

**UNDP-GEF Strengthening the Effectiveness of the Protected Area System in Qinghai Province, China to conserve globally important biodiversity**

 **Management Response for MTR**

**Qinghai Project Management Office**

**22 October 2015**

**Management Response for Mid-term Review of**

**Strengthening the Effectiveness of the Protected Area System in Qinghai Province, China to conserve globally important biodiversity**

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**I. Background**

The project was designed to directly target barriers through a series of steps that aim to enhance PA system effectiveness. The global and national biodiversity significance of Qinghai’s PA system, its vital role as the catchment area for three major rivers, the nature and severity of on-going threats to the PA system and the persistence of important barriers limiting its effectiveness have led the Government to prioritize and present this project for GEF support.

The project goal is to strengthen the effectiveness of the PA system in Qinghai Province, China to conserve globally important biodiversity. The project objective is to catalyse management effectiveness of Qinghai’s PA system to fulfil its purpose of conserving globally important biodiversity, by removing the barriers of outcomes. The focus of the project is to strengthen the PA system in Qinghai to better protect its unique biodiversity and more effectively manage this PA network as a whole.

The project is implemented fromSeptember,2013toSeptember 2017 that is part ofCBPF along globally important biodiversity conservation, and is a GEF-funded project which its co-fund is from the local provincial government of Qinghai. As the international executing agency of the project, UNDP CO provides overall supervision of the project and Qinghai Forestry Department is responsible for implementation of the project.

This document summarizes the response of management to Mid-Term Review of the Strengthening the Effectiveness of the Protected Area System in Qinghai Province, China to conserve globally important biodiversity

MTR is an integral part of UNDP/GEF project cycle. It aimed to identify potential project design problems, to assess progress towards the achievement of the project objective, and to identify and document lessons learned about project design, implementation, and management. The review also focused on aspects such as effectiveness, efficiency, and relevance of the project, and the likelihood that the envisioned global environmental benefits will be realized and whether the project results will be sustained after closure of GEF funding. Findings of this review are formulated as recommendations for enhanced implementation during the final period of the project implementation timeframe.

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 made during field visits.

The MTR panel was consisted of two consultants consisting of an international consultant and a national consultant. The MTR was carried out in April–August 2015. It included 15 days kick-off meeting, interviewing partners and other stakeholders in Beijing, Xining and Tibetan herders during field visits to two of the 12pilot villages in SNNR.

The draft MTR report was received and circulated for comments from UNDP, CTA, PMO early August, which were compiled and sent back to the MTR team. The final version of the report was submitted on 20 August 2015.

**II. Overview of Management Response**

The project has made satisfactory progress towards outcomes. The overall rating applied for the Project is satisfactoryas evidenced by the following key achievements by midterm:

* Legal, regulatory, and institutional frameworks have been strengthened. The assessment of Component 1 of the Financial Sustainability scorecard has increased from a baseline figure of 15% in 2011 to 30% in 2015.
* Through capacity building and support in developing management plans, the management effectiveness of the 5 national nature reserves has improved. Increases in METT scores for the national nature reserves have ranged from 20% for the Kekexili NR to 131% for the Golmud Poplar Forest NR.
* The biodiversity baseline surveys completed for three target units within the Sanjiangyuan nature reserve are substantive contributions to the knowledge base of these ecosystems.
* Cross-sectoral advisory groups are supporting biodiversity mainstreaming for 5 sectoral plans, and also providing input to the preparation of the 13th 5-year plan.
* The project has facilitated completion of regulations and technical guidelines for (1) road construction, operation, and maintenance, and (2) electricity transmission line construction and operation.
* A comprehensive trainings needs assessment has been completed, and 440 person-days of trainings delivered to PA staff and other stakeholders. The midterm capacity development scorecard assessment is 63.6%, which is nearly a 100% increase since 2011.
* At the end of 2014, permanent PA staff numbered 231, which is up the baseline figure of 113 in 2011. This is a noteworthy increase towards the end of project target of 360, particularly considering the current government restrictions on staff hiring across the board.
* Management plans have been developed for 8 of the 11 nature reserves in the PA system, and the following 5 have gone through two rounds of revision: Qinghai Lake NR, Kekexili NR, Qaidam Haloxylon Forest NR, Golmud Poplar Forest NR, and the Qumahe Block of the SNNR.
* Funding for PA operations has increased from USD 1.04 million per year in 2011 to USD 2.4 million in 2013-14.
* Participatory rural appraisals have been completed in the 12 pilot villages, and based upon the priorities identified in this process, collaborative PA management agreements have been signed with coordination committees formed in each of the villages, and 12 village-level collaborative management committees have been established and related management rules developed using a participatory approach.
* Participatory conservation zoning processes have been started in some of the pilot villages; a potentially replicable model that could be up-scaled in other parts of the PA system.
* Training and equipment have been provided to the participants of the pilot collaborative management arrangements, and implementation of some of the activities has started, including monitoring and patrolling, and solid waste management.

