the program supports mainstreaming of wetland PAs within sector practices so as to reduce pressures on wetland PAs and making them more sustainable and resilient in the face of climate change.

The program consists of a set of interlinked projects that would create a strong national system for managing wetland PAs, transforming management practices in seven different provinces which harbor important wetland biodiversity and address the management needs of different wetland types and develop a data base and networks that would inform the management of these types country wide.

## Purpose and Methodology

The objective of the MTR was to gain an independent analysis of the progress mid-way through the program. The MTR focused on identifying potential design problems, assessing progress towards the

achievement of the intended outcomes, and identifying and documenting lessons learned about design, implementation and management. Findings of this review will be incorporated as recommendations for enhanced implementation during the final half of the program’s term. The program performance was measured based on the indicators of the project’s strategic results framework, and findings of midterm reviews carried out for the six projects under the MSL program implemented by UNDP.

The MTR was an evidence-based assessment and relied on feedback from persons who have been involved in the design, implementation, and supervision of the project, and also review of available documents and findings obtained during the field mission.

## Evaluation Ratings

A compilation of the MTR ratings of the six individual MSL projects implemented by UNDP is presented below in **Exhibit 2**.

| <b>Exhibit 2: MTR Ratings of the Six Individual MSL Projects Implemented by UNDP</b> |                   |   |                         |                           |                           |                         |                         |
|--|-------------------|---|-------------------------|---------------------------|---------------------------|-------------------------|-------------------------|
| Measure  |                   | MTR Rating for the 6 Projects Implemented by UNDP under the MSL Program |                         |                           |                           |                         |                         |
|  |                   | National<br>PIMS 4391   | DXAL<br>PIMS 4824       | Xinjiang<br>PIMS 4596     | Anhui<br>PIMS 4868        | Hainan<br>PIMS 4597     | Hubei<br>PIMS 4823      |
| <b>Project Strategy</b>  |                   | Not Rated   | Not Rated               | Not Rated                 | Not Rated                 | Not Rated               | Not Rated               |
| <b>Progress towards Results</b>  | <b>Objective:</b> | Satisfactory  | Satisfactory            | Moderately Satisfactory   | Moderately Satisfactory   | Satisfactory            | Satisfactory            |
|  | <b>Outcome 1:</b> | Satisfactory  | Moderately Satisfactory | Moderately Unsatisfactory | Satisfactory              | Satisfactory            | Satisfactory            |
|  | <b>Outcome 2:</b> | Moderately Satisfactory   | Satisfactory            | Moderately Satisfactory   | Satisfactory              | Satisfactory            | Satisfactory            |
|  | <b>Outcome 3:</b> | Satisfactory  | Satisfactory            | Moderately Satisfactory   | Moderately Unsatisfactory | Moderately Satisfactory | Moderately Satisfactory |
| <b>Project Implementation and Adaptive Management</b>                                |                   | Moderately Satisfactory   | Moderately Satisfactory | Moderately Satisfactory   | Moderately Satisfactory   | Satisfactory            | Satisfactory            |
| <b>Sustainability</b>  |                   | Likely  | Likely                  | Moderately Likely         | Moderately Likely         | Moderately Likely       | Moderately Likely       |

In general the project designs were found to be sound and logically broken down among three components, including institutional strengthening for improving wetland PA management on a system level, mainstreaming biodiversity conservation across relevant production sectors, and demonstration of effective PA management for selected pilot wetland PAs.

At the objective level, the national, Daxing’anling (DXAL), Hainan, and Hubei projects were rated satisfactory, and the Xinjiang (Altai) and Anhui projects rated moderately satisfactory. For the national project, an under-resourced PMO has had difficulties coordinating the key outputs, several of which are intended to support the activities on the provincial projects – such as development of a methodology for valuation of ecosystem services and establishment of occupational competency standards for PA staff. The Xinjiang and Anhui projects require certain management responses, including relocating the project management offices (PMOs) to ensure project objectives are realized by closure of GEF funding. The shortcomings with respect to achievement of project results are directly reflected in the project implementation and adaptive management of these projects, as well as for the DXAL project. In terms of sustainability, there are clear policy and financial commitments from the central government with respect to conservation and management of wetland ecosystems. There are certain factors posing challenges to the sustainability of project results. Delays in completing management plans for some of the pilot wetland PAs are constraining the likelihood that the plans will garner required support and approval by project closure. And, certain livelihood activities are not delivering the envisaged reduction in pressure on wetland ecosystem goods and services.

At the program level, the midterm ratings are presented below in **Exhibit 3**.

| Exhibit 3: Program Level MTR Ratings and Achievement Summary Table   |   |  |
|--|---|--|
| <b>Program:</b> CBPF-Main Streams of Life (MSL) – Wetland PA System Strengthening for Biodiversity Conservation Biodiversity (GEF Program ID: 4646; UNDP Program ID: 4847) |   |  |
| Measure  | MTR Rating  | Achievement Description  |
| <b>Program Strategy</b>  | Not Rated   | The program strategy was logically formulated, supported with a comprehensive situational analysis and description of baseline conditions. The mainstreaming component was a bit over-ambitious, not fully matching the resources allocated.   |
| <b>Progress towards Results</b>  | <b>Component 1</b><br>(Enhancing management effectiveness of wetland PA sub-system)<br>Achievement: <b>Satisfactory</b>               | <p>Coverage of the sub-system of wetland PAs continue to expand, and the program has provided technical support to the SFA/OWCM. The target of increasing coverage of wetland protected areas, 1% per year, is on target to be achieved.</p> <p>The advocacy role of the MSL program could be strengthened, with respect to assisting SFA in systematically reviewing the wetland PA coverage in relation to climate change threats and adaptation needs, and also in promoting improved representativity within the wetland PA system.</p> <p>The MSL program has delivered ground level capacity building on the application of the Ecosystem Health Index (EHI) for supporting PA management decisions. On the national project, the MSL program is assisting SFA in developing a fine-tuned EHI, with the aim of deploying it for wetland PAs nationwide. For the demonstration wetland PAs within the MSL program, there has been a notably increase in METT scores by midterm.</p> <p>Documentary evidence, including from automatic cameras operating in several of the demonstration wetland PAs, shows the presence of key indicator species.</p> |
|  | <b>Component 2</b><br>(Mainstreaming wetland PAs in development and sectoral planning)<br>Achievement: <b>Moderately Satisfactory</b> | <p>Wetland conservation and management priorities have been included in the 13<sup>th</sup> 5-year plan, and the MSL program is supporting the SFA in developing wetland conservation and management guidelines.</p> <p>However, mainstreaming wetland conservation and management at the national level, integrating wetland priorities in sectoral planning, will require more time.</p> <p>The MSL program has made substantive contributions with respect to mainstreaming wetland conservation and management at the provincial level. The annual SFA budget for wetland conservation and management has reached approximately USD 300 million in 2015 and 2014; this level of funding exceeds the target of increasing the baseline rate by &gt;50%.</p> <p>PA system financing gaps have also narrowed among the provincial projects, as documented by midterm updates of the GEF biodiversity tracking tool, Objective 1, Section III.</p>   |
|  | <b>Component 3</b><br>(Knowledge management and lesson sharing)<br>Achievement: <b>Satisfactory</b>                                   | <p>The MSL program is supporting SFA in developing (or improving) a public information system on wetlands issues. And, the provincial MSL projects are assisting development and upgrade of PA level information management systems.</p> <p>Achieving a nationwide consolidated data and information system on PA management is beyond the scope of the MSL program.</p> <p>The MSL program has supported the SFA on a number of wetland awareness campaigns, and there is anecdotal evidence of increased public knowledge and awareness. A Knowledge, Attitudes, and Practices (KAP) survey is slated to be made before the end of the project, providing an update to the baseline KAP survey.</p>  |
| <b>Program Implementation and Adaptive</b>   | <b>Moderately Satisfactory</b>  | One of the advantages of the individual project implementation modality on the MSL program is higher level of ownership and participation at the local level. The coordination role of the national project should be further  |

**Exhibit 3: Program Level MTR Ratings and Achievement Summary Table**

| <b>Program: CBPF-Main Streams of Life (MSL) – Wetland PA System Strengthening for Biodiversity Conservation Biodiversity (GEF Program ID: 4646; UNDP Program ID: 4847)</b> |                   |  |
|--|-------------------|--|
| <b>Measure</b>   | <b>MTR Rating</b> | <b>Achievement Description</b>   |
| <b>Management</b>  |                   | strengthened, delivering more proactive support across a number of functions, including technical oversight, monitoring and evaluation, capacity building support, knowledge management.   |
| <b>Sustainability</b>  | <b>Likely</b>     | The Chinese government continues to increase budgetary allocation for protected area management and also under payment for ecosystem service (PES) schemes. And, the principles of ecological civilization are being mainstreamed across all productive sectors in the country. Provincial governments are often leading the way in regulatory reform and pilot implementation of certain approaches, including PES schemes.<br><br>The results of the second national wetlands survey, which shows a nearly 10% loss of wetland area over the 10 years since the first survey, underscores the ongoing challenges that continued socioeconomic development pressures are having on natural resources. |

**Recommendations**

Separate sets of recommendations are included in the MTR reports of the six individual MSL projects. The recommendations are based on the programmatic level midterm review and are mostly addressed to the national project, which was envisaged to provide secretariat service for the Program Steering Committee, providing necessary coordination and ensuring synergy between the different provincial level projects.

***The coordination role of the national project should be strengthened***

Notwithstanding the individual project implementation modality approach selected for the MSL program, there are certain functions that should be delivered at a program level, under the coordination of the national project. The national project has initiated some effective collaborative approaches, including organizing regular Internet-based meetings among the 6 PMOs, rotating the location where the Program Steering Committee meetings are convened, sponsoring exchange visits among the individual projects, etc. The coordination role of the national project should be further strengthened.

**Recommendation No. 1:** A few actions recommended to strengthen the coordination role of the national project are presented below.

- a. **Technical oversight:** The chief technical officer (CTA) is supporting all 6 projects, but his work assignments are being organized piecemeal. The terms of reference (TOR) of the CTA should be reassessed and more clearly articulating how technical advisory services will be delivered to the program.
- b. **Monitoring and evaluation:** Monitoring and evaluation at the program level should be specifically assigned to one or more staff or advisors to the national project, and the TORs for these positions should be revised to reflect monitoring and evaluation responsibilities.
- c. **Knowledge management:** Certain knowledge management functions, e.g., preparing case studies and organizing national level stakeholder workshops or peer reviews, should be better coordinated among the individual projects.

***State Forestry Administration (SFA) should share in facilitating improved cross-project collaboration***

The SFA is best positioned, both in terms of their institutional mandate and their role of executing agency for the national project, to help facilitate improvement of performance at the national and subnational level, and to help enhance cross-project collaboration.



**Recommendation No. 2:** The coordinating and executing roles of the SFA at the program level should be enhanced through administrative approaches, including convening meetings with the provincial forestry bureaus; approving and implementing the policies, guidelines, and standards developed by national project; and more actively participating in the monitoring and evaluation of achievements produced by the individual projects.

***Work planning for provincial projects not sufficiently reflecting enabling outputs from national project***

Certain enabling outputs under the national project are delayed, and there is limited time available for the provincial projects to benefit from these deliverables. Some of the key enabling outputs include development of a methodology for valuation of wetland ecosystem services, establishment of occupational competency standards for PA staff, adapting the ecosystem health index (EHI), formulation of wetland restoration guidelines, etc.

**Recommendation No. 3:** An extraordinary meeting of the Programmatic Steering Committee should be convened, to agree upon corrective actions for expediting enabling outputs on the national project. The PSC meeting should be followed by a workshop joined by all 7 individual projects, including the Poyang Lake one, in order to discuss the results of the midterm reviews and associated management responses, and integrating the enabling outputs on the national project into the work plans of the provincial projects.

***Outdated baselines and inconsistencies between the indicative program level strategic results framework and the national project level results framework should be corrected***

The baseline figures and end of program targets for protected area expansion are outdated, not reflecting the results of the second national wetlands survey, which was completed over the time period of 2009-2013 but only published in 2015. For the MSL program, this timeframe is a more appropriate baseline. There are also inconsistencies between the indicative strategic results framework presented in the program framework document and the results framework on the national project.

**Recommendation No. 4:** Baseline information on the types and areas of wetlands should be adjusted to the results of the second national wetlands survey, end of program targets should be reassessed accordingly, and the strategic results framework of the national project should be adjusted according to revisions in baselines.

***The delay in implementing the Poyang Lake project is impacting the coherence of the program***

Implementation of the Poyang Lake project, which is being implemented by the FAO, has not yet started, although GEF CEO approval was granted in September 2015. Poyang Lake is an important wetlands ecosystem in the country, and the delay of this project is impacting the coherence of the MSL program.

**Recommendation No. 5:** The UNDP, or rather the UN Resident Representative, could be more proactive in advocating for the FAO to start implementation of the Poyang Lake project as soon as possible.

***Relatively low financial delivery by midterm***

The cumulative financial delivery of the 6 individual projects stands at 35% by midterm, represented as 30 June 2016. Delivery rates are improving on the projects, but considering the UNDP policy on prohibiting time extensions for GEF financed projects, there is a risk that allocated resources will not be disbursed in time.

**Recommendation No. 6:** Special attention should be placed on ensuring financial delivery is sufficiently high during the second half of the program.

## **Lessons Learned**

### ***A multi-focal project might more conducive to the integrated approaches required to achieve improved conservation and management of wetland protected areas***

The GEF is encouraging more projects implemented under multiple focal areas, for example biodiversity and climate change. This approach has proved generally more conducive to the integrated approaches required to achieve improved biodiversity conservation.

### ***Achieving mainstreaming requires sharing implementation responsibilities among relevant sectors***

Achieving biodiversity mainstreaming is a formidable task, requiring engagement from stakeholders across production sectors and extending to non-governmental civil and business enterprises. In order to achieve meaningful mainstreaming results, project implementation responsibilities and budgets should be shared by relevant sectors.

### ***Mutually supportive activities require proactive coordination***

Coordinating mutually supportive activities requires keen oversight even on single projects. For a multiple project modality, in such a large country as China, coordination of such activities needs to be particularly proactive. Critical path methodology should be applied to work planning, identifying which activities are critical in terms of meeting end of project targets and where to focus resource allocation on inter-dependent activities in order to ensure these targets are achieved

### ***Cofinancing needs to be better aligned with project activities***

Although, the cumulative level of cofinancing realized by midterm exceeds the sum of pledged cofinancing for the 6 individual projects, there has been limited alignment of project activities with the cofinancing activities. A new UNDP template for project documents for GEF financed projects initiated this year, 2016, aims to address this disconnect at the project preparation phase. Cofinancing partners need to be more involved in project preparation for genuine alignment to be realized.

### ***Cofinancing leveraged after project approval should be better captured and reported***

Among the 6 individual projects there were no additional sources of cofinancing identified. Clearly there are other complementary governmental, donor-funded, civil society, and enterprise level projects and initiatives that are running. Stakeholder engagement planning should be strengthened in this regard, and cofinancing realized after project approval should be better captured and reported, e.g., in the annual project implementation reviews (PIRs).

### ***Policy advances more likely to achieve at the subnational level than at the national level***

Achieving policy advances at the national level in China, particularly across more than one sector, requires a lot of time and the political decision timeframes do not match typical GEF project or programmatic horizons. Setting targets for new policies or regulations at the national level should coincide with the requisite stakeholder involvement and sufficient resources and time should be allocated. The likelihood of realizing policy advances at the subnational level, county, prefectural, or possibly even provincial is higher. Subnational governments in China are often leading the way in passing certain regulations and implementing new approaches promoted by the central government.

## Abbreviations and Acronyms

Exchange Rate, CNY:USD (15 June 2016) = 6.5897

|        |   |
|--------|---|
| ADB    | Asian Development Bank  |
| APR    | Annual Project Report   |
| AWP    | Annual Work Plan  |
| BD     | Biodiversity  |
| BSAP   | Biodiversity Strategy and Action Plan   |
| CAS    | Chinese Academy of Science  |
| CBD    | Convention on Biological Diversity  |
| CBPF   | China Biodiversity Partnership and Framework for Action                                 |
| CCICED | China Council for International Cooperation on Environment and Development              |
| CDR    | Combined Delivery Report  |
| CHM    | Clearing House Mechanism (under CBD)  |
| CI     | Conservation International  |
| CITES  | Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species                                 |
| CNY    | Chinese yuan  |
| CPAP   | Country Programme Action Plan   |
| CTA    | Chief Technical Advisor   |
| DG     | Director General  |
| EA     | Executing Agency  |
| ECBP   | EU-China Biodiversity Programme   |
| EIA    | Environmental Impact Assessment   |
| EHI    | Ecosystem Health Index  |
| EU     | European Union  |
| FAO    | Food and Agriculture Organization of United Nations                                     |
| GDP    | Gross Domestic Product  |
| GEF    | Global Environment Facility   |
| GIS    | Geographic Information System   |
| GIZ    | <i>Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit</i>                          |
| IA     | Implementing Agency   |
| IAS    | Invasive alien species  |
| IUCN   | International Union for the Conservation of Nature                                      |
| KAP    | Knowledge, Attitudes, and Practices   |
| M&E    | Monitoring and evaluation   |
| MEP    | Ministry of Environmental Protection  |
| METT   | Management Effectiveness Tracking Tool  |
| MoA    | Ministry of Agriculture   |
| MoF    | Ministry of Finance   |
| MoU    | Memorandum of Understanding   |
| MSL    | Main streams of life (name of the GEF-financed Wetland PA System Strengthening Program) |
| MTEF   | Medium Term Expenditure Framework   |
| MTR    | Midterm Review  |
| NBSAP  | National Biodiversity Strategy and Action Plan  |
| NIM    | National Implementation Modality  |
| NGO    | Non-Governmental Organization   |
| NNR    | National Nature Reserve   |
| NPC    | National People’s Congress  |

|         |  |
|---------|--|
| NPD     | National Project Director                                      |
| NR      | Nature Reserve   |
| OFP     | Operational Focal Point  |
| OWCM    | Office of Wetland Conservation and Management (within the SFA) |
| PA      | Protected Area   |
| PFD     | Program Framework Document                                     |
| PIMS    | Project Information Management System                          |
| PIR     | Project Implementation Review                                  |
| PM      | Project Manager  |
| PMO     | Project Management Office                                      |
| PNR     | Provincial Nature Reserve                                      |
| PPG     | Project Preparation Grant (GEF)                                |
| PSC     | Project Steering Committee                                     |
| QPR     | Quarterly Progress Report                                      |
| RTA     | Regional Technical Advisor                                     |
| SFA     | State Forestry Administration                                  |
| SBAA    | Standard Basic Assistance Agreement                            |
| SGP     | Small Grants Program (UNDP-GEF)                                |
| SMART   | Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Relevant and Time-bound      |
| SRF     | Strategic Results Framework                                    |
| STAR    | System for Transparent Allocation of Resources (GEF)           |
| TBD     | To Be Determined   |
| TGD     | Three Gorges Dam   |
| TE      | Terminal Evaluation  |
| TOR     | Terms of Reference   |
| TNC     | The Nature Conservancy   |
| TRAC    | Thematic Resources Assigned from the Core (UNDP)               |
| UNCCD   | United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification            |
| UNDP    | United Nations Development Programme                           |
| UNDP CO | UNDP Country Office  |
| UNFCC   | United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change          |
| UNCBD   | United Nations Convention on Biological Diversity              |
| UNDAF   | United Nations Development Assistance Framework                |
| UNEP    | United Nations Environment Programme                           |
| USD     | United States Dollar   |
| WB      | World Bank   |
| WWF     | World Wide Fund for Nature                                     |

## 1. INTRODUCTION

### 1.1. Purpose of the Review

The objective of the midterm review (MTR) was to gain an independent analysis of the progress mid-way through the program. The review also focuses on strategy, progress towards results, summary of implementation and adaptive management of the individual projects, and the likelihood that the envisaged global environmental benefits will be realized and whether the program results will be sustained after closure.

### 1.2. Scope and Methodology

Separate midterm reviews were completed by three teams of consultants: Team 1 covered the national and Daxing'anling projects, Team 2 covered the Xinjiang (Altai Mountains) and Anhui projects, and Team 3 completed the Hainan and Hubei projects. The synthesis report presented herein is a consolidated summary of the 6 individual MTRs, and an assessment of results toward the strategic results framework set forth in the program framework document (PFD) for the MSL program. The synthesis report was prepared by Team 1, consisting of one national consultant and one international consultant/team leader.

The overall approach and methodology of the MTRs followed the guidelines outlined in the UNDP Guidance for Conducting midterm reviews (MTRs) of UNDP-supported, GEF-financed Projects<sup>1</sup>. Desk reviews were made of available documentation; missions were carried out by the teams to personally interview implementation and beneficiary stakeholders of the projects, and field visits were made to project demonstration sites. The findings of the MTRs were recorded in individual reports, which also included recommendations for enhancing project performance over the course of the second half of the implementation timeframes.

### 1.3. Ethics

The review was conducted in accordance with the UNEG Ethical Guidelines for Evaluators, and the review team has signed the Evaluation Consultant Code of Conduct Agreement form (**Annex 4**). In particular, the MTR team ensures the anonymity and confidentiality of individuals who were interviewed and surveyed. In respect to the UN Declaration of Human Rights, results are presented in a manner that clearly respects stakeholders' dignity and self-worth.

### 1.4. Limitations

The individual reviews were carried out according to the Terms of Reference (see **Annex 5**), over the period of June-August 2016. Reporting was finalized in September 2016).

There were no limitations with respect to language, as the MTR teams included a national consultant, a Chinese native, and independent interpreters supported the MTR interviews. Interviews were made with the key project stakeholders during the mission, and with most of the contractors who have been appointed by the PMOs. For the provincial projects, all of the demonstration sites were visited by the MTR teams.

As the Poyang Lake project, implemented by FAO, has not yet started due to delays in reaching agreement regarding value added tax issues, the midterm review does not cover this project. The MTR team leader had an opportunity to interview FAO representatives during the debriefing held on 19 July at the UNDP office in Beijing.

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<sup>1</sup> Guidance for Conducting Midterm Reviews of UNDP-Supported, GEF-Financed Projects, 2014, UNDP-GEF Directorate.

## 1.5. Rating Scales

The following rating scales were applied in the review:

### Ratings for progress towards results:

|                                       |  |
|---------------------------------------|--|
| <b>Highly Satisfactory (HS)</b>       | Project is expected to achieve or exceed all its major global environmental objectives, and yield substantial global environmental benefits, without major shortcomings. The project can be presented as “good practice”.  |
| <b>Satisfactory (S)</b>               | Project is expected to achieve most of its major global environmental objectives, and yield satisfactory global environmental benefits, with only minor shortcomings.  |
| <b>Moderately Satisfactory (MS)</b>   | Project is expected to achieve most of its major relevant objectives but with either significant shortcomings or modest overall relevance. Project is expected not to achieve some of its major global environmental objectives or yield some of the expected global environment benefits. |
| <b>Moderately Unsatisfactory (MU)</b> | Project is expected to achieve its major global environmental objectives with major shortcomings or is expected to achieve only some of its major global environmental objectives.   |
| <b>Unsatisfactory (U)</b>             | Project is expected not to achieve most of its major global environment objectives or to yield any satisfactory global environmental benefits.   |
| <b>Highly Unsatisfactory (U)</b>      | The project has failed to achieve, and is not expected to achieve, any of its major global environment objectives with no worthwhile benefits.   |

### Ratings for project implementation and adaptive management:

|                                       |  |
|---------------------------------------|--|
| <b>Highly Satisfactory (HS)</b>       | Implementation of all seven components – management arrangements, work planning, finance and co-finance, project-level monitoring and evaluation systems, stakeholder engagement, reporting, and communications – is leading to efficient and effective project implementation and adaptive management. The project can be presented as “good practice”. |
| <b>Satisfactory (S)</b>               | Implementation of most of the seven components is leading to efficient and effective project implementation and adaptive management except for only few that are subject to remedial action.   |
| <b>Moderately Satisfactory (MS)</b>   | Implementation of some of the seven components is leading to efficient and effective project implementation and adaptive management, with some components requiring remedial action.   |
| <b>Moderately Unsatisfactory (MU)</b> | Implementation of some of the seven components is not leading to efficient and effective project implementation and adaptive, with most components requiring remedial action.  |
| <b>Unsatisfactory (U)</b>             | Implementation of most of the seven components is not leading to efficient and effective project implementation and adaptive management.   |
| <b>Highly Unsatisfactory (HU)</b>     | Implementation of none of the seven components is leading to efficient and effective project implementation and adaptive management.   |

Sustainability was evaluated across four risk dimensions: financial risks, socio-economic risks, institutional framework and governance risks, and environmental risks. According to UNDP-GEF evaluation guidelines, all risk dimensions of sustainability are critical: i.e., the overall rating for sustainability is not higher than the lowest-rated dimension. Sustainability was rated according to a 4-point scale, as outlined below:

### Ratings for sustainability (one overall rating):

|                                 |   |
|---------------------------------|---|
| <b>Likely (L)</b>               | Negligible risks to sustainability, with key Outcomes on track to be achieved by the project’s closure and expected to continue into the foreseeable future |
| <b>Moderately Likely (ML)</b>   | Moderate risks, but expectations that at least some Outcomes will be sustained due to the progress towards results on Outcomes at the Midterm Review        |
| <b>Moderately Unlikely (MU)</b> | Significant risk that key Outcomes will not carry on after project closure, although some outputs and activities should carry on                            |
| <b>Unlikely (U)</b>             | Severe risks that project Outcomes as well as key outputs will not be sustained   |

## 2. PROGRAM DESCRIPTION

### 2.1. Development Context

Apart from their rich biodiversity value, wetlands play a vital role in terms of national development in China, underpinning the supply and quality of water for a very large and growing population, agriculture, fisheries, and industries, and provide many other key ecosystem services including recreation, flood control, nutrient cycling, and climate regulation.

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

The program design was aligned with several national policies and programmes, including the 12th National Five-year Plan (2011-2015) which urged environmental protection and sustainable growth by enhancing “ecological conservation and restoration”. The 13<sup>th</sup> Five-year Plan (2016-2020), currently under development, has further underscored the linkage between environmental conservation and socio-economic development. The National Biodiversity Conservation Strategy and Action Plan (NBCSAP 2011-2030) also attaches high priority to wetlands conservation and PA protection.

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

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

The incremental value of the GEF funding was envisaged to secure critically important biodiversity and deliver global benefits including the strengthening of the sub-network of wetland PAs, thus enhancing conservation and management of the habitats of endangered species and many hundreds of endemic mammal, bird, reptile, amphibian, and plant species. In particular, the lake, marshland, riverine, coastal and forest habitats that they occupy will be secured by bringing real protection in place of token (paper) protection within a total of 36 of the 58 WWF terrestrial ecoregions that are recognized in China, including 5 WWF Global 200 Ecoregions.

### 2.2. Problems that the Program Sought to Address

Wetland ecosystems in China are under considerable pressure from socioeconomic development. The Government of China has allocated considerable resources for ecological conservation, but there remain substantive barriers in achieving improved protected area management. The three barriers described in the program framework document (PFD) are outlined below – reflecting the circumstances in 2011 when the PFD was developed.

**Barrier 1: Weak systemic and institutional capacity for effective PA management at the national, provincial and local levels**

Systemic Barrier: Management effectiveness is hindered by weaknesses in the legal basis for PA development and management, in particular for wetland PAs. Despite many laws and regulations relating to wildlife protection and management of forests, grasslands and other natural systems, there is no comprehensive law for the establishment of PAs. Also, there are no guidelines tailored for management and zoning of different types of wetland PAs. There is a need for wider categories and more flexible zone options to allow for different levels of naturalness, protection and sustainable utilization to match local conditions and needs.

Represented and Spatial Barrier: Individual wetland PAs are established and exist in isolation without systematic and spatial consideration of effectiveness as wetland PA sub-system. There is no climate change resilience consideration in planning and demarcation of PA boundaries. Accordingly, designation of PAs as different levels of NRs and wetland parks tends to be arbitrary. As a consequence, not all the important types of wetlands are adequately represented in the wetland PA sub-system. Notably, riverine wetlands are severely under-represented.

Institutional Barrier: The wetland areas in China are still faced with the challenges of unwise use, resulting in reduction of natural wetland areas and loss of biodiversity, declining wetland services, and the reduced capacity of wetlands to support socio-economic development and regional ecological security.

Most provincial Forest departments' current institutional capacity to oversee multiple PAs, make sound operational decisions, manage budgets, deploy staff, and monitor performance are not adequate for effective PA management. The Bureaus' themselves are mostly understaffed at provincial and sub-provincial levels. NRs lack capacity and GIS software to undertake effective systems planning or biodiversity monitoring particularly when it comes to wetland biodiversity. PA management is the primary responsibility of field staff that the local governments (prefecture and county) allocate and thus they are under local government control and supervision.

The process of making master plans to justify requests for 'development' investments is well developed. But there is no routine system of developing 'management plans' to define the operational programmes (protection, monitoring, enforcement, visitor use, research, community involvement etc.) that can be approved and ensured funding.

Whilst national NRs often get a disproportionate share of overall PA budgets, most provincial level NRs receive much less funding, though some are extremely valuable and important for biodiversity conservation and provision of ecosystem services. Also, local communities are heavily dependent on resources inside many of the NRs. They remain too isolated from planning, monitoring and management and could be readily involved in several aspects of management.

**Barrier 2: Disconnect between PA planning and management and national development and sectoral planning plus low financial security**

Weak Coordination and Cooperation: At the national level, broad five-year economic development plans and subsidiary sector plans are formulated, and large-scale national programmes and projects, many of which have a significant impact on wetland health, are developed. It is therefore critical to ensure that the national development direction and mega-projects do not adversely affect wetland biodiversity and ecosystem services. Furthermore, coordination between sector agencies is weak resulting in overlaps and inappropriate government projects that are often harmful to the local environment and biodiversity.

Previous mainstreaming projects addressed some aspects of this mainstreaming but in broader landscape terms. They did not focus on integrating the PA system which needs more specific safeguards and management approaches given their biodiversity status and the negative impacts of losing this. Hence, the wetland PAs are still subject to loss or severe degradation due to regional development and sector development activities. National level budget allocation for SFA and PA management will also directly



influence the availability of finance for the wetland PA sub-system and site management, however to date there is no correlation between the budgets and actual management needs of the PA system or sites.

Several government agencies and their subsidiary units at the provincial level, such as agriculture, environmental protection, mining, water resources also operate inside PAs dealing with particular resources or areas under their jurisdiction within the PAs, alongside the local Prefecture and County governments. These institutions have tended to operate independently from the PA management authorities. Sub-provincial governments also plan and implement work inside PAs without due coordination, or consideration to biodiversity conservation.

**Financial Barrier:** An underlying issue behind this disconnect is insufficient understanding of the economic value of wetland biodiversity and ecosystem services and how the loss of these will economically affect various industries and peoples' livelihoods. Although a number of economic valuation studies on natural resources and ecosystems have been carried out in China, there is no clear synthesis to cause major policy shift. The creation of payment for ecosystem services mechanisms has been hindered by the lack of standards for valuation methods and service indicator selection and difficulty in determining service providers and receivers due to the complex social and economic structure of the country.

Related to the above, underfunding for actual management activities of wetland PAs is an important factor for suboptimal management effectiveness of wetland PAs. As described above, wetland PAs, like other PAs, are mainly funded by provincial governments. These funds are mainly allocated to national and provincial NRs and very little goes to local NRs to the extent that these NRs often face difficulties even maintaining staff salaries. SFA currently does not have the capacity or the tools to identify how much it actually costs to adequately or optimally manage the wetland PA sub-system and the PA system as a whole

### **Barrier 3: Insufficient availability and accessibility of information and data and insufficient awareness**

The two barriers listed above are compounded by the lack of awareness about the importance of biodiversity in maintaining vital ecosystem services plus poor access to up to date and accurate data on biodiversity and PAs. No formal education and discipline on wetlands has been set up in universities in the country, resulting in the thin resource base of wetland data collectors and analysts. Even where data exists, lack of access and sharing prevents it being used for effective planning of PA systems, developments that might adversely impact PAs and biodiversity and planning of mitigation and adaptations strategies in face of changing climate. Also, Knowledge, Attitude and Practices surveys (KAPs) undertaken by the closing ECBP project confirm that understanding of the concept and importance of biodiversity in China remains very poor both among the general public but also among government planners and decision makers.

SFA already maintains an extensive database on wetlands in China; however the database is not user friendly and not openly accessible to the external users for planning and decision making. Limited access to best practices and technical information also hinders optimal performance and there is plenty of room to greatly improve the availability, accessibility and flow of relevant know-how and successful wetland management cases around the country which were achieved through government and donor – funded initiatives.

## **2.3. Program Description and Strategy**

The incremental support provided through the GEF funding was designed to remove the barriers described above, by supporting national and subnational systems for managing wetland protected areas (PAs) covering 48,962,400 ha, improving the spatial design of the wetland PA sub-system and bringing an additional 1.7 million ha under protection, ensuring better terrestrial wetland ecosystem representation and filling ecosystem coverage gaps. This was envisaged to increase the resilience of the sub-system in the face of a fast changing climate by maintaining functional connectivity at landscape level, addressing non climate change related anthropogenic stressors that are undermining wetland resilience, and ensuring adequate protection of upstream non-wetland habitats such as forests and grasslands that serve as vital catchments for the wetlands themselves.

The program also aimed to consolidate and strengthen the enabling legal, planning and institutional framework for effective management of PAs with globally significant wetlands; and strengthening the capacity (strategies, tools, mechanisms, knowledge, skills and resources) to support the operational management and financing of wetland PAs system at the national, provincial and site levels. Furthermore, the program supports mainstreaming of wetland PAs within sector practices so as to reduce pressures on wetland PAs and making them more sustainable and resilient in the face of climate change.

The MSL program is being implemented through six (6) provincial level projects covering 7 provinces, as the Daxing'anling region extends in the Inner Mongolia autonomous region and Heilongjiang province. The provincial projects are being implemented in diverse wetland ecosystems across the country, as shown below in the country map in **Exhibit 4**.



**Exhibit 4: Map showing location of projects within the MSL Programme**

## 2.4. Implementation Arrangements

The individual projects are being run under a national implementation modality (NIM). The State Forestry Administration (SFA) is the national implementing partner, or executing agency, for the national project, which was designed to take a coordinating role for the provincial projects and delivering national level institutional strengthening and knowledge management. Provincial governments are acting as executing agencies in the Xinjiang autonomous region (Altai Mountains), Anhui province, Hainan province, and Hubei province. Consistent with the unique administrative arrangements for the Daxing'anling region, the SFA is

the executing agency for the project there, which covers the Inner Mongolia autonomous region and Heilongjiang province.

UNDP is the lead GEF agency for the program, providing technical and administrative support, operating in line with the Standard Basic Assistance Agreement between UNDP and the Government of China. UNDP is overseeing 6 of the 7 individual projects, and FAO is the GEF agency for the Poyang Lake project. As of June 2016, implementation of the Poyang Lake project had not yet started.

## 2.5. Program Timing and Milestones

The program framework document (PFD) was submitted to the GEF Secretariat in September 2011. The duration of the program was indicated as 84 months. Project identification forms (PIFs) for the 7 individual projects followed, and following approval of the PIFs the project preparation grants were issued to develop the project documents for each project.

The project documents for the 5-year duration individual projects were approved by the Ministry of Finance, signifying the official start of the projects, starting in June 2013 for the Hainan project and continuing until March 2014 for the Hubei project. The Poyang Lake project, implemented by FAO, obtained GEF CEO approval in September 2014, but the project document had not been approved as of 30 June 2016 by the Ministry of Finance, due to continued negotiations regarding value added tax issues.