As outlined above, a number of achievements have been realized by midterm of the project, and satisfactory progress has been made towards the performance indicators established. There are certain weaknesses, however, that are constraining realization of sustained results following project closure.

Firstly, the strategic results framework was not critically reviewed at the inception phase, and there are a number of indicator targets that are not SMART compliant, while other aspects of the intended added value of the project are not represented. Sustainability structures are also not sufficiently integrated in the results framework.

The project has managed to assemble a group of qualified national and international consultants, but their efforts have not been optimally synergized. Internal communication should be improved to maximize input from technical consultants and service providers.

With respect to protected area management and financial sustainability, there have been some improvements reported in the management effectiveness tracking tool (METT) and financial sustainability midterm scorecard assessments, but there has been insufficient strategic focus regarding PA staffing and sustainable financing. While the project management team has started to address sustainability concerns, specific actions have not been consolidated into a coherent sustainability strategy.

The identified weaknesses, along with associated recommendations are compiled. The 16recommendations have been formulated to support improving project effectiveness and enhance the likelihood that project results will be sustained after GEF funding ceases.

The PMO will take the recommendations into strategic arrangement and resolve shortcomings in the second half of the project and achieve better results and project impact at the completion of the project.

The following are the responses to the specific recommendations:

**Recommendation 1: The MTR team recommends the modifications to the strategic results framework, as outlined in the separate table below. The recommended changes are to the indicators and targets; the project objective and outcomes remain the same. These recommended modifications should be reviewed and approved by the project management team, the UNDP CO, the RTA, and finally by the Project Steering Committee (PSC). Upon approval by the PSC, the modified strategic results framework should be the official version used for the remainder of the implementation timeframe and for the terminal evaluation.**

By reviewing strategic results frameworkand indicators during the MTR of the project, PMO is aware of the issues of outcome and output indicators and targets. Following the recommendationsof the MTR, after discussion with Director of PMO and other PMO staff, CTA and Project Manager jointlyprepared an updated strategic results frameworkwith modifications ofsome indicators and targets suggested by MTR report. Then, it will be circulated forUNDP review and submitted to PSC for approvalduring PSC meeting in October 2015.

**Recommendation 2: The following actions are recommended to improve inter-linkages between project components and communication/coordination among national and international consultants:**

2a: Create a project website, primarily for internal purposes, and assign one of the PMO staff members responsible to update the site at least on a monthly basis. A working area should be established, where national and international consultants can provide concise information/feedback. Comments should be translated on a regular basis;

2b: Deliverables produced by national and international consultants should include an executive summary that is translated from Chinese to English or English to Chinese. These deliverables, with translated executive summaries, should be uploaded to the project website within one month from finalization;

2c: Opportunities for collaborating across project components should be discussed on a weekly basis in project management meetings, including the project manager and component managers.

2d: Component managers should prepare annual monitoring and evaluation plans for their respective outcomes, using the strategic results framework as a guideline, but also developing interim performance indicators and targets to assist them in assessing the progress of work. Quarterly progress reports on the monitoring and evaluation plans should be prepared, translated to English, and uploaded to the project website.

PMO was aware of the weakness of communications, in particular, communications between international and national consultants. Agreeing with detail MTR recommendations above, firstly, PMO will establish a website for the project while knowledge management system is in operation in order to set up area for the communications among international and national consultants as well as the project staff and upload the summary of consultants' project report on the website. Secondly, PMO will keep regular meetings to discuss collaboration issue cross components on a weekly basis. Thirdly, component managers will prepare annual monitoring and evaluation plans for their respective outcomes, using the updated strategic results framework as a guideline, and component managers will also prepare the Quarterly Progress Reports on the monitoring and evaluation plans.

**Recommendation 3: A mentoring program should be designed and implemented to strengthen the capacity of provincial and sub-provincial stakeholders in biodiversity conservation strategic planning and management implementation. A specific group of provincial and sub-provincial staff from QFD and other departments responsible for PA management should be selected for the mentoring program. The design of the program should be adaptive, e.g., responding to opportunities for interaction as part of assignments carried out by national and/or international consultants.**

PMO will take biodiversity conservation strategic planning and management implementation as mentoring programme into capacity building under component. PMO will select a specific group of provincial and sub-provincial staff from QFD and other departments responsible for PA management for the mentoring programme.PMO will cooperate with QFD and Environment Protection Department together to design a mentoring program on biodiversity conservation strategic planning and management implementation, to organize training workshopsand experience sharing workshops on biodiversity conservation strategic planning and management implementation.

**Recommendation 4: A plan should be developed and implemented to increase** **gender/minority inclusion** **in the collaborative management arrangements and activities piloted under component 3. The targets of this plan should be integrated into the updated strategic results framework, which is outlined below in Recommendation No. 5.**

Gender/minority inclusion is cross-cutting issue. PMO will continuously pay attention to gender balance issue and discuss arrangement and criteria to increase women in village co-management committees and assess to meet women's needs and specifically design project activity to address the needs.

**Recommendation 5: A thorough assessment should be made of the each of the tracking tools, for both the baseline and midterm figures. The indicators and targets of the** **strategic results framework should be then reformulated and/or reconciled.**

PMO and consultants will reviewboth the baseline and midterm figures of tracking tools and reconcile the indicators and targets of the strategic results framework. Then, The indicators and targets of the strategic results framework was reviewed and approved by PSC on 21 October 2015 (same actions as Recommendation 1).

**Recommendation 6: A knowledge management strategy should be developed, including (1) defining the roles and responsibilities for interpreting information inputs; (2) formulating a strategy for developing management responses to ecosystem perturbations; (3) outlining roles/responsibilities and processes for interpreting PA management effectiveness; and (4) describing how PA management results and lessons learned will be disseminated. In addition to the KMS strategy,** **a value-for-money analysis should be carried out, comparing** **the costs and benefits of** **having an information management system hosted by the QFD to the option of expanding the existing information management system operated by the Qinghai Environmental Monitoring Centre.**

Prior to MTR, PMO had a discussion and consultation on strategic arrangement of KMS management with Wildlife and Nature Reserve Management Bureau of QFD(WNRMB) and has been getting WNRMB involved in KMS development and management and will combine the information of nature reserves and Monitoring and Patrolling of NRs managed by WNRMB together and information will be updated by individual nature reserves. Meanwhile, PMO will share managerial authority of KMS with WNRMB during the project cycle. Afterwards, PMO will hand over the managerial authority to WNRMB to ensure that KMS benefits Qinghai biodiversity conservation in a long term. However, it was not written on a plan.With the development of KMS, PMO and WNRMB will develop a KMS management strategy together in 2016 and submit for approval in the PSC meeting in 2016.

Regarding options for KMS analysis, the advisory team assessed thefeasibilityoftechnical proposal of KMS. One option is to have an information management system hosted by the QFD. Another optionis to expand the existing information management system operated by the Qinghai Environmental Monitoring Centre. The advisory team recommended to develop a KMS combing with forestry information centre of QFD rather than to expand the existing information management system of the Qinghai Environmental Monitoring Centre. Because the latter is project-based information system that only focuses onenvironment monitoring SNNR and Qinghai Lake surrounding area at macro-level, it does not meet the need of provincial biodiversity conservation and nature reserve management. Moreover, it is necessary for QFD to have overall KMS covering 10 nature reserves and provincial biodiversity information. Therefore, the decision is clear and reasonable.

**Recommendation 7:** **The QBSAP should be strengthened by including: (1) actions addressing potential climate change impacts to biodiversity, (2) an itemization of the major ecosystem services and some approximate economic values, and (3) actions associated with improving the PA staffing and funding shortfalls within the Qinghai PA system.**

PMO will immediately coordinate with Qinghai BSAP working group and recommend the integrating the research results and issues listed above into the BSAP.(1) A report on potential climate change impacts to biodiversity has been finished and results could be integrated into the QBSAP; (2) Itemization of the major ecosystem services and some approximate economic values has been estimated by another QFD co-financing project, and the results could be used in QBSAP;(3) share research reports of financial assessment and METT with QHBSAP working group and integrate the issues of the PA staffing and funding shortfalls and recommendations into QBSAP, moreactions need to be taken to improve the PA staffing and funding shortfalls within the Qinghai PA system.

**Recommendation8: Recommendation: The MTR team recommends the following actions to strengthen the biodiversity mainstreaming efforts:**

8a: Summarize results of the comprehensive review of provincial regulations into a written report, indicating which regulations were reviewed, and what steps were taken to remove conditions and/or entire regulations that are not conducive biodiversity conservation.