## 2.6. Main Stakeholders

According to the PFD, the main stakeholders and their roles within the program are indicated below.

| Stakeholder                                     | Roles and Responsibilities   |
|---|--|
| National People's Congress                      | The highest organ of state power; responsible for the legal framework and revision of laws and national regulations; approves national development plans.  |
| State Council                                   | Executive body of the NPC responsible for formulation and administration of plans and decisions of central government including responsibilities and coordination of ministerial functions.  |
| Ministry of Finance                             | Operational Focal Point (OFP). Coordination and implementation of GEF projects.  |
| GEF Secretariat                                 | Approval, financing and supervision for the programme.   |
| UNDP  | UN Development Agency focusing on capacity building for environmental protection, democratic governance and poverty reduction. It has a large biodiversity and ecosystem programme and a long-term presence in China. The GEF Programme Coordination Agency for this Programme and the GEF Implementing Agency for six projects under the Programme. |
| FAO   | Technical agency for UN in agriculture, forestry and fisheries sectors. Develop and supervise Poyang Lake Wetlands Project.  |
| Legislative Affairs Office of the State Council | Responsible for coordination of legislation and regulation functions under the State Council, including the regulation of nature reserve management and regulation of wetland conservation.  |
| UNEP, WB, ADB                                   | GEF implementing agencies and partners in the CBPF umbrella programme for CBD actions for biodiversity in China. WB manages another GEF wetlands project in Xinjiang (Lake Aibi) that should be closely coordinated.   |
| Ministry of Environmental Protection            | Coordination of environmental issues, pollution and CBD implementation and reporting, execution of CBPF. Processing and coordination of drafting new legislation. Must be involved in any proposed regulatory revisions.   |
| State Forestry Administration                   | Responsible for forest lands, most of China's nature reserves, wildlife issues, wildlife trade (CITES), wetlands protection (Ramsar Convention), drafting of departmental level regulations especially wetlands.   |
| National Development and Reform Commission      | The national development planning agency and responsible for macroeconomic policy and management. Examines and approve major construction project. Responsible for promotion of the strategy of sustainable development; to undertake comprehensive coordination of energy saving and emission reduction. The focal agency for the UNFCCC.           |
| Ministry of Water Resources                     | Responsible for water security. Important stakeholder with high interest in terms of water quality, flood control and other ecological functions. Manages 3 national wetland NRs and 8 provincial wetland NRs.   |

| Stakeholder   | Roles and Responsibilities  |
|---|---|
| Ministry of Agriculture   | Responsible for agriculture and grasslands. Major stakeholder in terms of water use and a source of agricultural water pollution; responsible for freshwater fisheries. Should mainstream biodiversity and PA protection within their plans and avoid causing pollution of wetland sites. Can help monitor wetland biodiversity on agricultural lands adjacent to NRs. Need cooperation in controlling fishing within sustainable limits. |
| Ministry of Land and Resources  | Responsible for protection and rational use of land and resources in particular geological resources for mining. Manage one wetland NRs.  |
| State Oceanic Administration  | Responsible for marine fisheries and ecosystem management, as well as marine NR management.   |
| China Three Gorges Corporation  | Responsible for management of 3 Gorges dam including rehabilitation and ecological protection of affected catchments and downstream ecosystems, including water levels of Poyang and Honghu Lakes, provide environmental flows by TGD Operations.   |
| Provincial Bureaus of Finance   | Coordination and provision of provincial co-financing of provincial level projects under the same framework.  |
| Provincial Forestry Departments - Heilongjiang, Inner Mongolia, Anhui, Jiangxi, Hubei, Hainan | Planning and management of wetland PAs; project execution at provincial level.  |
| GIZ, Wetlands International, WWF, TNC and domestic level NGOs                                 | Involvement in wetlands and biodiversity projects. Available for technical support, consultancies, training and monitoring. High capacity for grass roots action with local communities. GIZ undertake a parallel project at 4 sites that will be closely coordinated with this programme.  |
| Civil-society organization (CSOs)   | CSO participation will be pivotal in implementing the provincial level projects (particularly with regard to the planned community co-management interventions). CSOs will also play a key role in supporting awareness and education.  |
| Chinese Academy of Sciences, several specialized and regional institutes                      | Technical expertise on hydrological, botanical and zoological aspects.  |
| Management Bureaus of individual model protected areas  | Involved in project design. Responsible for site-level execution and monitoring.  |
| Local communities at county and township levels   | Direct beneficiaries of alternate livelihood interventions and increasingly consulted during planning processes and involved in co-management and monitoring.   |

## 2.7. Program Budget and Finance

The indicative GEF financing for the MSL program was USD 23,010,915, with indicative cofinancing exceeding a 6:1 ratio, at USD 142,600,000, as broken down below in **Exhibit 5**.

| Exhibit 5: Breakdown of Indicative Program Financing and Cofinancing                |                          |                        |
|---|--------------------------|------------------------|
| Component   | Indicative GEF Financing | Indicative Cofinancing |
| <b>Component 1:</b> Effectiveness management effectiveness of wetland PA sub-system | USD 11,968,716           | USD 98,924,000         |
| <b>Component 2:</b> Mainstreaming wetland PAs in development and sectoral planning  | USD 7,830,000            | USD 27,000,000         |
| <b>Component 3:</b> Knowledge Management and Lesson Sharing                         | USD 2,062,199            | USD 10,700,000         |
| <b>Program Management Costs</b>   | USD 1,150,000            | USD 5,976,000          |
| <b>Total:</b>   | <b>USD 23,010,915</b>    | <b>USD 142,600,000</b> |

Source: Program Framework Document

The actual amounts of the GEF project implementation grants and committed cofinancing are recorded in the individual project documents. For the 7 individual MSL projects, including the one implemented by FAO, the cumulative totals of the GEF implementation grants and cofinancing were USD 22,977,442 and USD 144,297,089, respectively. These figures are slightly different than the indicative ones in Exhibit 5, taken from the PFD.

### 3. FINDINGS

#### 3.1. Summaries of Project Level Midterm Reviews

Summaries of the MTRs completed for the 6 individual projects under the MSL program that are being implemented by UNDP are presented below.

##### **National Project MTR**

Executing Agency: State Forestry Administration (SFA)

GEF Grant: USD 2,654,771

Amount Disbursed by Midterm (30 June 2016): USD 861,917

##### **Strengths and Major Achievements:**

- Highly relevant project closely aligned with national priorities. The awareness of the importance of wetlands in China has increased since the project was formulated in 2011-2012, for example, the promotion of the concept of ecological civilization has been mainstreamed across all productive sectors in the country. The results of the second national wetlands survey also spotlights how wetland conservation and management are intertwined with socio-economic development.
- Strong country ownership. The executing agency for the project, the State Forestry Administration (SFA), is responsible for 75-80% of the protected areas in China. Senior officials from the Office of Wetland Conservation and Management (OWCM) of the SFA have been actively involved in the project, extending back to the preparation phase and continuing throughout implementation. The amount of government co-financing realized by midterm is reported at USD 7,692,308, slightly less than 50% of the USD 15,900,000 pledged at project approval.
- Timely opportunity for adopting good practices across the wetland PA sub-system in the country. The project is working closely with the SFA/OWCM on a number of good practices and policies, with the potential for adoption across the wetland PA sub-system in the country. For example, the SFA guidelines on wetland conservation and management that are being developed would be applicable to other sectors once approved, representing a framework for reducing unsustainable development and promoting wise use of wetland areas.
- Increasing public awareness on wetland issues. Project stakeholders have wisely reached a decision to allocate resources from the GEF grant originally earmarked for database development to support establishment of a public information management system on wetland issues. Such a system could potentially significantly contribute to efforts aimed at increasing public awareness on wetlands. This seems to be a more sensible use of available resources, compared to developing a database for use within the SFA/OWCM.
- Good collaborative implementation practices. Although the individual projects within the MSL Programme are being implemented separately, the national project has an indirect oversight role and they have adapted effective collaborative implementation practices in this regard.

##### **Weaknesses:**

- Ineffective coordination and technical oversight on some issues. Although the project has done a reasonably good job at procurement, selecting technically competent contractors through open tendering processes, coordination and technical oversight has been ineffective on some issues. For example, several of the interviewed contractors were largely unaware of the end goals of the project outputs that their work is contributing to, and some of the figures presented in their output deliverables have not been sufficiently quality controlled.
- Insufficient guidance from SFA/OWCM on certain outputs. The SFA/OWCM is actively engaged in the project, but the agency could be providing more strategic guidance to the implementation of

some of the key outputs. The project document was prepared approximately 4 years ago, and there have been substantive developments in management and conservation of wetlands in China since that time.

- Weak cross-collaboration on technical outputs. Several of the project outputs are mutually supportive, but there have been missed opportunities at facilitating cross collaboration among the output level contractors. For instance, the work on valuation of wetland ecosystem services could be complementarily linked to the separate contract focusing on sustainable financing mechanisms. Similarly, the project efforts on developing occupational competency standards for wetland PA staff have not been coordinated with the training activities that a different contractor has been delivering.
- Insufficient emphasis on advocacy. The national project is front and center within the MSL programme, distinctively positioned to provide policy support to the SFA/OWCM on key wetland management and conservation issues. The project has supported the SFA/OWCM with promoting wetland issues, e.g., helping to organizing the annual Wetlands International Day events, but there has been an insufficient emphasis on advocacy. Such advocacy opportunities exist both on national and international platforms.
- Training lacks strategic focus. The capacity building objective of the project underpins the long-term sustainability of the delivered results, with the aim of providing foundational guidance towards sensible management and conservation of the valuable wetland ecosystem goods and services in China. The training activities, however, lack strategic focus, with no formal curriculum, no linkage to the occupational competency standards the project is promoting, the training events have been organized as technical seminars with no mechanism on assessing knowledge retention and no certification of successful completion awarded.
- Unclear and outdated knowledge management plan. The overall knowledge management plan is outdated, e.g., does not reflect the decision to have the project focus on supporting the development of a public information system for information on wetlands, and the information dissemination methodology, including the project website, could likely be more effective if more current social media platforms are better utilized/focused on. Gender issues should be spotlighted on the public information system to be developed with project support.
- Financial delivery has been low. As of 30 June 2016, midterm of the project, USD 861,917 of the USD 2,654,771 of the GEF grant have been incurred, representing a financial delivery of 32%. The generally low delivery to date warrants diligent oversight, in order to ensure that the project efficiently utilizes the available resources within the timeframe of the project
- The strategic results framework does not fully reflect the added value of the project. Certain indicators and associated end-of-project targets are outdated, and others do not reflect the actual added value of the project

### **Daxing'anling (DXAL) Project MTR**

Executing Agency: State Forestry Administration (SFA)

GEF Grant: USD 3,544,679

Amount Disbursed by Midterm (30 June 2016): USD 1,120,919

#### **Strengths and Major Achievements:**

- Timely project with respect to the logging ban imposed in the DXAL region. Daxing'anling was one of the last regions in China where logging was allowed. Restrictions were gradually imposed over the past 20 years, and a comprehensive ban was initiated in 2014, the first full year of project implementation. With conservation now the primary mandate of the forestry sector, a paradigm shift in strategic thinking is required among stakeholders tasked with management of the vast

tracks of protected areas in the DXAL region. The project is well positioned to support the requisite institutional and individual capacity building necessary for safeguarding the valuable DXAL ecosystems while managing sustainable use of the ecosystem goods and services for the benefit of the communities formerly highly dependent upon timber resources.

- Potential for significant global environmental benefits. The extensive wetland ecosystems of the DXAL region are host to a number of rare and endangered species, provide important protection of headwaters of beneficial watersheds, and play a crucial role with respect to carbon dynamics. Realizing the envisaged enhanced protection of these valuable ecosystems would deliver significant global environmental benefits. By 30 June 2016, roughly the midterm of the project, available reports indicate that the DXAL PA system has expanded by 484,000 hectares (ha), representing 44% of the 1.1 million ha target, but 62% of the target for natural wetlands. In addition to the expansion of the PA system, a reported 137,553 ha of PAs have been upgraded to national status by midterm, and 117,695 ha upgraded to provincial status. Supporting the Hanma National Nature Reserve in applying for inclusion onto the Ramsar Convention's List of Wetlands of International Importance is another example of how the project is contributing to achieving these benefits.
- Clear evidence of application of skills and equipment delivered by the project. Based upon observational evidence during the MTR mission and documentary evidence, such as automatic camera footage and monitoring reports, capacities of the demonstration PAs have been strengthened through delivery of training and physical monitoring assets. At the Genheyuan Wetland Park, for example, the project has provided 33 automatic cameras and other monitoring equipment, such as GPS units, portable cameras, and water testing instrumentation. Local staff members of 11 PAs in both Heilongjiang and Inner Mongolia have been trained on the application of the ecosystem health index (EHI), and midterm scores of the EHI of these PAs show notable increases since baselines were made in 2012.
- Local ownership is high, with cofinancing contribution >50% of committed sums at midterm. This is the first time a GEF financed project has been implemented in the DXAL region, and local stakeholders in Heilongjiang and Inner Mongolia are keen on the opportunity provided, including learning from international best practice. One line of evidence that demonstrates the level of local ownership is the amount of cofinancing contributions made by midterm: in Heilongjiang USD 6,043,571 in grant cofinancing has been realized by midterm, representing 76% of the USD 8,000,000 total pledged; and in Inner Mongolia, 78% of the committed USD 8,000,000, or USD 6,254,875 in cofinancing has been realized by midterm
- Good opportunity for facilitating collaborative management with indigenous communities. The DXAL region is home to a few indigenous communities, including the Ewenki people, who have lived close to the land, herding reindeer for more than 400 years. Participatory management of nature resources, through applying traditional knowledge can contribute significantly to maintaining and restoring ecological integrity, as well as contribute to community well-being through more equitable access and benefit-sharing of ecosystem goods and services. This project offers a good opportunity for facilitating better integration of traditional knowledge into the management regime of the DXAL PA system.

#### **Weaknesses:**

- Local beneficiaries disconnected from Outcomes 1 and 2. Involvement of local beneficiaries, specifically the Daxing'anling Group Cooperation in Heilongjiang and Inner Mongolia provinces, with respect to the activities under Outcomes 1 and 2 has been unsatisfactory. Group Cooperation staff members have provided data to the contractors retained by the project under the various technical outputs, but they are largely unaware of the details of the work and are unclear of how the deliverables the contractors are working on are aligned to the strategic priorities of their organizations.

- Training lacks strategic focus. The training activities lacked strategic focus, with no formal curriculum, no linkage to the occupational competency standards the project is promoting, the training events have been organized as technical seminars with no mechanism on assessing knowledge retention and no certification of successful completion awarded.
- Difficult execution from central PMO. This is the first occasion when GEF financed projects have been implemented for the DXAL region. For this reason, the decision to have SFA act as executing agency was sensible, because of the limited experience and capacity for project execution, and also because the DXAL forest region is directly under the SFA's jurisdiction. The downside to this arrangement has been a general lack of local ownership and efficiency shortcomings associated with managing a project in a remote location from a central project management office based in Beijing.
- Ineffective coordination on some issues. Several of the project outputs are mutually supportive, but there have been missed opportunities at facilitating cross collaboration among the output level contractors. For instance, the work on valuation of wetland ecosystem services could be complementarily linked to the separate contract on development of business plans for the two demonstration sites. Wetland restoration at the demonstration sites should be referencing the restoration guidelines being developed under the national project. Similarly, the project efforts on developing occupational competency standards for wetland PA staff have not been coordinated with the training activities that a different contractor has been delivering.
- Insufficient resources and focus allocated for promotion of new jobs, regarding sustainable use of DXAL ecosystem goods and services. As a result of the comprehensive logging plan imposed in 2014, a large number of forestry sector workers were rendered unemployed or under-employed. One of the objective level performance indicators on the project is creation of new jobs for local residents in activities involving sustainable use of DXAL ecosystem goods and services. Although there has been an increase of 413 new jobs created by midterm, there are only limited activities funded by the project to promote this objective. A USD 28,000 contract was concluded in June 2016 to develop a landscape business plan, which is slated to be completed by the end of 2016. In the opinion of the MTR team, this level of resource allocation is not consistent with the scale of the issue at hand.
- Biodiversity mainstreaming not sufficiently inclusive in Inner Mongolia. Biodiversity mainstreaming efforts have been restricted to the cross-sectoral departments within the Group Cooperation Forestry Management Authorities in Heilongjiang and Inner Mongolia. In the case of Heilongjiang, the Group Cooperation also has local governance functions, but this is not the case in Inner Mongolia, where local governance reform is currently underway. The project has not reached out to local government departments in Inner Mongolia.
- Limited strategic guidance on participatory PA management arrangements with indigenous communities. This project offers good opportunities for supporting local beneficiaries in developing and implementing participatory PA management arrangements with indigenous communities, including the Ewenki people, but there has been limited strategic guidance provided.
- PA expansion not sufficiently advocated. Considering the vast expanses of unique boreal forests with globally significant biodiversity, the project has a unique opportunity to deliver significant global environmental benefits. There has been generally insufficient emphasis placed on advocacy with respect to increasing the area under enhanced protection. The MTR team considers this a missed opportunity to take advantage of the GEF funding provided.
- Financial delivery has been low. As of 30 June 2016, midterm of the project, USD 1,120,919 of the USD 3,544,679 of the GEF grant have been incurred, representing a financial delivery of 32%. The generally low delivery to date warrants diligent oversight, in order to ensure that the project efficiently utilizes the available resources within the timeframe of the project



- The strategic results framework does not fully reflect the added value of the project. Certain indicators and associated end-of-project targets are outdated, and others do not reflect the actual added value of the project.

### **Xinjiang (Altai Mountains) Project MTR**

Executing Agency: Forestry Department of Xinjiang Uyghur Autonomous Region

GEF Grant: USD 3,544,679

Amount Disbursed by Midterm (30 June 2016): USD 1,321,531

#### **Strengths and Major Achievements:**

- The planning for over 150,000 ha of new PAs. At provincial level, several new PAs have been established.
- The cessation of mining in the Liangheyuan NR Kuermutu Station area. This includes the ground work landscaping restoration of the former mining areas and the establishment of pilot re-vegetation demonstration areas.
- The strengthening of NR management at Liangheyuan NR. The project to date has been conducted almost solely by the Liangheyuan NR staff, with limited outside support. This has been beneficial for improving the long-term capacity of the NR staff and delivering Outcome 3 to begin with.
- Government co-funding has been mobilized to construct facilities at Liangheyuan NR and other protected wetlands
- The preparation of a draft management plan and the application for NNR status for Liangheyuan NR.
- The PMO with the support of XFD have made a positive contribution to the project's development including: recruitment of a project manager and CTA; procuring and deployed equipment; awarding of seven subcontracts; and has undertaken a range of training activities for staff, other departments and local stakeholders.
- Altai Leading Group becoming active and taking on a role to develop an AMWL Sustainable Development Plan.

#### **Weaknesses:**

- The project design has institutional and management issues with weak coordination between provincial and prefectural components. The PMO lacks sufficient standing within the present government agency line of authority which hampers implementation at lower and higher levels of project design intervention.
- Until recently, there hasn't been a collaborative institution set up to undertake the coordination and management of the project at Outcome 2 level.
- Altai government through Altai Forestry Bureau is responsible for Buergen Beaver NR, Kekesu Wetlands NR, Keketuohai Wetlands NR and Kalameili Ungulate NR. They are not responsible for the demonstration NR - Liangheyuan NR which is under AMFB and XFD. Other project sites such as Ulungur Lake Fishery PA are under the Agricultural Department / Altai Government. Kanas NNR is directly under XFD. This structure negatively affects taking a landscape level approach.
- The PMO lacks sufficient operational funds in order to conduct its tasks. Remoteness of sites, CTA and PMO manager change, and slow movement of funds have made delivery more difficult.
- The engagement with Kazakh herders is very limited, partly due to a lack of direction in understanding the priority of wetland conservation in divergence with traditional and certificated user-rights for seasonal sheep herding.

- The alternative-income activities are limited, largely ineffective and not completely appropriate.
- The fast emerging threat of tourists visiting the Sandaohaizi burial mounds is not being addressed.

### **Anhui Project MTR**

Executing Agency: Forestry Department of Anhui Province

GEF Grant: USD 2,654,771

Amount Disbursed by Midterm (30 June 2016): USD 870,605

#### **Strengths and Major Achievements:**

- Forty percent of the 80,000 ha of new WPA target achieved with the designation of 32,163 ha of new wetland park
- Seven pilot wetland parks have been approved by State Forestry Administration (SFA) to upgrade to national wetland parks.
- Anhui wetland conservation regulations enacted 2016.
- Anhui wetlands master plan (2016-2030) drafted.
- Shengjin Hu NNR has been listed as a Ramsar site.
- Under Chizhou city government, a cross-sector basin management committee has been established for Shengjin Hu basin.
- The preparation of a draft basin management plan for Shengjin Hu basin.
- Creation of a working project structure from province to local government to seven WPAs across a number of jurisdictions.
- Six extra wetland management plans are under preparation (excluding Shengjin Hu) with start dates planned from 2018/19.
- The preparation of a management plan for Shengjin Hu NNR.
- Beginning the development of co-management structures.
- The facilitation of environment awareness campaigns and capacity building.

#### **Weaknesses:**

- The project lacks sufficient standing within the government agencies 'line of authority' which hampers implementation at all levels of project intervention
- The project team lack technical staff to support the implementation of activities
- The Chizhou Shengjin Hu Basin Plan and the Shengjin Hu Management Plan run from 2014-2018, but they both need government technical and financial approval, which may take until end of 2017. This would mean only one year of implementation before they finish. Furthermore, the submission / approval process is not apparent.
- There is a lack of development 'ownership' of the outputs of the project, which affects quality, interest, and as a result, the expected impact of the interventions.
- There are limited plans at province level to ensure that the 80,000 ha of new wetland target by end of 2018 is achieved. It appears that the timeframe is now effectively under the master plan which looks towards 2020 as the benchmark approval time.
- One of the key outputs is to develop conservation demonstrations. These are not really evident in the field, partly due to poor design and flooding and partly due to lack of inventiveness. This is the only indicator / output that has not really got going.

## **Hainan Project MTR**

Executing Agency: Forestry Department of Hainan Province

GEF Grant: USD 2,634,771

Amount Disbursed by Midterm (30 June 2016): USD 909,091

### **Strengths:**

- **Project Design.** The overall framework of the project's design in terms of objective and outcomes to achieve the vision and address the barriers is appropriate. Outcome 3 is perhaps most challenging with respect to integrating and mainstreaming wetland conservation across other sectors.
- **GEF Agency, UNDP.** UNDP CO, as implementing agency, has accumulated much experience in taking a more programmatic approach to its development work and this is manifest from its ability to efficiently and effectively implement 1 national and 5 regional/provincial projects under this wetland PAs Systems Strengthening Programme, providing strong technical support via the services of a highly experienced CTA.
- **Executing Agency.** Ownership of the project by Hainan Forest Department is strong and this applies more widely across provincial government, including its implementing partners, Hainan Ecology & Environment Protection Department and Hainan Marine & Fisheries Department. It is also reflected in the high level of financial commitment to wetland conservation in the province. PMO comprises a small and very committed team, with some good technical ability and experience, and an aptitude for undertaking a prodigious amount of work. The team has developed effective working relationships among its stakeholders, particularly members of the Mangrove Wetland Protected Areas Network.
- **Work Planning and Reporting.** Work planning is undertaken conscientiously and competently. Reporting is extensive and of a good standard.
- **Finance and Cofinance.** Financial management is sound, transparent and to the satisfaction of the auditor. While the disbursement rate is on the low side and needs addressing, it is to PMO's credit that they have been committed to securing value for money and quality deliverables.
- **Project Level M&E Systems:** The Project's monitoring and evaluation system is basically sound and has been applied to good effect, making good use of the Results Framework.

### **Major Achievements:**

- **Progress towards Results, Objective.** Effective management of wetland PAs system has improved: system has expanded by over 30,000 ha (1% increase in terrestrial coverage by PAs) and representation of under-represented biodiversity has potentially increased; management of 5/7 project wetland PAs has improved by at least 50% towards target; and financial sustainability of individual PAs and provincial PAs system improved by over 50% of target – following in the wake of Hainan Provincial Regulation of Nature Reserve Management (adopted 2014), which ensures that Provincial Nature Reserves will be funded from the provincial budget.
- **Progress towards Outcomes Analysis, Outcome 1, Output 1.1.** *Provincial Wetland PAs Strategy, Action Plan & Climate Resilience Plan* and *Financing Plan for Hainan PA System* are key strategic documents, now drafted. Former needs to be mainstreamed across many other sectors; latter needs to feed into *Master Plan for Hainan PA System* (awaiting approval).
- **Progress towards Outcomes Analysis, Outcome 2, Output 2.1.** Mangrove Wetland Protected Area Network is proving to be a hallmark of the project's success, bringing together wetland PAs, generating strong ownership and a sense of camaraderie, and providing a platform for sharing information and experience that cuts across Hainan's three PA agencies (HFD, HEEPD, and HMFDD). The Network increased from the original 7 PAs in the ProDoc to 12 PAs by 2014; and its scope has

widened from mangroves to other wetlands. All members are now committed to monitoring the Environmental Health Index (EHI).

- Progress towards Outcomes Analysis, Outcome 2, Indicator 2.4. Hainan’s Black-faced Spoonbill population at Dongfang increased from 56 in 2015 to 77 in 2016, according to the latest census in January 2016. This is an endangered species with a global population of < 3,000 birds.
- Project Implementation, Finance and Cofinance. By mid-term national and provincial government have distributed US\$ 14,657,627 in cofinancing, already exceeding their commitment of grant funds by over US\$ 1.6 million. From a GEF perspective, the leverage value of its US\$2.6 million grant is nearly sevenfold and likely to be more by the end of the project. This underscores the ever-increasing importance being attached to wetland ecosystems by provincial as well as national government, albeit cofinancing from municipalities and other local levels of government have yet to be realized.
- Project Implementation, Stakeholder Engagement and Partnerships. The project has engaged well with a wide range of stakeholders. Partnerships with some government sectors, research and academic institutions and conservation NGOs have been strengthened, and co-management with communities is beginning to emerge.
- Project Implementation, Communications. The project is amassing a wealth of material, mostly research reports but also guidelines, manuals, videos and photographs on wetland research, conservation and management, all of which is excellent. This now needs to be made readily accessible via the web-based database established in Dongzhaigang NNR and due to become the web-based platform information platform for MWPAN member and the wider public.

**Weaknesses:**

| MTR REPORT<br>(SECTION NO.)                  | WEAKNESSES:<br>REQUIRING CORRECTIVE ACTIONS FOR THE DESIGN, IMPLEMENTATION, MONITORING AND EVALUATION  |
|--|--|
| <b>PROJECT STRATEGY (3.1)</b>                |  |
| <b>Results Framework (3.1.2.)</b>            | Output 2.6 is concerned with co-management and the development of alternative livelihoods. Experience to midterm suggests that there is a design weakness in applying the alternative modality to aquaculture. It is not possible for alternatives, such as bee-keeping and crab-raising, to provide a comparable level of income to those generated from, for example, shrimp and fish farming. Thus, the alternative concept is somewhat misleading in this context.                       |
| <b>Results Framework (3.1.2 and Annex 5)</b> | The Results Framework requires a number of modifications to ensure that it is adequately robust as an M&E tool. Some indicators and targets are weak or poorly defined, some indicators are unnecessarily duplicative, some targets may be unrealistically high, and socio-economic indicators are lacking (notably for improvements in livelihoods).  |
| <b>Results Framework (3.1.2)</b>             | Aquaculture, as practiced around Hainan’s coasts, is highly lucrative because the true environmental costs are not taken into account: shrimp and fish farms are not paying for their damage to the environment. This raises two issues for the project: should it be promoting the introduction of ‘polluter pays’ policies by government; while at the same time working with this sector to demonstrate how aquaculture practices can be ‘improved’ and made environmentally sustainable? |
| <b>PROGRESS TOWARDS RESULTS (3.2)</b>        |  |
| <b>Objective</b>                             | Scoring of EHI and METT is not always consistent or sufficiently robust and evidence-based, resulting in somewhat inflated results on occasions, despite training and provision of some independent facilitation and technical assistance.   |
| <b>Outcome 1 Output 1.2</b>                  | Currently, there is no progress with preparing provincial guidelines for managing coastal wetlands. PMO suggests it may not be a priority now that new regulations for wetland conservation are in force.  |
| <b>Outcome 1 Output 1.3 Indicator 1.3</b>    | HEEPD and HMFD have shown little or no improvement, based on UNDP Capacity Assessment score at midterm (HFD on track to meet target).  |

| MTR REPORT<br>(SECTION NO.)                                 | WEAKNESSES:<br>REQUIRING CORRECTIVE ACTIONS FOR THE DESIGN, IMPLEMENTATION, MONITORING AND EVALUATION  |
|---|--|
| <b>Outcome2<br/>Indicator 2.2</b>                           | Mean score of EHI improvements is only 25% of target, baselines for which were set at project onset.   |
| <b>Outcome 2<br/>Output 2.3</b>                             | Mangrove Research Working Group had identified some research priorities by mid-2015 but little/nothing has been reported since then suggesting that this Group lacks purpose, direction and ownership. (Not a criticism of the Group, probably as much a weakness in design or implementation.)  |
| <b>Outcome 2<br/>Output 2.6<br/>Indicator 2.5</b>           | Co-management activities have got off to a slow start, resulting in little more than exploration of possible ecotourism and mangrove restoration. More progress realised with development of alternative livelihoods, such as bee-keeping and crab-raising.  |
| <b>Outcome<br/>Output 2.6<br/>Indicator 2.6</b>             | Interventions to achieve target for Indicator 2.6 (1,000 ha increase in mangrove cover) are not always informed by sound science. For example, exotic species sometimes used in mangrove restoration; and very important areas of mud flats used as stop-overs for migratory birds are lost due to being replanted with mangrove.  |
| <b>Outcome 2<br/>Output 2.7</b>                             | <p>Project appears not to have engaged with stakeholders and developed an integrated communication strategy based on key principles of providing information to all stakeholders, promoting dialogue between all stakeholders and promoting access to information. According to the ProDoc, such a strategy should be annually updated to ensure that all stakeholders are informed on an on-going basis about the project’s progress and opportunities for stakeholders’ involvement in various aspects of the project’s implementation.</p> <p>While there is a draft Communications Plan, this is a two-page list of activities and publications, lacking any sense of strategy. What is needed is a strategy that prioritises interventions and targets those audiences having potentially the greatest positive and negative impacts on wetlands.</p> |
| <b>PROJECT IMPLEMENTATION (3.3)</b>                         |  |
| <b>Work planning<br/>(3.3.2)<br/>Reporting (3.3.6)</b>      | There are systemic shortcomings in reporting formats for quarterly and annual progress reports. While progress is reported at considerable length and adequate detail, actual versus planned progress are not presented in the same way, let alone alongside each other. If an activity is delayed, the extent of the delay is not readily apparent from glancing further at the information. The converse is true for an activity completed ahead of schedule.  |
| <b>Finance and co-<br/>finance (3.3.3)</b>                  | Financial management shows up as being weak in respect of disbursement, which slowed down from 61% in 2014 and 86% in 2015 to just 6% for the first half of 2016. Total disbursement by midterm is 35% of the total budget. Outcome 3 merits particular attention as only 35% had been disbursed by midterm.   |
| MTR REPORT<br>(SECTION NO.)                                 | WEAKNESSES:<br>REQUIRING ACTIONS TO FOLLOW UP OR REINFORCE INITIAL BENEFITS FROM THE PROJECT   |
| <b>PROGRESS TOWARDS RESULTS (3.2)</b>                       |  |
| <b>Outcome 1<br/>Output 1.1<br/>Indicators 1.1,<br/>1.2</b> | Three interlinked strategies and plans, <i>Master Plan for Hainan PA System</i> (awaiting approval), <i>Provincial Wetland PAs Strategy</i> , <i>Action Plan &amp; Climate Resilience Plan</i> (drafted) and <i>Financing Plan for Hainan PA System</i> (drafted), are becoming delayed and may never secure approval at provincial level because government is advocating “multiple planning integration” rather than single sector plans.  |
| <b>Output 1.3<br/>Indicator 1.3<br/>and<br/>Output 2.2</b>  | The introduction of competency standards for wetland PA staff is being piloted in Yinggeling as a precursor to applying such standards across MWPA under Output 2.2. Competency standards have also been drafted under Output 1.3 under a collaborative initiative involving HFD, HEEP and HMF. The two initiatives should be mutually reinforcing and serve to improve and institutionalise PA management capacity at site and agency levels.   |
| <b>PROJECT IMPLEMENTATION (3.3)</b>                         |  |
| <b>GEF Partner<br/>Agency, UNDP<br/>(3.3.1)</b>             | <p>Insufficient quality assurance to meet the much higher demands of such a large programme comprising 6 projects, particularly with respect to maintaining standards and consistency when applying the M&amp;E tools (GEF METT and Financial Scorecard, UNDP Capacity Assessment Scorecard, EHI).</p> <p>Insufficient resourcing of CTA(s) to meet the demand for technical support by the Hainan project.</p>  |

| MTR REPORT<br>(SECTION NO.)          | WEAKNESSES:<br>REQUIRING CORRECTIVE ACTIONS FOR THE DESIGN, IMPLEMENTATION, MONITORING AND EVALUATION  |
|--------------------------------------|--|
| <b>Executing Agency, HFD (3.3.1)</b> | <p>MTR of the role and performance of the Project Steering Committee indicates a number of shortcomings:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• PSC meets once a year, which is considered insufficient for a project of this nature that may require strategic direction, unravelling of bottlenecks within higher echelons of provincial government, enhancing collaboration with existing partners and facilitating engagement with new partners from multiple sectors in order to mainstream wetland conservation, as well as maintaining an oversight of project implementation.</li> <li>• PSC is already a large group of 20 members, male dominated (only two females, one being the Chair person), overrepresented by HFD members and, contrary to ProDoc specifications, lacks representation by Development Reform Commission (HDRC) and Tourism Commission. Agriculture Department (HAD) should also be included.</li> <li>• Its meetings tend to be attended by many other non-members, which must detract from core business of meetings.</li> </ul> |
| MTR REPORT<br>(SECTION NO.)          | WEAKNESSES:<br>REQUIRING PROPOSALS FOR FUTURE DIRECTIONS UNDERLINING MAIN OBJECTIVES   |
| <b>Project Design (3.1.1.)</b>       | <p>Most of the MWPAN sites, particularly the mangroves, are small fragments disconnected from other naturally functioning ecosystems.</p> <p>Conceptually, the project would do well to adopt a more catchment-oriented approach that considers the functioning of mangrove PAs being at the interface between freshwater and marine ecosystems.</p>   |

**Hubei Project MTR**

Executing Agency: Forestry Department of Hubei Province

GEF Grant: USD 2,654,771

Amount Disbursed by Midterm (30 June 2016): USD 1,372,079

**Strengths:**

- Project Design. Project is conceptually well designed to strengthen effective management of Hubei's wetland protected areas in response to threats to globally significant biodiversity and essential ecosystem services, with interventions to address barriers to achieving vision nested at provincial, water basin and WPA levels using participatory multi-sector mechanisms to resolve potential conflicting interests.
- GEF Agency, UNDP. UNDP CO, as implementing agency, has accumulated much experience in taking a more programmatic approach to its development work and this is manifest from its ability to efficiently and effectively implement 1 national and 5 regional/provincial projects under this WPAs Systems Strengthening Programme, providing strong technical support via the services of a highly experienced CTA.
- Executing Agency. Ownership of the project by HFD is very strong and this applies more widely across provincial government. It is also reflected in the high level of financial commitment to wetland conservation in the province. PMO comprises a small and very committed team, having the ability to undertake a prodigious amount of work. Most staff members have relevant experience, having been seconded from HFD's Wetland Conservation Centre. The team has developed strong relationships among its stakeholders. PSC is well represented by the key government partners and sectors having cross-cutting interests in wetlands. It has a core group who are also members of the Hubei Provincial Wetland Conservation Consultative Group. It is this Group that will be institutionalised by the end of the project to secure the interests of WPAs over the longer term.

- Finance and Cofinance. Financial management is sound, very transparent and to the satisfaction of the auditor, a reflection of the experience and diligence of the project's Finance Manager.
- Project Level M&E Systems. Project's monitoring and evaluation system is basically sound and has been applied to good effect, including revision to the ProDoc during inception phase.

**Major Achievements:**

- Progress towards Results, Objective. Effective management of WPAs has improved and end of project targets met in several cases. Such improved management capacity is reflected in improved health of these 8 pilot WPAs, with some of them also having already met their end of term EHI targets.
- Progress towards Results, Outcomes 1-2. Wetlands conservation strategies have been drafted for Hubei Province and for Honghu Watershed, alongside coordinating mechanisms to drive forward their implementation and mainstream wetland conservation into respective sector plans.
- Progress towards Results, Outcome 3. The Provincial Wetland Ecosystem Management Training Programme (PWEMTP), for which an excellent *Operational Handbook for Wetland Managers in China* has been produced by the CTA, has met with considerable success among PSC and HPWCCG members and WPAs staff. It has also contributed to the improved capacities of the three agencies with responsibilities for wetland conservation (HAD, HFD and HEPD), as evident from the significantly increased scores at midterm using the UNDP Capacity Development Scorecard. (HFD has already met the 20% improvement by end of project target and HEPD is very close.). Model management plans drafted for Honghu and Longganhu, plus a business plan for Honghu with financing approved. Stakeholder forums have also been established for both WPAs; and management agreements between WPA authorities and their key sector/community interest groups are in the process of being signed.
- Project Implementation, Work Planning and Reporting. Work planning and reporting are undertaken conscientiously and to a fair standard.
- Project Implementation, Finance and Cofinance. GEF funds disbursed efficiently, with 68% of the planned budget spent in 2014 and 92% in 2015. The level of cofinancing has increased from nearly sevenfold of the GEF grant at CEO endorsement of the project to over 18-fold by midterm. This significant achievement highlights the increasing awareness and importance attached to functioning wetland ecosystems and their services.
- Project Implementation, Stakeholder Engagement and Partnerships. Project has engaged well with a wide range of stakeholders. Partnerships with some government sectors, including schools, research and academic institutions and conservation NGOs have been strengthened, and co-management with communities is beginning to emerge.
- Project Implementation, Communications. A highly successful communications platform has been set up enabling the CTA, national consultants, WPA staff, PMO, NGOs, local government and service contractors to network with each other.