8b: Work with the Provincial Land Resources Department in updating the Provincial Land Use Plan by indicating the key conservation areas highlighted in the QBSAP.

8c: Work with at least one County Land Resources Department, in one of the areas where the pilot villages are located, and assist them in developing their county Key Ecological Function Area Plan. This county plan should make reference to the village level conservation zoning areas.

8d: Identify linkages between provincial departments and academic institutions to facilitate applied research, e.g., the effects of the pylon structures used for electrical transmission developments. The project should try to fund some preliminary research as a means of operationalizing the partnerships.

8e: Prepare a running tally of (1) specific activities added to sectoral plans that have been operationalized (approved budget and implementation started); (2) specific activities in the QBSAP that have been operationalized (approved budget and implementation started); items/activities that have already been considered for the 13th 5-year plan.

8f: Develop specific inspection protocols for each of the new regulations and guidelines being developed, and invite inspection stakeholders to participate in the process.

8g: Establish a tracking register for the new regulations and guidelines that are being developed, in order to document how the regulations and guidelines are being implemented in practice. The register should include a brief description of the activity/investment, the timeframe, investment value, photograph documentation, etc. The register should also include a list of environmental impact assessments that have used the guidelines in assessing biodiversity impacts and recommending appropriate mitigation measures.

8h: Ensure that waste management provisions are included in regulations/guidelines, as many of the communities among the pilot villages in Outcome 3 have complained of poor waste management as part of infrastructure development projects.

Regarding recommendations 8a, 8b, PMO has coordinated with Qinghai Office of Legislative Affairs to collect the review reports from key departments as the department has conducted desk review of existing regulations and policies. PMO have included Provincial Land Resources Department into advisory group in mainstreaming biodiversity conservation to 13th Five-Year Plan and sectoral plans.

As for recommendations 8c, PMO needs to coordinate with county land resource managementauthoritywhether there is specific land use plan developed or developing in the contextof county Key Ecological Function Area Plan. Due to the life cycle of land use mapping, it is necessary to consult with local land use management authority and make sure that the village level conservation zoning areas will be referenced in country-level land use plan.

As for recommendations 8d, PMOwill seek for the existing global good practicefor the sectors. Right now, mainstreaming specialist will helppurchase the guideline of the effects of the pylon structures used for electrical transmission development that may be applied this practice in the design and deploymentof the pylon structures.To fund some preliminary research, such as the design of the pylon structures, is beyond the GEF project scope.

As for recommendations 8e, 8f, 8g, it is good tracking approach to see what extend the regulations and guidelines have been applied in practices. PMO will coordinate with Qinghai Office of Legislative Affairs to follow on this approach that will continue to take leading role to promote this strategy.

**Recommendation 9: Based upon the findings of the MTR mission and recommendations included in reports prepared by national and international consultants, the following actions are recommended for the second half of the project in terms of strengthening the sustainable financing capacity of the PA system:**

9a: Establish a task force with relevant provincial and sub-provincial stakeholders for formulating a system for reviewing ecological compensation programs and making recommendations of how the funds are allocated. The system should include tracking how the funds are actually disbursed.

9b: Identify a few key revenue generation options, identified in the PA financing report, and pilot them, preferably at least one in each of the nature reserves. Lessons learned from the pilot results should be consolidated into a series of case studies.

9c: Facilitate development of a regional plan for implementing policy reforms that would lead to a more systematic and strategic approach to improving financial sustainability, especially for ecotourism and payments for ecosystem services.

Following recommendation 9a, instead of setting up a task force, PMO will work closely with Financial Division of QFD to review the ecological compensation programs and tracking the funds flow.The ecological compensation programs have been strictly supervised and financially inspected by government agencies.

Regarding recommendation 9b and 9c, PMO is coordinating with provincial Political Consultative Conference to identify the issues PAs in Qinghai are facing and make recommendationto decision makers to improve the PA financial sustainability.

**Recommendation 10: The project should develop and implement a site level pilot of a collaborative arrangement between thegovernment run** **Public Service Program and community co-management structures as means of addressing shortfalls in PA staff.**

Following the recommendation, the PMO will coordinate with SNNR Administrationat both county level and site level as well as the county-level governments and authorities (such as husbandryauthorities) to establish collaboration between co-management and Public Service Program and will continue to make effort on this linkage.

**Recommendation 11: The following actions are recommended to strengthen the nature reserve management plans:**

11a: The plans should include biodiversity assessment protocols, building upon what was accomplished through the baseline surveys sponsored by the project.

11b: The Management Effectiveness Tracking Tool (METT) should be considered to be integrated into the management plans, as regular management tool.