**Weaknesses:**

| MTR REPORT<br>(SECTION No.)                      | KEY SHORTCOMINGS  |
|--|---|
| <b>PROJECT STRATEGY</b>                          |   |
| <b>Results Framework<br/>(3.1.2 and Annex 5)</b> | Some indicators and targets are weak or poorly defined (e.g. ecosystem functionality).<br>Some targets need to be reviewed as may be unrealistically high.<br>Target for 25% female representation on PSC and other decision-making bodies unlikely to be achieved, unless government agencies introduce positive discrimination towards less senior women. |
| <b>PROGRESS TOWARDS RESULTS</b>                  |   |

| MTR REPORT<br>(SECTION No.)                        | KEY SHORTCOMINGS  |
|--|---|
| <b>Objective</b>                                   | Scoring of EHI and METT is not always consistent or sufficiently robust and evidence-based, resulting in somewhat inflated results on occasions, despite training and provision of some independent facilitation and technical assistance.  |
| <b>Outcomes 1-2 (3.2.1)</b>                        | <p>There is a sense of a lack of urgency to get these strategies approved and funding in place so that implementation can begin. Only then will it become clear whether or not adequate structures and levels of governance, in terms of authority and convening powers, have been put in place to deliver integrated approaches to mainstreaming wetland conservation and management across the different sectors at provincial and river basin levels.</p> <p>Most of Hubei’s wetlands are part of the Yangtze River Basin system, albeit some of them such as Tian’ezhou and Shishou Milu have become increasingly disconnected from the main river over recent decades. The long-term sustainability of Hubei’s wetlands will depend to a large extent on maintaining and restoring the integrity of the entire system. Thus, Hubei needs to engage more widely with its provincial neighbours, exchanging knowledge and experience about wetland management in the Yangtze River Basin and building up regional databases of information on the status and distribution of biodiversity and associated ecosystem services.</p> |
| <b>Outcome 3 (3.2.1)</b>                           | <p>Longganhu should have developed a business plan alongside its management plan, indicating a conceptual misunderstanding about the relationship between management and business planning.</p> <p>Honghu Management Plan has several weaknesses, such as lack of a clear framework whereby actions and their respective projects are linked to the operational objectives and, in turn, to the threats and limiting factors. It also lacks a framework to monitor implementation of the plan.</p> <p>The training programme has been successful to date but steps have yet to be taken to ensure it is institutionalised and sustained over the longer term, before the end of the project.</p>  |
| <b>PROJECT IMPLEMENTATION (3.3)</b>                |   |
| <b>GEF Partner Agency, UNDP (3.3.1)</b>            | <p>Insufficient quality assurance to meet the much higher demands of such a large programme as this, comprising 6 projects, particularly with respect to maintaining standards and consistency when applying the M&amp;E tools (GEF METT and Financial Scorecard, UNDP Capacity Assessment Scorecard etc.).</p> <p>Insufficient resourcing of CTA(s) to meet the demand for technical support by the Hubei project.</p>   |
| <b>Executing Agency, HFD (3.3.1)</b>               | <p>PSC falls short of ProDoc specifications in the following ways:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• it meets once rather than twice per year, which is insufficient for a project of this nature that, for example, would benefit from more regular direction, guidance and resolving of potential bottlenecks in piloting multi-sector mechanisms at different levels of governance within the province and address, for example, Ecological Protection Red Lining;</li> <li>• Department of Water Resources (HDWR), and Department of Land and Resources (HLRD) are not represented; tourism sector should also be represented;</li> <li>• percentage of women (14%) is well below 25% target;</li> <li>• dual roles of members of both PSC and HPWCCG are somewhat confusing and potentially detract from each other, especially when they meet together;</li> <li>• the role of HPWCCG is not so much about consultation but that of a Task Force or Working Group: to facilitate mainstreaming of the wetland strategy into sector plans.</li> </ul>   |
| <b>Work planning (3.3.2)<br/>Reporting (3.3.6)</b> | There are systemic shortcomings in reporting formats for quarterly and annual progress reports. While progress is reported at considerable length and adequate detail, actual versus planned progress are not presented in the same way, let alone alongside each other. If an activity is delayed, the extent of the delay is not readily apparent from glancing further at the information. The converse is true for an activity completed ahead of schedule.   |
| <b>Finance and co-finance (3.3.3)</b>              | Disbursement slowed down in the first half of 2016 to the extent that only 21% of the planned budget had been spent by June, or 41% of the total budget. Outcome 3 merits particular attention as only 35% had been disbursed by midterm.   |
| <b>Project level M&amp;E systems (3.3.4)</b>       | Most of the weaknesses in the M&E systems relate to the design of the Results Framework and to UNDP’s quarterly and annual progress reporting formats.  |



| MTR REPORT<br>(SECTION No.)       | KEY SHORTCOMINGS   |
|-----------------------------------|--|
| <b>Communications<br/>(3.3.7)</b> | A communications strategy was drafted in 2015 but appears not to have been adopted, let alone implemented. |

## 3.2. Program Strategy

### 3.2.1. Program Design

#### Program Design

The project strategy was formulated according to the systemic, institutional, and financial barriers identified in the program framework document that are impeding effective management of wetland PAs in China, and supported with a comprehensive situational analysis and description of baseline conditions.

The mainstreaming component was a bit over-ambitious, not fully matching the resources allocated. While there have been some advances in promoting biodiversity mainstreaming, there are certain design and implementation modality constraints. For example, it might have been useful to design demonstrations of implementation of mainstreaming activities rather than primarily focusing on inclusion of biodiversity conservation into sector plans. One of the recommendations from the Hubei project MTR, regarding supporting ecological redlining on a cross-sector perspective is a good adaptive management measure to this shortcoming, and something that could be also done for the other provincial projects.

#### Alignment with GEF Strategic Objectives

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

| Expected Outcomes and Indicators of<br>Objective 1 of the GEF-5 Biodiversity Strategy  | Core Outputs  |
|--|---|
| <b>Outcome 1.1:</b> Improved management effectiveness of existing and new protected areas.                                     | <b>Output 1:</b> New protected areas (number) and coverage (hectares) of unprotected ecosystems.                  |
| <b>Indicator 1.1:</b> Protected area management effectiveness score as recorded by Management Effectiveness Tracking Tool      | <b>Output 2:</b> New protected areas (number) and coverage (hectares) of unprotected threatened species (number). |
| <b>Output 1.2:</b> Increased revenue for protected area systems to meet total expenditures required for management.            | <b>Output 3:</b> Sustainable financing plans (number)   |
| <b>Indicator 1.2:</b> Funding gap for management of protected area systems as recorded by protected area financing scorecards. |   |

Considering that the project is promoting mainstreaming biodiversity among the key production sectors, in the opinion of the MTR team, the program is also relevant according to Objective 2 of the GEF-5 Biodiversity Strategy, which is defined as *“Mainstream Biodiversity Conservation and Sustainable Use into Production Landscapes, Seascapes and Sectors”*.

### 3.2.2. Program Results Framework

The program strategic results framework contains intended outcomes and associated outputs across the following 3 components:

Component 1: Enhancing management effectiveness of wetland PA sub-system

Component 2: Mainstreaming wetland PAs in development and sectoral planning

Component 3: Knowledge management and lesson sharing

Performance indicators and targets were formulated in the results framework for the national project.

The program level strategic results framework is logically articulated. Again, the policy level outcomes were over-ambitious, particularly for other sectors.

### 3.2.3. Baseline Conditions

One of the intended outcomes of the MSL program is expansion of the wetland protected area sub-system in the country, particularly coverage of natural wetlands. A quantitative end of project target, consistent with that of the State Forestry Administration (SFA), of 55% of the total area of natural wetlands was set. At the time when the PFD was submitted, in 2011, the SFA target was aimed to be achieved by the year 2015. The SFA with the help of the Office of Wetland Conservation and Management (OWCM) continue to proactively facilitate expansion of the wetland PA sub-system, with an annual target of 1% per year. The baseline figures of wetland areas presented in the PFD, reportedly based on the results of the first national wetlands survey, are summarized below.

| Baseline and Targets Established at Program Approval |                                     |                                     |                       |                       |                       |                      |
|--|-------------------------------------|-------------------------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|----------------------|
| Type of Wetlands                                     | Total Area of Wetlands (million ha) | Designated as Protected Areas (PAs) |                       |                       |                       |                      |
|  |                                     | Baseline (2011)                     |                       | End of Program Target |                       |                      |
|  |                                     | %                                   | Cumulative million ha | %                     | Cumulative million ha | Expansion million ha |
| Natural Wetlands                                     | 8.35                                | 53%                                 | 4.4255                | 58%                   | 4.843                 | 0.4175               |
| Coastal Wetlands                                     | 5.94                                | 61%                                 | 3.6234                | 67%                   | 3.980                 | 0.3564               |
| Riverine Wetlands                                    | 8.20                                | 32%                                 | 2.6240                | 35%                   | 2.870                 | 0.2460               |
| Marshes  | 13.70                               | 55%                                 | 7.5350                | 61%                   | 8.357                 | 0.8220               |
| Artificial Wetlands                                  | Not Indicated                       | Not Indicated                       | Not Indicated         | Not Indicated         | Not Indicated         | Not Indicated        |
| <b>Total</b>   | <b>36.19</b>                        | <b>50.3%</b>                        | <b>18.2079</b>        | <b>55.4%</b>          | <b>20.050</b>         | <b>1.8419</b>        |

Starting at a baseline of 50.3% of natural wetlands designated as protected areas in 2011, reaching 55% over the course of the 5 year MSL program is realistic. Separate quantitative end of program targets were set for the following types of wetlands: natural wetlands, coastal wetlands, riverine wetlands, and marshes, and the cumulative total by the end of the program slated to reach 55%, representing an expansion of 1.7 million ha. Tallying up the individual targets for the four types of wetlands, the cumulative total of wetland areas under enhanced protection is 20.05 million ha, which is 55.4% of the total or 1.8419 million ha of expanded area. This is one discrepancy that needs to be reconciled, and, in fact, the baseline conditions and end of program targets should be reassessed to reflect the findings of the second national wetlands survey and a more accurate summary of wetland areas designated as protected areas.

The second national wetlands survey was carried out over the period of 2009-2013 and data were published at the end of 2015. The summary report of the second survey show that total area of wetlands in the country has decreased by nearly 10% over the approximate 10-year time period, from when the first national survey was made.

| Summary of Wetland Areas according to the Second National Wetland Survey Report |                                     |
|---|-------------------------------------|
| Type of Wetlands  | Total Area of Wetlands (million ha) |
| Natural Wetlands  | 8.5938                              |
| Coastal Wetlands  | 5.7959                              |
| Riverine Wetlands   | 10.5521                             |
| Marshes   | 21.7329                             |
| Artificial Wetlands   | 6.7459                              |
| <b>Total</b>  | <b>53.4206</b>                      |

Artificial wetlands, comprising a bit more than 12.5% of the total, are included in the second survey report; however, excluding these areas, the total area of wetlands is considerably higher than reported in the PFD. The second survey report does not include a breakdown of types of wetland areas under enhanced protection, but the report does indicate that 23.2432 million ha, or 43.51% are designated as protected areas. Of this total, wetland areas within nature reserves cover 16.3354 million ha, or 70.28% of the total, and other types of protected areas, such as wetland parks, make up the remaining 6.9078 million ha.

The report also includes disaggregated information for the 40 sites of wetlands of global importance in China and the 162 sites of wetlands of national importance.

| Globally Important Wetlands in China (40 sites)<br>Cumulative total breakdown |               |             |
|---|---------------|-------------|
| Type of Wetland   | million ha    | %           |
| Lakes (Natural Wetlands)  | 0.8903        | 42%         |
| Coastal Wetlands  | 0.3575        | 17%         |
| Riverine Wetlands   | 0.0380        | 1.8%        |
| Marshes   | 0.6916        | 33%         |
| Artificial Wetlands   | 0.1502        | 7.1%        |
| <b>Total</b>  | <b>2.1276</b> | <b>100%</b> |

Source: 2nd National Wetland Survey Report

| Nationally Important Wetlands in China (162 sites)<br>Cumulative total breakdown |                |             |
|--|----------------|-------------|
| Type of Wetland  | million ha     | %           |
| Lakes (Natural Wetlands)   | 5.2113         | 33%         |
| Coastal Wetlands   | 1.6136         | 10%         |
| Riverine Wetlands  | 1.2521         | 7.8%        |
| Marshes  | 6.9755         | 44%         |
| Artificial Wetlands  | 0.9570         | 6.0%        |
| <b>Total</b>   | <b>16.0095</b> | <b>100%</b> |

Source: 2nd National Wetland Survey Report

There are also discrepancies in the targets of wetland PA expansion between the strategic results framework included in the PFD and the results framework of the national project, which should be a reflection of the program level outcomes. The PFD indicates a target of wetland PA expansion of 1.7 million ha, and the national project has a target of 0.6154 million ha. There were a number of inconsistencies also pointed out in the MTR reports of the individual projects. In some cases, such as for the Hubei project, the end of project target was a combination of new protected areas and existing areas that have achieved upgrade from provincial to national or county to provincial. For the Daxing'anling project, the baseline of wetland areas was reassessed during filling out the midterm tracking tools, and the result was an area roughly half the figure included in the strategic results framework, due to an error in calculating the original areas.

### 3.2.4. Gender Mainstreaming

The program framework document outlines the fact that wetlands are providing ecosystem goods and services that are supporting social welfare in addition to biodiversity conservation across the country. There was no gender analysis made for the program framework document, and the programmatic strategic results framework and the one for the national project are not disaggregated by gender.

Based on feedback from project stakeholders during MTR interviews, gender issues were seen as covered under national policies and, in China, the view was that gender equality was fairly balanced. As the national project is essentially the focal point for the MSL programme, it would be advisable, in the opinion of the MTR team, to address gender issues at some level. For example, community welfare is covered in the management effectiveness tracking tool (METT) – as part of promotion of adopting the METT across the entire sub-system of wetland PAs, gender issues could be highlighted. Also, as part of the awareness-raising activities, e.g., development of the public information system on wetlands, gender could be spotlighted, as well.

The provincial projects are addressing gender mainstreaming more effectively, e.g., through the interventions promoting alternative livelihoods associated with sustainable use of ecosystem goods and services. The PMOs are conscientious of involving women in the implementation and regularly tracking women involvement.

### 3.3. Progress toward Results

According to the National Report on the Implementation of the Ramsar Convention on Wetlands, submitted to the 12th Meeting of the Conference of the Contracting Parties, Uruguay, 2015, the five most successful aspects of implementation of the Convention are summarized below in **Box 1**.

**Box 1: Partial excerpt from the National Report on the Implementation of the Ramsar Convention on Wetlands, submitted to the 12th Meeting of the Conference of the Contracting Parties, Uruguay, 2015**

**Five most successful aspects of implementation of the Convention**

**1. Completion of the second national wetland resources survey**

China has finished its second nationwide wetland resource investigation. Launched in 2009 and completed in 2013, the survey by 22,000 forestry professionals was conducted and completed by the State Forestry Administration with great support from relevant departments of the State Council.

The survey has firstly adopted a wetland classification system in line with that recommended by the Ramsar Convention. It has also applied advanced techniques, including remote sensing (RS), geographical information system (GIS), and the global positioning system (GPS), in field sampling and satellite imagery analysis. The survey was designed to cover all of China's wetland patches no less than eight hectares individually in size. Each eligible wetland patch was portrayed by eleven survey parameters, e.g. wetland type, water supply, dominant aquatic plants, land tenure, and governance status. The statistics also had an in-depth description of 1,579 nationally or internationally important wetlands by studying their aquatic environment, fauna and flora, conservation and exploitation of wetland resources, socioeconomic context, and ecological threats.

The survey results indicated that China's wetlands falling into 34 types in 5 categories cover an area of 53,602,600 ha, exclusive of 30,057,000 ha paddy fields, amounting to 5.58 percent of China's total land area. Findings from the survey also showed that China's wetlands declined by an estimated 3,396,300 ha between 2004 and 2013, including an estimated 3,376,200 ha or 9.33 percent of the losses for the natural wetlands. The statistics presents China the latest information on wetland resources, key aquatic plants and animals, main threats to wetlands, and land tenure.

All collected data have been digitalized, which will secure data-informed decision-making on the conservation, management, planning, and utilization of wetlands and their resources. The updated information will further help prioritize conservation planning efforts to close gaps in wetland protection through ameliorating wetland protected area network and optimizing geographical space for the conservation and sustainable use of wetland resources.

**2. Conservation funds for wetlands climbed and the protected wetlands expanded**

The survey report of the second national wetland resource inventory implied that the protected wetland area in China was 23,243,200 ha, representing 43.51 percent of China's land area. An estimated 21,156,800 ha natural wetlands (45.33 percent) were under protected. Between 2004 and 2013, wetland area under protection increased by an estimated 5,259,400 ha, comprising an estimated 13.02 percent of the total land area of China. China has, so far, established a hierarchical wetland protected area network, consisting of nature reserves, wetland parks, preserves, and other conserved areas.

By 2013, 46 wetlands in China had been designated as Ramsar sites, and nine of which won their designations during 2011 and 2013; *one of the newly designated Ramsar sites is located in Anhui Province, which is among the 7 provinces where the MSL program is operating.*

Between 2011 and 2013, the Ministry of Finance apportioned CNY 1.467 billion (USD 222 million) for wetland conservation and management to the State Forestry Administration (SFA) and the Ministry of Agriculture. Specifically, SFA received CNY 1.37 billion (USD 208 million), of which CNY 650 million (USD 99 million) earmarked for over 200 wetland conservation subsidy projects and CNY 720 million (USD 109 million) budgeted for other wetland conservation and restoration efforts; and the Ministry of Agriculture obtained CNY 97 million (USD 15 million) budgetary appropriations for 26 agricultural wetland protection projects in Jiangsu, Hunan, Anhui, Heilongjiang and Hubei provinces, and Heilongjiang Agricultural Reclamation Area. Local governments also invested wetland conservation. The above-mentioned 26 projects, for example, received CNY 186 million (USD 28 million) co-financing from local governments.

*China has also received grant and loan financing from multilateral donor agencies, including the GEF, and international financing institutions over this period for wetland conservation and management projects and investments.*

**3. Mainstreaming of wetland conservation and management further progressed**

Since COP11, wetland conservation and management have been integrated into ten national strategic development plans as follows:

- i. Drafted by the Ministry of Environmental Protection, the China National Biodiversity Conservation Strategy and Action Plan (2011-2030) was approved by the State Council in September 2010.
- ii. The Twelfth Five-Year Plan for National Forestry Development (2011-2015) was issued by the State Forestry Administration in August 2011, setting targets of wetland conservation.
- iii. The Opinions of the State Forestry Administration and the National Tourism Administration on Accelerating the Development of Forest-based Tourism, announced in November 2011, pointed out: 'to establish a tourism network built on forest parks, wetland parks, nature reserves, and etc.'
- iv. The Twelfth Five-Year Plan for China's Environmental Protection (2011-2015), endorsed by the State Council in December 2011,

highlighted four environmental issues to be tackled, two related to wetlands: water environment improvement and ecological protection and enhancement of law enforcement.

- v. Delivered by the Ministry of Transport in January 2012, the Twelfth Five-year Plan for Protecting the Surrounding Environment of Transportation Networks of Highways and Waterways identified protecting the environment adjacent to highways and waterways and combating environmental pollution by transportation-related practices as two priority activities.
- vi. The National Land Consolidation Plan (2011-2015) was issued by the Ministry of Land and Resources in March 2012. The Plan viewed environmental integrity and wetland conservation as a guideline to land consolidation.
- vii. Approved by the State Council in August 2012, the Twelfth Five-Year Plan for Implementing National Wetland Conservation Programme (2011-2015), was to direct 12.987 billion RMB, both central and sub-national funding, to wetland conservation, wetland restoration and integrated improvement, the wise use of wetlands, and wetland management capacity building between 2011 and 2015.
- viii. The Twelfth Five-Year Plan for China's Marine Economic Development (2011-2015) was put out by the State Council September 2012. The Plan aimed to strengthen protecting marine environment with five key strategies.
- ix. The Master Plan for Protecting the Environment and Ecosystems of Lakes with Good Water Quality (2013-2020) was promulgated by the State Council in December 2013. The plan was prepared for controlling and preventing water pollution in key watersheds and for saving lakes suffering notorious pollution except protecting water bodies in pristine condition across China's five lake districts.
- x. Approved by the State Council in March 2014, the National Ecological Protection and Development Plan (2011-2020) will serve as a framework for mainstreaming wetland conservation into a wide range of natural resource exploitation and conservation plans.

#### 4. Further promoted safeguarding mechanisms for wetland conservation and management

China has attributed its current wetland conservation achievement to the progressive wetland safeguarding mechanism that includes, inter alia:

(i) Legal system—First of all, the State Forestry Administration issued the Wetland Conservation and Management Provisions in 2013 after it put out the National Administrative Measures for Wetland Parks (Tentative) in 2010 to steer the establishment of national wetland parks. The Ministry of Agriculture introduced the Tentative Administrative Rules for Aquatic Resource Preserves in January 2011. Second, the Ministry of Finance, together with the State Forestry Administration, drafted the Tentative Measures for Wetland Conservation Subsidy Programme. Later on, the State Forestry Administration further adopted the Interim Provisions on the Administration of Wetland Monitoring and Management Funds for advising the use of earmarked funds for wetlands. Third, the State Forestry Administration supported six provinces' promulgating provincial-level wetland conservation regulations or measures, sending the number of provinces with wetland ordinance to 19 up to 2013. The six provinces were Jiangxi and Zhejiang provinces, Qinghai and Yunnan Provinces, and Shandong and Xinjiang Uyghur Autonomous Region. Last, the State Forestry Administration succeeded in adding the enactment of the Regulations on Wetland Protection to the legislative agenda of the State Council. It is now revising and refining the draft version of the Regulations in answering review comments or advices from over twenty national sectors with a view to get the Regulations effective earlier.

(ii) Technical standard system—Since 2011, China has put forward and has developed an array of technical standards or guidance to standardize wetland conservation and management practices, covering nominating, designating and managing a wetland protected area, assessing threats to wetlands, and evaluating the stewardship performance of a wetland protected area management authority. Over the past three years, China effected five technical norms, including: (i) Tentative Scheme for Early Warning the Changes of Ecological Features of Ramsar Sites, (ii) Technical Guidelines for Preparing Management Planning for Ramsar Sites in China, (iii) Guidelines on the Management of Environmental Impact Assessment of Construction Projects on Aquatic National Nature Reserves, (iv) the Business Practices for Building and Managing National Ecotourism Pilot Sites, and (v) the Recommended Indicators for Evaluating Ecological Health and Functions of Wetland Ecosystems.

(iii) Economic incentive system—China has established a special subsidy fund for wetland conservation since COP11. In addition, the State Forestry Administration started wetland ecological compensation work, attempting to use economic instruments to engage wetland stakeholders in wetland conservation and management.

(iv) Management effectiveness evaluation system—China has introduced a reporting mechanism built on the Bulletin of Ecological Status of China's Ramsar Sites to release ecological status of the Ramsar sites in China in a regular manner. The State Forestry Administration evaluated ecological changes at 41 Ramsar sites during 2009 and 2012, and the assessment results are to be released soon.

#### 5. Public interests on wetlands reached new high

In conjunction with China Central Television (CCTV), the State Forestry Administration (SFA) takes an initiative to select the top ten most beautiful wetlands in China. The initiative concluded with 225 million tallied votes—that was, one in five Chinese partook in the activity. Such an extensive public involvement was attributable to China's unremitting efforts to promote wetland conservation and the escalating popularity of wetland-based tourism in China.

China's national leaders attended and delivered an important speech at a celebration marking the country's 20th anniversary of joining the Ramsar Convention in 2012. In addition to the celebration, SFA also publicized wetland conservation and biodiversity conservation through mainstream medium, generating over 1,000 pieces of media coverage except staging a 19-day series programme themed Wetlands in China on China National Radio (CNR).

SFA also celebrated China Wetland Festival in 2011 and 2013. The 2011 China Wetland Festival and Asian Wetland Symposium on Human Well-being and Wetlands concluded with the adoption of the Wuxi Declaration. It was also the largest global gathering for marking the 40th anniversary

of the Ramsar Convention that year. Relevant news were googled on Baidu, Chinese Google, as much as 2.4 million times. The 2013 celebration event ended with the adoption of the Dongying Declaration. China's National Political Consultative Conference Vice President Lu Fuhe and the Ramsar Convention's Secretary General observed the two events along with over 1,000 representatives altogether from twenty country across the world.

Working with CCTV, SFA also ran a large-scale campaign themed Beautiful China: Wetlands, shooting 50 episodes of China wetlands documentary and getting them televised on CCTV-4. It also published articles on wetland in a special section, The Loss of Wetlands, in China Economic Weekly. CCTV news also covered wetland conservation several times over the last three years. In 2011, China's ex-Administrator of SFA published a thematic article in the People's Daily, calling for valuing wetlands. SFA published at least twelve types of books on China's wetlands, such as Strategic Research on China's Wetland Conservation and Handbook for Wetland Conservation Management.

Over the last three years, other Chinese state sectors also conducted a wide range of wetland-related promotion activities on different festival days, such as World Wetlands Day, Earth Day, and National Land Day. They built the knowledge and understanding of wetlands of the public ranging from school students to farmers, through giving presentations, hosting seminars, and doling out promotion materials, including books.

China hosted 3.25 billion tourists in 2013. Some wetlands, such as Qiandaohu Lake and Xixi Wetlands, have become famous tourist destinations in China. Thirteen wetlands have won their designation as a National Ecotourism Pilot Site along with other 26 forest sites, according to the National Tourism Administration (NTA). Among 175 5A-level tourist sites, as graded by the NTA, 49 sites consist of wetlands, representing 28 percent of China's 5A-level tourist sites. And eight Ramsar sites (17 percent) have reached level 3A or above. Establishing a functional on-site environmental education or interpretation system has been considered a key strategy for China's wetland management authorities to promote wetland and biodiversity conservation.

The website of ChinaWetlands has grown as the main window for the public to keep abreast of the latest information about wetlands. The website had over 33 million hits in 2013, 3.6 times more than that in 2012.

### **What has been the added value of the GEF financed MSL program?**

Clearly over the past few years there has been significant investment in wetland conservation and management. How has the MSL program contributed to these achievements?

#### **Component 1: Enhancing management effectiveness of wetland sub-system**

Realizing provincial level wetland conservation regulations is on target to be achieved, but it is unlikely that a national wetland conservation regulation will be passed before program closure.

The target of increasing coverage of wetland protected areas, 1% per year, is on target to be achieved.

For purposes of consolidating the wetland PA expansion results achieved by midterm among the MSL provincial level projects, the MTR team has compiled into **Annex 2** the information collected as part of the individual project MTRs. Notwithstanding the inconsistencies mentioned above in the baseline and reported midterm results, the cumulative end of project target for wetland PA expansion is 1.3 million ha for the 5 provincial projects, and 0.5868 million ha, or 45% of the target of new wetland PAs have been designated by midterm. It should be noted that 82% of the 0.5868 million ha is from the Daxing'anling project, and the remaining 18% split among the other 4 projects.

The advocacy role of the MSL program could be strengthened, with respect to assisting SFA in systematically reviewing the wetland PA coverage in relation to climate change threats and adaptation needs, and also in promoting improved representativity within the wetland PA system.

The MSL program has delivered ground level capacity building on the application of the Ecosystem Health Index (EHI) for supporting PA management decisions. On the national project, the MSL program is assisting SFA in developing a fine-tuned EHI, with the aim of deploying it for wetland PAs nationwide. For the demonstration wetland PAs within the MSL program, there has been a notably increase in METT scores by midterm.

Documentary evidence, including from automatic cameras operating in several of the demonstration wetland PAs, shows the presence of key indicator species.

#### **Component 2: Mainstreaming wetlands PAs in development and sectoral planning**

Wetland conservation and management priorities have been included in the 13<sup>th</sup> 5-year plan, and the MSL program is supporting the SFA in developing wetland conservation and management guidelines.

However, mainstreaming wetland conservation and management at the national level, integrating wetland priorities in sectoral planning, will require more time.

The MSL program has made substantive contributions with respect to mainstreaming wetland conservation and management at the provincial level. The 5 provincial level projects and the national project each have biodiversity mainstreaming components. The project has been successful in strengthening, and in some cases establishing, cross-sector collaborative mechanisms to facilitate the mainstreaming objectives. For example, a Daxing'anling Biodiversity Coordination Committee has been formed to bring together stakeholders from Inner Mongolia and Heilongjiang province. Inter-sector committees in the provincial projects in Anhui, Altai (Xinjiang), Hainan, and Hubei; with representatives from various governmental departments, including forestry, agriculture, water resources, land resources, planning, animal husbandry, and legislation. Provincial development committees are also participating in these collaborative working groups.

The annual SFA budget for wetland conservation and management has reached approximately USD 300 million in 2015 and 2014; this level of funding exceeds the target of increasing the baseline rate by >50%.

PA system financing gaps have also narrowed among the provincial projects, as documented by midterm updates of the GEF biodiversity tracking tool, Objective 1, Section III.

### **Component 3: Knowledge management and lesson sharing**

The MSL program is supporting SFA in developing (or improving) a public information system on wetlands issues. And, the provincial MSL projects are assisting development and upgrade of PA level information management systems.

Achieving a nationwide consolidated data and information system on PA management is beyond the scope of the MSL program.

The MSL program has supported the SFA on a number of wetland awareness campaigns, and there is anecdotal evidence of increased public knowledge and awareness. A Knowledge, Attitudes, and Practices (KAP) survey is slated to be made before the end of the project, providing an update to the baseline KAP survey.

## **3.4. Project Implementation and Adaptive Management**

### **3.4.1. Management Arrangements**

#### **GEF Partner Agency (UNDP)**

UNDP has been closely involved throughout the process, from the preparation phase and during implementation, providing support on technical issues, administrative procedures, and stakeholder participation.

The annual project implementation reviews (PIRs) are focused on results and require the project teams to assess progress towards the agreed project objective and outcomes. In general, the MTR teams found the PIRs thorough and challenges were discussed reasonably candidly.

UNDP has been an active member of the programmatic steering committee and the individual project steering committees, and as recorded in the meeting minutes, has regularly provided guidance on implementation and urged improvements.

With their strong institutional capacity on facilitating broader development objectives, including gender equity and social inclusion, the UNDP could be drawing upon their expertise in China and the region to better guide the projects in this regard.

Certain governmental stakeholders stressed that the UNDP, or rather the UN Resident Representative, could be more proactive in advocating for the FAO to start implementation of the Poyang Lake project.

## **Executing Agencies / Implementation Partners**

There was a GEF funded wetlands program in China in the late 2000s, concluding in 2009. The implementation arrangements were centralized, with a central PMO operating in Beijing and directing activities in select provinces. There were certain benefits of this modality, including consolidated reporting and more efficient project management, but ownership at the subnational level was not fully achieved and lessons learned on this earlier program informed the design of the implementation arrangements for the MSL program.

Execution of the Xinjiang, Anhui, Hainan, and Hubei projects is devolved to the respective provincial governments. The situation with Daxing'anling (DXAL) is unique, in that the DXAL forest area is under the direct jurisdiction of the State Forestry Agency (SFA), and hence the SFA is the executing agency for that project. There was also a concern with local capacities of the forest management authorities in the Inner Mongolia Autonomous Region and Heilongjiang province, as they have not managed GEF funded projects in the past.

The subnational level where the PMO is hosted ranges among the provincial projects. There were a few shortcomings observed by the MTR teams regarding implementation arrangements. For the case of the Anhui and Altai projects, the PA administrations lack the authority for advancing institutional level decision making, e.g., approving management plans for the demonstration PAs. In this context, in the opinion of the MTR teams, it would have been more effective to have the PMO hosted by a county or prefecture level. In fact, moving the PMOs of these two projects is among the MTR recommendations made by the teams. Due to the administrative arrangements in DXAL, a decision was made to have the national PMO also cover the separate DXAL project. This arrangement has proved challenging, resulting in insufficient involvement by the local beneficiaries.

With respect to the mainstreaming component, particularly at the national level, spreading implementation responsibilities, for instance, through a joint implementation arrangement modality might be a better approach. This would require additional administration, with more than one agency or department managing project funds, but the benefits of increased ownership and specific sector-level activities designed could very well outweigh this downside.

### **3.4.2. Technical Oversight**

There is one chief technical advisor (CTA), an international consultant, hired on the MSL program, supporting each of the six individual projects. The CTA is based in Beijing on a rolling short-term consultancy agreement, having office space in the project management office (PMO) of the national project (PIMS 4391) and traveling often to the provinces based upon work assignments agreed upon by the different PMOs. The current CTA started in March 2015, after an earlier consultant concluded his activities. A national consultant was hired on a part-time, short-term consultancy arrangement, in October 2015, to reinforce the technical and strategic advisory services, primarily for the national project, but he is also assisting with issues on the other projects.

The 6 individual projects are each full-time GEF projects in their own right. In the opinion of the MTR team, having one CTA and a part-time national technical advisor is insufficient, and overall technical oversight should be strengthened. The MTR teams observed evidence of inadequate quality control with the activities completed by some of the contractors retained among the projects, there have been missed opportunities in cross-linking mutually supportive outputs, and there is limited time available for the technical advisors to support advocacy efforts.

### **3.4.3. Capacity Building**

Capacity building, e.g., through training, inter-project exchanges, overseas visits, etc., is one of the cornerstones of the MSL program. There has been good results achieved through field-level trainings at the demonstration protected areas, e.g., by working with PA staff members on understanding and applying the ecosystem health index (EHI). The project has also implemented efficient ways to share lessons learned



across the 6 projects, e.g., by combining some of the trainings, rotating the program level steering meetings, and assigning specific thematic tasks for each of the 6 individual projects.

Formal trainings are designed into each of the projects, retaining service providers to design and deliver the trainings domestically and to organize the overseas visits and academic study programs. In some cases, e.g., for the national and DXAL projects, these training contracts have values of approximately 10% of the GEF implementation grant. There are common features among the training components of the 6 projects, e.g., they each reference protected area competency standards, something that is a separate activity on the national project. Development of these standards is behind schedule, and consequently the trainings delivered by midterm have not been linked with competency standards. In the opinion of the MTR team, it would be more advisable to organize the training efforts for all 6 projects centrally, more or less under a programmatic arrangement coordinated by the national PMO.

### 3.4.4. Finance and Cofinance

#### Financial Expenditures

As of 30 June 2016, the indicative midterm point of the program, USD 6,456,142, or 36% of the cumulative total of the GEF project implementation grants for the 6 projects implemented by UNDP have been disbursed (see Annex 6).

**Exhibit 6: Summary of MSL Project Costs Disbursed by Midterm (30 June 2016)**

| Project              | GEF project grant<br>USD | Costs disbursed by<br>midterm<br>(30 June 2016)<br>USD | % Disbursed of GEF<br>grant<br>by midterm |
|----------------------|--------------------------|--|---|
| National             | 2,654,771                | 861,917  | 32%                                       |
| Daxing'anling (DXAL) | 3,544,679                | 1,120,919  | 32%                                       |
| Xinjiang (Altai)     | 3,544,679                | 1,321,531  | 37%                                       |
| Anhui                | 2,654,771                | 870,605  | 33%                                       |
| Hainan               | 2,634,771                | 909,091  | 35%                                       |
| Hubei                | 2,654,771                | 1,372,079  | 52%                                       |
| <b>Total:</b>        | <b>17,688,442</b>        | <b>6,456,142</b>                                       | <b>36%</b>                                |

\*Figures on costs disbursed taken from the individual MTR reports.

On an individual project basis, the financial delivery by midterm has been relatively low, ranging from 32% for the national and Daxing'anling projects to 52% for the Hubei project.

#### Cofinancing

The cumulative cofinancing realized by midterm (30 June 2016) for the six projects being implemented by UNDP is USD 126.77 million, exceeding the USD 117.61 million of cumulative cofinancing pledged for these projects at the time of project approval. Cofinancing on the Xinjiang and Hubei projects has significantly exceeded the pledged sums.

The largest proportion of cofinancing has been grant cofinancing realized from provincial level governments: USD 107.73 million, compared to USD 68.06 pledged. The amount of in-kind cofinancing from the provincial governments, on the other hand, is considerably lower at USD 4.27 million as compared to the USD 21.15 million pledged. The MTR team observed during interviews that PMO staff members were uncertain how to allocate contributions of grant and in-kind cofinancing.

Much of the cofinancing realized by provincial governments is funding received from the central government for investments and management of wetland protected areas and for ecological compensation programs.

UNDP reports that USD 2.5 million in grant cofinancing have been realized by midterm; a total of USD 5 million were pledged at project approval. The UNDP cofinancing is from Thematic Resources Assigned from the Core (TRAC) funds that have been contributed to a public-private partnership programme on water governance involving the Ministry of Water Resources, the Ministry of Commerce, the Ministry of Environmental Protection, and Coca-Cola Greater China. This water governance programme has not extended direct cofinancing to the MSL projects, rather the policy mechanisms and pilot implementations have strengthened the national and subnational institutional capacities and regulatory frameworks associated with integrated water resources management, which is a critical aspect of conservation and sustainable use of wetland ecosystems.

According to cofinancing information reported for the individual MTRs of the 6 projects being implemented by UNDP, there have not been any additional sources of cofinancing realized on these projects, for example from other government agencies, the private sector, civil society, or others. In the opinion of the MTR team, the respective PMOs have not been instructed to collect information on other sources of cofinancing and, hence, this information has not been reported.

### **3.4.5. Program-level Monitoring and Evaluation Systems and Reporting**

The strategic results framework of the national project was largely formulated according to results framework outlined in the program framework document (PFD), albeit there are some discrepancies in some figures, including with regard to the target of wetland PA expansion. And the annual project implementation review (PIR) for the national project is essentially the programmatic performance review.

There does seem to be a certain inconsistency between monitoring and evaluation on a program level, and collecting monitoring and evaluation feedback from the 5 provincial projects. For example, the program level target of reaching 55% of natural wetlands designated as protected areas is a nation-wide target; however, there is no evidence of monitoring and evaluating results on a national scale. Similarly, the target to use the Management Effectiveness Tracking Tool (METT) for 20% of the national wetland PA system is misunderstood by the interviewed stakeholders, many thinking the target applies only for the demonstration PAs covered by the 5 provincial projects.

As discussed in previous sections of this synthesis report, the national PMO is under-staffed and technical oversight is spread thin with one CTA covering all 6 projects. Among the recommendations from the MTR of the national project, strengthening the PMO with additional technical staff members and hiring an additional technical advisor to support the CTA, will also bolster the monitoring and evaluation capacity.

### **3.4.6. Stakeholder Engagement and Partnerships**

One of the key added values of this project is policy level support. A number of agencies are responsible for wetland protected areas, but the SFA has jurisdiction over approximately 80% of them. Stakeholder involvement with key SFA officials has been good, particularly with the Office of Wetlands Conservation and Management (OWCM). The chief engineer for the OWCM is closely involved with the project, and the PMO has regular interactions with him.

The MSL program was designed under the China Biodiversity Partnership Framework (CBPF), which has been spearheaded by the Ministry of Environmental Protection (MEP). The MTR team has found little evidence of collaboration between the MSL program and the CBPF, however. In addition to governmental agencies and line ministries, CBPF membership includes multilateral and bilateral organizations, international NGOs, and international financing institutions. As discussed under Section 3.3.1 on progress towards results, realizing active stakeholder engagement with other governmental agencies under the mainstreaming component has proven challenging. Stakeholder involvement with non-governmental actors has also been limited.

### 3.5. Sustainability

#### **Financial:**

The Chinese government continues to increase budgetary allocation for protected area management and also under payment for ecosystem service (PES) schemes. According to the 2016 PIR of the national project, the annual amount of national financing for wetland PA management (within the SFA?) reached approximately USD 300 million in 2014 and 2015, constituting more than a three-fold increase from the USD 87.95 million in the baseline year of 2012. These funds have been allocated for wetland ecological compensation, conservation and restoration programmes, conversion of farmland to wetlands, and pilot wetland conservation incentive schemes.

#### **Socioeconomic:**

The results of the second national wetland survey, reported at the end of 2015 on results obtained over the period of 2009-2013, show that the total area of wetlands in China has reduced by 3.3963 million ha in the 10 years since the first survey was made, representing a loss of 8.82% in total. The survey report also indicates that the coverage of natural wetland decreased to 3.3762 million ha, which is a 9.33% loss in the 10 year period or 0.97% annually. The second wetland survey report also outlines the main threats to wetlands, and the top 4 threats clearly underscore the linkage to socio-economic development: (1) agriculture conversion, (2) conversion to other purposes, (3) pollution, and (4) animal husbandry. Even with significant increases governmental allocation to natural resource management of the past 10 years, the socio-economic pressures remain formidable.

As many of the wetlands in the country are on productive lands which are not under enhanced protection, public awareness on the wetlands is critical in the stemming further loss of valuable wetlands. The project is well positioned to support the public awareness objectives of the SFA/OWCM and of the Chinese government as whole regarding the importance of safeguarding wetlands and participatory wetland conservation and management. One example of how the project is delivering this support is the decision to have the project help develop a public information system on wetlands – this could be one of the key legacies of the project, contributing to the sustainability of the results achieved.

#### **Institutional Framework and Governance:**

Strengthening the institutional frameworks and governance associated with wetland protected areas is one of the main aims of the project. In fact, supporting the SFA/OWCM on wetlands related policy is one of the cornerstones of the national project. For example, the National Wetland Conservation Ordinance/Standard is designed as a cross-sectoral guidance framework for management and sensible use of wetland ecosystems. The project is also supporting development of the 13<sup>th</sup> 5-year plan. The national consultant of the MTR team checked the draft 13<sup>th</sup> 5-year plan and verified the following sections that mention wetland areas:

#### **Chapter 45: Enhancing eco-environment conservation and restoration**

##### Section 1: Promoting ecosystem service overall

*To ensure ecological water level for the important wetlands of river, lake and estuary, to protect and restore the wetland ecosystem and river/lake ecosystems, and to establish regulatory system for wetland conservation.*

##### Section 2: Expanding eco-products supply

*To enhance the protection of scenic spots, forest parks, wetland parks, desert parks, etc., to enhance the construction of traffic infrastructure in forest zones, to exploit moderately public recreation, tour and sightseeing, ecological healthy service and eco-products.*

##### Section 3: Maintaining biodiversity

*To implement major engineering project for biodiversity conservation. To strengthen construction and management for nature reserves, to strengthen protection for the typical ecosystems, species, genes*

*and landscapes. To carry out biodiversity baseline survey and assessment and complete biodiversity monitoring system.*

Advocating for system wide use of the management effectiveness tracking tool (METT) and ecosystem system health index (EHI) is contributing to improved governance of wetland ecosystems.

A substantive part of the project is focused strengthening institutional capacity, including management systems, staff expertise, and hardware and software tools for improved monitoring and management. The training activities, which play an important role in this regard, should be improved, e.g., by linking to the occupational competency standards promoted by the project and delivering more focused trainings to distinct groups. The training activities also include overseas study tours, which are providing key stakeholders with an opportunity on learning from international best practice and assessing how these can be best adapted in China.

#### **Environmental:**

The results of the second national wetlands survey underscore how environmental factors are affecting the ecosystem health of wetlands in China. Conversion to agricultural land was indicated as the most significant threat to wetlands, and impacts of pollution are imparting long-lasting impacts to sensitive habitats and loss of globally significant biodiversity. The effects of climate change are even more daunting, due to the high degree of uncertainty and possibly irreversible outcomes.

The project is providing valuable support to the SFA/OWCM in ensuring environmental sustainable land use associated with wetlands. For example, the wetland conservation and management standards being developed by the SFA will provide cross-sectoral guidance for preventing adverse impacts to wetland ecosystems.

## **4. RECOMMENDATIONS AND LESSONS LEARNED**

### **4.1. Recommendations**

Separate sets of recommendations are included in the MTR reports of the six individual MSL projects. The recommendations are based on the programmatic level midterm review and are mostly addressed to the national project, which was envisaged to provide secretariat service for the Program Steering Committee, providing necessary coordination and ensuring synergy between the different provincial level projects.

#### ***The coordination role of the national project should be strengthened***

Notwithstanding the individual project implementation modality approach selected for the MSL program, there are certain functions that should be delivered at a program level, under the coordination of the national project. The national project has initiated some effective collaborative approaches, including organizing regular Internet-based meetings among the 6 PMOs, rotating the location where the Program Steering Committee meetings are convened, sponsoring exchange visits among the individual projects, etc. The coordination role of the national project should be further strengthened.

**Recommendation No. 1:** A few actions recommended to strengthen the coordination role of the national project are presented below.

- a. **Technical oversight:** The chief technical officer (CTA) is supporting all 6 projects, but his work assignments are being organized piecemeal. The terms of reference (TOR) of the CTA should be reassessed and more clearly articulating how technical advisory services will be delivered to the program.
- b. **Monitoring and evaluation:** Monitoring and evaluation at the program level should be specifically assigned to one or more staff or advisors to the national project, and the TORs for these positions should be revised to reflect monitoring and evaluation responsibilities.

- c. **Knowledge management:** Certain knowledge management functions, e.g., preparing case studies and organizing national level stakeholder workshops or peer reviews, should be better coordinated among the individual projects.

***State Forestry Administration (SFA) should share in facilitating improved cross-project collaboration***

The SFA is best positioned, both in terms of their institutional mandate and their role of executing agency for the national project, to help facilitate improvement of performance at the national and subnational level, and to help enhance cross-project collaboration.

**Recommendation No. 2:** The coordinating and executing roles of the SFA at the program level should be enhanced through administrative approaches, including convening meetings with the provincial forestry bureaus; approving and implementing the policies, guidelines, and standards developed by national project; and more actively participating in the monitoring and evaluation of achievements produced by the individual projects.

***Work planning for provincial projects not sufficiently reflecting enabling outputs from national project***

Certain enabling outputs under the national project are delayed, and there is limited time available for the provincial projects to benefit from these deliverables. Some of the key enabling outputs include development of a methodology for valuation of wetland ecosystem services, establishment of occupational competency standards for PA staff, adapting the ecosystem health index (EHI), formulation of wetland restoration guidelines, etc.

**Recommendation No. 3:** An extraordinary meeting of the Programmatic Steering Committee should be convened, to agree upon corrective actions for expediting enabling outputs on the national project. The PSC meeting should be followed by a workshop joined by all 7 individual projects, including the Poyang Lake one, in order to discuss the results of the midterm reviews and associated management responses, and integrating the enabling outputs on the national project into the work plans of the provincial projects.

***Outdated baselines and inconsistencies between the indicative program level strategic results framework and the national project level results framework should be corrected***

The baseline figures and end of program targets for protected area expansion are outdated, not reflecting the results of the second national wetlands survey, which was completed over the time period of 2009-2013 but only published in 2015. For the MSL program, this timeframe is a more appropriate baseline. There are also inconsistencies between the indicative strategic results framework presented in the program framework document and the results framework on the national project.

**Recommendation No. 4:** Baseline information on the types and areas of wetlands should be adjusted to the results of the second national wetlands survey, end of program targets should be reassessed accordingly, and the strategic results framework of the national project should be adjusted according to revisions in baselines.

***The delay in implementing the Poyang Lake project is impacting the coherence of the program***

Implementation of the Poyang Lake project, which is being implemented by the FAO, has not yet started, although GEF CEO approval was granted in September 2015. Poyang Lake is an important wetlands ecosystem in the country, and the delay of this project is impacting the coherence of the MSL program.

**Recommendation No. 5:** The UNDP, or rather the UN Resident Representative, could be more proactive in advocating for the FAO to start implementation of the Poyang Lake project as soon as possible.

***Relatively low financial delivery by midterm***

The cumulative financial delivery of the 6 individual projects stands at 35% by midterm, represented as 30 June 2016. Delivery rates are improving on the projects, but considering the UNDP policy on prohibiting

time extensions for GEF financed projects, there is a risk that allocated resources will not be disbursed in time.

**Recommendation No. 6:** Special attention should be placed on ensuring financial delivery is sufficiently high during the second half of the program.

## 4.2. Lessons Learned

### ***A multi-focal project might more conducive to the integrated approaches required to achieve improved conservation and management of wetland protected areas***

The GEF is encouraging more projects implemented under multiple focal areas, for example biodiversity and climate change. This approach has proved generally more conducive to the integrated approaches required to achieve improved biodiversity conservation.

### ***Achieving mainstreaming requires sharing implementation responsibilities among relevant sectors***

Achieving biodiversity mainstreaming is a formidable task, requiring engagement from stakeholders across production sectors and extending to non-governmental civil and business enterprises. In order to achieve meaningful mainstreaming results, project implementation responsibilities and budgets should be shared by relevant sectors.

### ***Mutually supportive activities require proactive coordination***

Coordinating mutually supportive activities requires keen oversight even on single projects. For a multiple project modality, in such a large country as China, coordination of such activities needs to be particularly proactive. Critical path methodology should be applied to work planning, identifying which activities are critical in terms of meeting end of project targets and where to focus resource allocation on inter-dependent activities in order to ensure these targets are achieved

### ***Cofinancing needs to be better aligned with project activities***

Although, the cumulative level of cofinancing realized by midterm exceeds the sum of pledged cofinancing for the 6 individual projects, there has been limited alignment of project activities with the cofinancing activities. A new UNDP template for project documents for GEF financed projects initiated this year, 2016, aims to address this disconnect at the project preparation phase. Cofinancing partners need to be more involved in project preparation for genuine alignment to be realized.

### ***Cofinancing leveraged after project approval should be better captured and reported***

Among the 6 individual projects there were no additional sources of cofinancing identified. Clearly there are other complementary governmental, donor-funded, civil society, and enterprise level projects and initiatives that are running. Stakeholder engagement planning should be strengthened in this regard, and cofinancing realized after project approval should be better captured and reported, e.g., in the annual project implementation reviews (PIRs).

### ***Policy advances more likely to achieve at the subnational level than at the national level***

Achieving policy advances at the national level in China, particularly across more than one sector, requires a lot of time and the political decision timeframes do not match typical GEF project or programmatic horizons. Setting targets for new policies or regulations at the national level should coincide with the requisite stakeholder involvement and sufficient resources and time should be allocated. The likelihood of realizing policy advances at the subnational level, county, prefectural, or possibly even provincial is higher. Subnational governments in China are often leading the way in passing certain regulations and implementing new approaches promoted by the central government.

## ANNEXES

### Annex 1: Progress towards Results

#### Assessment Key:

|                 |                                  |                                   |
|-----------------|----------------------------------|-----------------------------------|
| Green: Achieved | Yellow: On target to be achieved | Red: Not on target to be achieved |
|-----------------|----------------------------------|-----------------------------------|

| Outcome   | Outputs  | Midterm Assessment                 | Midterm Rating and Justification  |            |           |        |               |      |    |    |                  |      |    |    |                   |     |    |    |         |      |    |    |              |             |             |           |   |                          |  |
|---|--|------------------------------------|---|------------|-----------|--------|---------------|------|----|----|------------------|------|----|----|-------------------|-----|----|----|---------|------|----|----|--------------|-------------|-------------|-----------|---|--------------------------|--|
| <b>Program Goal: To strengthen the sub-system of wetland protected areas to respond to existing and emerging threats to their globally significant biodiversity.</b>  |  |                                    |   |            |           |        |               |      |    |    |                  |      |    |    |                   |     |    |    |         |      |    |    |              |             |             |           |   |                          |  |
| <b>COMPONENT 1: Enhancing management effectiveness of wetland PA sub-system.</b>  |  |                                    |   |            |           |        |               |      |    |    |                  |      |    |    |                   |     |    |    |         |      |    |    |              |             |             |           |   |                          |  |
| <p>Effective governance and legal framework for the national wetland PA sub-system delivers <i>improved protection</i> to 18,208,600 ha of wetlands in 822 PAs covering 48,962,400 ha and all 42 wetland types identified in the Ramsar Convention. Improved protection will be measured by:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- increase in METT for a sample of Natural Reserves</li> <li>- approved national systems plan for wetlands</li> <li>- new PA categories suited for wetland protection in place;</li> <li>- exclusive jurisdiction of SFA over core zone of national nature reserves for conservation purposes.</li> </ul>   | <p><u>PA wetlands regulations and management framework strengthened</u> in collaboration with other responsible divisions of SFA and MEPS. The framework will include: (i) National Wetland Conservation Regulation passed by the State Council; (ii) 7 Provincial regulations on PA or wetland management; (iii) 5 Standards and management guidelines for different types of wetland PA; (iv) 3 Guidelines for managing wetlands to increase resilience; (v) Compliance monitoring mechanisms and penalties.</p> | Partially on target to be achieved | <p>Realizing provincial level wetland conservation regulations is on target to be achieved, but it is unlikely that a national wetland conservation regulation will be passed before program closure.</p> |            |           |        |               |      |    |    |                  |      |    |    |                   |     |    |    |         |      |    |    |              |             |             |           |   |                          |  |
| <p>Coverage of natural wetlands in the national PA network, increased from the baseline of 50.3% to 55%, adding an <i>extra 1.7 million</i> hectares under protection and reducing representativity gaps as follows:</p> <table border="1" style="width: 100%; border-collapse: collapse; text-align: center;"> <thead> <tr> <th rowspan="2">Type of wetlands</th> <th rowspan="2">Total area (mil. ha)</th> <th colspan="2">% under PA</th> </tr> <tr> <th>Base-line</th> <th>Target</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td>Natural lakes</td> <td>8.35</td> <td>53</td> <td>58</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Coastal Wetlands</td> <td>5.94</td> <td>61</td> <td>67</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Riverine Wetlands</td> <td>8.2</td> <td>32</td> <td>35</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Marshes</td> <td>13.7</td> <td>55</td> <td>61</td> </tr> <tr> <td><b>Total</b></td> <td><b>36.2</b></td> <td><b>50.3</b></td> <td><b>55</b></td> </tr> </tbody> </table> | Type of wetlands   | Total area (mil. ha)               | % under PA  |            | Base-line | Target | Natural lakes | 8.35 | 53 | 58 | Coastal Wetlands | 5.94 | 61 | 67 | Riverine Wetlands | 8.2 | 32 | 35 | Marshes | 13.7 | 55 | 61 | <b>Total</b> | <b>36.2</b> | <b>50.3</b> | <b>55</b> | <p><u>New wetlands added to the PA system</u> to meet national targets and address climate change threats. This will include : (i) A systematic review of the wetland PA coverage in relation to climate change threats and adaptation needs; (ii) 5 Areas selected in critical areas to increase resilience and connectivity; (iii) PAs set up in these critical areas; gazetted and basic operation started.</p> <p><u>Protection status of the wetland PAs strengthened</u> through upgrading of at least 20 sites from provincial to national NRs, and through designation of at least 6 new Ramsar sites, entailing (i) biodiversity survey of these sites; (ii) management planning in line with international standards, (iii) training of staff, (iv) provision of monitoring and patrolling equipment.</p> | On target to be achieved | <p>The target of increasing coverage of wetland protected areas, 1% per year, is on target to be achieved.</p> <p>The advocacy role of the MSL program could be strengthened, with respect to assisting SFA in systematically reviewing the wetland PA coverage in relation to climate change threats and adaptation needs, and also in promoting improved representativity within the wetland PA system</p> |
| Type of wetlands  |  |                                    | Total area (mil. ha)  | % under PA |           |        |               |      |    |    |                  |      |    |    |                   |     |    |    |         |      |    |    |              |             |             |           |   |                          |  |
|   | Base-line  | Target                             |   |            |           |        |               |      |    |    |                  |      |    |    |                   |     |    |    |         |      |    |    |              |             |             |           |   |                          |  |
| Natural lakes   | 8.35   | 53                                 | 58  |            |           |        |               |      |    |    |                  |      |    |    |                   |     |    |    |         |      |    |    |              |             |             |           |   |                          |  |
| Coastal Wetlands  | 5.94   | 61                                 | 67  |            |           |        |               |      |    |    |                  |      |    |    |                   |     |    |    |         |      |    |    |              |             |             |           |   |                          |  |
| Riverine Wetlands   | 8.2  | 32                                 | 35  |            |           |        |               |      |    |    |                  |      |    |    |                   |     |    |    |         |      |    |    |              |             |             |           |   |                          |  |
| Marshes   | 13.7   | 55                                 | 61  |            |           |        |               |      |    |    |                  |      |    |    |                   |     |    |    |         |      |    |    |              |             |             |           |   |                          |  |
| <b>Total</b>  | <b>36.2</b>  | <b>50.3</b>                        | <b>55</b>   |            |           |        |               |      |    |    |                  |      |    |    |                   |     |    |    |         |      |    |    |              |             |             |           |   |                          |  |
| <p>Biodiversity health status index monitoring system and better staff competencies enables improved support with higher budget, technical capacity and up-to-date</p>  | <p><u>Planning and monitoring wetlands PAs and Ramsar Sites strengthened</u> through institutional strengthening of the SFA and its provincial bureaus. This includes: (i) introduction of standardized PA reporting and performance monitoring system</p>   | On target to be achieved           | <p>The MSL program has delivered ground level capacity building on the application of the Ecosystem Health</p>  |            |           |        |               |      |    |    |                  |      |    |    |                   |     |    |    |         |      |    |    |              |             |             |           |   |                          |  |

| Outcome  | Outputs  | Midterm Assessment                        | Midterm Rating and Justification   |
|--|--|---|--|
| information and data to be channeled quickly to wetland PAs that are most in need and thereby improving management effectiveness.  | nationwide and demonstration in wetland PAs through provincial level projects; (ii) standardized monitoring and reporting system on indicators of biodiversity and ecosystem health for all wetland NRs, designed to provide an overall index of wetland health, including habitat value, habitat impact and species status; (iii) strategic training and development and adoption of a set of professional competency standards for wetland PA management staff as a basis for enhanced performance.  |   | Index (EHI) for supporting PA management decisions. On the national project, the MSL program is assisting SFA in developing a fine-tuned EHI, with the aim of deploying it for wetland PAs nationwide.   |
| PA management effectiveness for the provincial wetland PA systems improved as measured by the METT; (the baseline is to be determined during project preparatory phase.). This conveys increased protection to biodiversity in model wetland PAs measured by 20% improvement in biodiversity health index over baseline (to be established in PPG phase)   | <u>Transforming management practices</u> in six different provinces which harbor important wetland. Targeted interventions include: (i) improved park management planning and boundary demarcation, (iii) setting up ecological monitoring and wetland use management systems; (iv) enforcement strengthening (surveillance, interception of malfeasance and prosecution), (v) staff training tailored to improving management of specific threats at each site, (vi) co-management practices established with communities.  | <b>On target to be achieved</b>           | For the demonstration wetland PAs within the MSL program, there has been a notably increase in METT scores by midterm.<br><br>The phrasing of the performance indicator in the strategic results framework of the national project should be revised to how it is written in the program level results framework.  |
| Increased protection in model wetlands along with additional wetlands incorporated into the wetlands sub-system increases the number of unprotected threatened species under protected (e.g. Chinese beaver, moose, Yangtze crocodile, finless porpoise and red-crowned crane).  |  | <b>On target to be achieved</b>           | Documentary evidence, including from automatic cameras operating in several of the demonstration wetland PAs, shows the presence of key indicator species.   |
| <b>COMPONENT 2: Mainstreaming wetland PAs in development and sectoral planning</b>   |  |   |  |
| National PA system management mainstreamed within national and provincial development planning framework enables increased financial security for PA management and promotes threat reduction at source by ear-marking budget for adoption of new PA management and sector standards and practices, in the sectoral development plans at national and provincial levels and in the 13th 5-year plan and sub-plans; | <u>Wetland PAs mainstreamed into national development planning process and budget allocation systems.</u> These processes provide the broad framework for development and determine the details of mega national projects and their associated budget allocation including that for PA management. The programme will include: (i) design and use of economic tools for proving and quantifying economic value of wetland PAs; (ii) enhancing coordination with other sectors (water, agriculture, infrastructure, mining, energy and fisheries sectors); (iii) integration of wetland biodiversity concerns in the sectoral planning at national level. | <b>Partially on target to be achieved</b> | Wetland conservation and management priorities have been included in the 13 <sup>th</sup> 5-year plan, and the MSL program is supporting the SFA in developing wetland conservation and management guidelines.<br><br>However, mainstreaming wetland conservation and management at the national level, integrating wetland priorities in sectoral planning, will require more time. |
| Strengthened national development and sector planning framework provides safeguards from sector practices in and near wetland PAs in the long term reducing pressures on biodiversity from agricultural; industrial and mining-related pollution; IAS threat; habitat change including water related disturbances from dams. Estimations of this pressure reduction will be developed                              | <u>Wetland PA system integrated into provincial development planning process</u> which determines most site-level land use and development. The programme will include: (i) adoption of climate resilient provincial PA system plans; (ii) enhanced inter-sectoral coordination; (iii) integration of wetland conservation in land use plans; (iv) inclusion of quantitative biodiversity indicators in provincial and local development plans; (v) economic valuation of ecosystem services.<br><br><u>Sector specific standards and safeguards</u> developed to protect wetland PAs from   | <b>Partially on target to be achieved</b> | The MSL program has made substantive contributions with respect to mainstreaming wetland conservation and management at the provincial level.  |



| Outcome   | Outputs   | Midterm Assessment                         | Midterm Rating and Justification   |
|---|---|--|--|
| <p>as part of the process of setting up these safeguards. The biodiversity health index to be set up by the national level project will enable monitoring of pressure reduction and achievement of targets.</p>   | <p>biodiversity threatening sector practices. This includes (i) setting up of standards for infrastructure development and operation, standards and procedures for mining; (ii) issuance of official guidelines for fisheries, aquaculture and agriculture in and around wetland PAs. Some safeguards would be more generic at the level of national sectors and others more specific addressing specific site based threats and based on the lessons learnt from provincial projects.</p>  |  |  |
| <p>Increased financial sustainability for wetland PA management indicated by:<br/>                     - Increased national and provincial governmental budget allocations: an increase of &gt;50% over baseline amount of \$300 million/per year.<br/>                     - Broadened access to new funding sources indicated by the number of successful new sustainable financing mechanisms for PAs (to be determined during PPG)<br/>                     - Reduction of funding gap for model PA due to improved planning and budget allocation efficiencies; increased revenues; and reduced cost from threat reduction at source. (Funding gap baseline and targets to be established during PPG )</p> | <p><u>Provincial PA system financing strengthened</u> and guided by a financing plan to meet actual management needs. This includes (i) improved financing planning skills; (ii) increased cost efficiencies through improved budget allocations and threat reduction at sources; (iii) diversifying financing mechanisms including through the application of ecocompensation schemes; (iv) increasing government budget appropriations through active participation in planning processes and through promoting economic values of wetland (marketed and non-marketed values), including roles of wetlands in climate change adaptation and disaster mitigation proven through a series of strategic assessments</p>                              | <p><b>On target to be achieved</b></p>     | <p>The annual SFA budget for wetland conservation and management has reached approximately USD 300 million in 2015 and 2014; this level of funding exceeds the target of increasing the baseline rate by &gt;50%. PA system financing gaps have also narrowed among the provincial projects, as documented by midterm updates of the GEF biodiversity tracking tool, Objective 1, Section III.</p> |
| <p><b>COMPONENT 3: Knowledge management and lesson learning</b></p>   |   |  |  |
| <p>Strengthened data sharing system between the PA sites and between sectoral agencies, catalyzing improved wetland and PA management: indicated by open access knowledge management platform, being routinely updated by wetland sites and used by planners and in EIA procedures, and by uptake of knowledge and replication of management practices from the provincial projects to similar types of wetland county wide (replication targets to be set during PPG)</p>  | <p><u>Data and information system on the PA management and wetland management.</u> This includes consolidating data from various agencies, and making it accessible to PA managers, provincial and national government agencies, scientists and the general public. The information system will contain <i>inter alia</i>: climate change risk management (ecosystem/biodiversity resilience enhancement), restoration parameters and functional management to maintain critical biological, physical and chemical functions of wetlands. It will also have a knowledge management and sharing component to store and avail information and technical knowhow on successful wetland management cases around the country to promote replication.</p> | <p><b>Not on target to be achieved</b></p> | <p>The MSL program is supporting SFA in developing (or improving) a public information system on wetlands issues. And, the provincial MSL projects are assisting development and upgrade of PA level information management systems.<br/><br/>Achieving a nationwide consolidated data and information system on PA management is beyond the scope of the MSL program.</p>                         |
| <p>Improved understanding among decision makers and the public on value of wetlands and PA system: indicated by Knowledge, Attitude and Practices surveys to be conducted at start and end of projects.</p>   | <p><u>Awareness on the importance of wetland PAs dramatically</u> increased among national and provincial decision makers, government practitioners and the general public, through intensive evidence-based awareness campaigns including production of tools for decision makers, media campaign including use of social media and organisation of special events at national and local levels.</p>   | <p><b>On target to be achieved</b></p>     | <p>The MSL program has supported the SFA on a number of wetland awareness campaigns, and there is anecdotal evidence of increased public knowledge and awareness. A Knowledge, Attitudes, and Practices (KAP) survey is slated to be made before the end of the project, providing an update to the baseline KAP survey.</p>   |

## Annex 2: Wetland PA Sub-System Expansion by Midterm, Cumulative Total for Provincial Projects

### Baseline Information

| Type of Wetlands    | Baseline and Targets Established at Program Approval |                                     |                          |                       |                          |                         | Baseline Information Revised According to 2nd National Wetlands Survey<br>(published in 2015, survey from 2009-2013) |                                     |                          |                       |                          |                         |
|---------------------|--|-------------------------------------|--------------------------|-----------------------|--------------------------|-------------------------|--|-------------------------------------|--------------------------|-----------------------|--------------------------|-------------------------|
|                     | Total Area of Wetlands<br>(million ha)               | Designated as Protected Areas (PAs) |                          |                       |                          |                         | Total Area of Wetlands<br>(million ha)   | Designated as Protected Areas (PAs) |                          |                       |                          |                         |
|                     |  | Baseline (2011)                     |                          | End of Program Target |                          |                         |  | Updated Baseline                    |                          | End of Program Target |                          |                         |
|                     |  | %                                   | Cumulative<br>million ha | %                     | Cumulative<br>million ha | Expansion<br>million ha |  | %                                   | Cumulative<br>million ha | %                     | Cumulative<br>million ha | Expansion<br>million ha |
| Natural Wetlands    | 8.35   | 53%                                 | 4.4255                   | 58%                   | 4.843                    | 0.4175                  | 8.5938   | TBD                                 | TBD                      | TBD                   | TBD                      | TBD                     |
| Coastal Wetlands    | 5.94   | 61%                                 | 3.6234                   | 67%                   | 3.980                    | 0.3564                  | 5.7959   | TBD                                 | TBD                      | TBD                   | TBD                      | TBD                     |
| Riverine Wetlands   | 8.20   | 32%                                 | 2.6240                   | 35%                   | 2.870                    | 0.2460                  | 10.5521  | TBD                                 | TBD                      | TBD                   | TBD                      | TBD                     |
| Marshes             | 13.70  | 55%                                 | 7.5350                   | 61%                   | 8.357                    | 0.8220                  | 21.7329  | TBD                                 | TBD                      | TBD                   | TBD                      | TBD                     |
| Artificial Wetlands | N.I.   | N.I.                                | N.I.                     | N.I.                  | N.I.                     | N.I.                    | 6.7459   | TBD                                 | TBD                      | TBD                   | TBD                      | TBD                     |
| <b>Total</b>        | <b>36.19</b>   | <b>50.3%</b>                        | <b>18.2079</b>           | <b>55.4%</b>          | <b>20.050</b>            | <b>1.8419</b>           | <b>53.4206</b>   | <b>TBD</b>                          | <b>TBD</b>               | <b>TBD</b>            | <b>TBD</b>               | <b>TBD</b>              |

### Wetland Protected Area Expansion Achieved by Midterm (30 June 2016) and End-of-Project Targets for the Provincial Projects

| Type of Wetlands  | DXAL, million ha |                       | Xinjiang (Altai), million ha |                       | Anhui, million ha |                       | Hainan, million ha |                       | Hubei, million ha |                       | Cumulative total, million ha |                       |
|-------------------|------------------|-----------------------|------------------------------|-----------------------|-------------------|-----------------------|--------------------|-----------------------|-------------------|-----------------------|------------------------------|-----------------------|
|                   | Midterm          | End of Project Target | Midterm                      | End of Project Target | Midterm           | End of Project Target | Midterm            | End of Project Target | Midterm           | End of Project Target | Midterm                      | End of Project Target |
| Natural Wetlands  | N.I.             | N.I.                  | N.I.                         | N.I.                  | N.I.              | N.I.                  | N.I.               | N.I.                  | N.I.              | N.I.                  | N.I.                         | N.I.                  |
| Coastal Wetlands  | N.I.             | N.I.                  | N.I.                         | N.I.                  | N.I.              | N.I.                  | N.I.               | N.I.                  | N.I.              | N.I.                  | N.I.                         | N.I.                  |
| Riverine Wetlands | N.I.             | N.I.                  | N.I.                         | N.I.                  | N.I.              | N.I.                  | N.I.               | N.I.                  | N.I.              | N.I.                  | N.I.                         | N.I.                  |
| Marshes           | N.I.             | N.I.                  | N.I.                         | N.I.                  | N.I.              | N.I.                  | N.I.               | N.I.                  | N.I.              | N.I.                  | N.I.                         | N.I.                  |
| <b>Total</b>      | <b>0.484</b>     | <b>0.780</b>          | <b>0.00564</b>               | <b>0.150</b>          | <b>0.03216</b>    | <b>0.080</b>          | <b>0.03849</b>     | <b>0.040</b>          | <b>0.0265</b>     | <b>0.250</b>          | <b>0.5868</b>                | <b>1.30</b>           |

N.I.: Not Indicated; TBD: To Be Determined

### Annex 3: Program Cofinancing

| Source                     | Cofinancer  | Type    | Program Cofinancing Pledged at Project Approval and Realized by Midterm (30 June 2016) |               |              |             |              |              |                  |              |              |              |              |              |              |              |              |             |      |
|----------------------------|---|---------|--|---------------|--------------|-------------|--------------|--------------|------------------|--------------|--------------|--------------|--------------|--------------|--------------|--------------|--------------|-------------|------|
|                            |   |         | Cumulative Total   |               | National     |             | DXAL         |              | Xinjiang (Altai) |              | Anhui        |              | Hainan       |              | Hubei        |              | Jiangxi      |             |      |
|                            |   |         | Pledged*   | Midterm       | Pledged      | Midterm     | Pledged      | Midterm      | Pledged          | Midterm      | Pledged      | Midterm      | Pledged      | Midterm      | Pledged      | Midterm      | Pledged      | Midterm     |      |
| National Government        | State Forestry Administration   | Grant   | 16.00  | 10.26         | 11.92        | 5.69        | 7.50         | 4.57         | 0.00             | 0.00         | 0.00         | 0.00         | 0.00         | 0.00         | 0.00         | 0.00         | 0.00         | 9.13        | 0.00 |
| National Government        | State Forestry Administration, Ministry of Environmental Protection   | In-Kind | 3.98   | 2.00          | 3.98         | 2.00        | 0            | 0            | 0.00             | 0.00         | 0.00         | 0.00         | 0.00         | 0.00         | 0.00         | 0.00         | 0.00         | 0.00        | 0.00 |
| Local Government           | Xinjiang, Hainan, Hubei, Jiangxi, Anhui, Heilongjiang, Inner Mongolia | Grant   | 99.50  | 107.73        | 0            | 0           | 16.00        | 7.99         | 16.50            | 34.87        | 11.69        | 14.42        | 13.00        | 14.66        | 10.87        | 35.79        | 15.85        | 0.00        |      |
| Local Government           | Xinjiang, Hainan, Hubei, Jiangxi, Anhui, Heilongjiang, Inner Mongolia | In-Kind | 17.74  | 4.27          | 0            | 0           | 0            | 0            | 4.50             | 0.00         | 5.76         | 3.23         | 4.30         | 0.00         | 6.59         | 1.04         | 1.25         | 0.00        |      |
| Civil Society Organization | International Crane Foundation  | Grant   | 0.00   | 0.00          | NA           | NA          | NA           | NA           | NA               | NA           | NA           | NA           | NA           | NA           | NA           | NA           | NA           | 0.14        | 0.00 |
| GEF Agency                 | UNDP  | Grant   | 5.00   | 2.50          | 0.90         | 0.45        | 1.00         | 0.50         | 1.00             | 0.50         | 0.70         | 0.35         | 0.70         | 0.35         | 0.70         | 0.35         | 0.00         | 0.00        |      |
| GEF Agency                 | FAO   | Grant   | 0.38   | NA            | NA           | NA          | NA           | NA           | NA               | NA           | NA           | NA           | NA           | NA           | NA           | NA           | NA           | NA          |      |
| GEF Agency                 | FAO   | In-Kind | 0.00   | 0.00          | NA           | NA          | NA           | NA           | NA               | NA           | NA           | NA           | NA           | NA           | NA           | NA           | NA           | 0.32        | 0.00 |
| <b>Total</b>               |   |         | <b>142.60</b>  | <b>126.77</b> | <b>16.80</b> | <b>8.14</b> | <b>24.50</b> | <b>13.06</b> | <b>22.00</b>     | <b>35.37</b> | <b>18.15</b> | <b>18.00</b> | <b>18.00</b> | <b>15.01</b> | <b>18.16</b> | <b>37.19</b> | <b>26.69</b> | <b>0.00</b> |      |

\*Cumulative total of pledged cofinancing taken from the indicative cofinancing table in the program framework document. Pledged cofinancing from the individual projects taken from the respective CEO Endorsement Requests for each project.  
 NA: Not Applicable

## Annex 4: Signed UNEG Code of Conduct Agreement Form

### Evaluators:

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

### Evaluation Consultant Agreement Form

Agreement to abide by the Code of Conduct for Evaluation in the UN System

Name of Consultants: Xue Dayuan, James Lenoci

We confirm that we have received and understood and will abide by the United Nations Code of Conduct for Evaluation.

Signature:

Signed in Beijing on 19 September 2016

Signed in Budapest on 19 September 2016



**Xue Dayuan**

National Consultant / Team 1 Specialist



**James Lenoci**

International Consultant, Team 1 Leader

## **Annex 5: Terms of Reference**

## Annex 6: Signed MTR Final Report Clearance Form

|   |       |
|---|-------|
| <b>Midterm Review Report Reviewed and Cleared By:</b> |       |
| <b>Commissioning Unit</b>                             |       |
| Name:   |       |
| Signature:  | Date: |
| <b>UNDP-GEF Regional Technical Advisor</b>            |       |
| Name:   |       |
| Signature:  | Date: |