11c: The process of compiling and reporting on the monitoring and patrolling data from the community driven collaborative management arrangements in the pilot villages should be described in the plans.

11d: Each management plan should include a specific activity that is consistent with the PA system strategy of increasing the capacity and number of PA staff on a system scale.

11e: The plans should also indicate how the monitoring and patrolling information obtained through the Public Service Position (PSP) activities, a Government-sponsored collaborative management program.

Regarding recommendation 11, these detail recommendationsarehelpful. PMO will provide the recommendations to nature reserves and management plan development specialist to ensure the recommendations are integrated in the development of management plans.

**Recommendation 12: The MTR team recommends creating a task force or advisory committee, including but not limited to the following stakeholders: representatives of the provincial focal agency for the PSP program, the QFD, the SNNR Administration, and the project management team. The task force (or advisory committee) should develop a plan for linking the top-down PSP program with bottom-up project model.**

This is a strategic recommendation for the sustainability of co-management, creating a task force or advisory committee is not very difficult, but how to make it function is not easy.PMO took this recommendation and consulted with some key stakeholders to develop a plan as suggested during the PSC meeting on 21 October 2015. The key stakeholders include Department of Finance, Department of Agriculture and Husbandry, QFD, the SNNR Administration as well as county governments and related authorities. PSC discussed this recommendation carefully and decided that this recommendation was beyond the scope of the Project and was not applicable.

**Recommendation 13: A sustainability strategy should be developed for Outcome 3 and include, but not limited to, the following:**

13a: Assist the collaborative management coordination committees in obtaining legal status (community based organization) by end of project;

13b: Negotiate partnership arrangements for collaborative management coordination committees after project closure (e.g., with SNNR);

13c: Consider adjusting the flow of financial and material support extended to the coordination committees, by having the SNNR Administration disburse the funds and assets to the communities rather than the PMO. This would require an agreement between the SNNR Administration and the PMO;

13d: Facilitate the acknowledgement of village conservation areas, through the village regulations and possibly also county land use plans;

13e: Support the communities and the SNNR Administration in preparation of annual NR management reports, thus creating a replicable model that could be continued after project closure;

13f: Prepare simple operation and maintenance instructions for equipment provided. The instructions should be also be available in Tibetan language.

This is good recommendation. Regarding specific recommendation13a, 13b,13d and13f, PMO has also taken these issues into considerations and worked hard to make them happen, such as the legal status of co-management committee. The PMO will address these with consultants' support in the second half of the project by strengthening the collaboration with SNNR. However, as for specific recommendation 13c, PMO has made comment on the MTR report. It is not inconsistence with the Manual of GEF Fund Management and Property Management. The 4th meeting of PSC on Oct. 21, 2015 determined that the project provides fund to communities keeping on the existing flow of fund that is from PMO to community. Then, the project gets SNNR Administration to more involve in the project activities.

**Recommendation14: A few additional actions recommended to strengthen the results under Outcome 3 include the following:**

14a: A cumulative work plan should be prepared for Outcome 3, extending to the end of the project. The actions outlined under the sustainability strategy recommendation should be incorporated in the plan, and allocation of resources should be carefully examined to ensure that the available funds are optimally utilized;

14b: Livestock (and property) loss due to wildlife attacks are expected to increase under enhanced biodiversity conservation. Compensation for villagers for these losses is a type of ecological compensation, but such compensation has not been sufficiently disbursed, even though there are regulatory frameworks in place. In the pilot villages, the project should work with County officials in developing a replicable model for facilitating fair compensation arrangements;

14c: Burning of plastic waste should be prohibited, as toxic gases and residuals have adverse health and environmental impacts. County waste collection and disposal companies should be engaged in developing waste management solutions for the pilot villages;

14d: Based upon the surveys made with herders in the visited communities, cooperative herding is a common arrangement. Development of alternative livelihood opportunities, e.g., by trading dairy products or handicrafts, or by supporting ecological tourism development, should be considered using these existing cooperative arrangements. The cooperative herding arrangements could also to address improved collaborative ecosystem management, e.g., through agreeing to remove fences, protection of water springs, etc.;

14e: For the cooperatives being considered in the pilot villages, supply chain analyses should be carried out to determine existing barriers, such as distance to market, storage capacities, etc., so that development support can be better focused. Also, a value chain analysis of yak wool products might be sensible, as it seems that such production is uncommon in the targeted grassland ecosystems.

Regarding the recommendation 14a, PMO will adjust work plan and budget for the second half of the project to speed up the spending of project fund under Outcome 3.

Regarding the recommendation 14b, PMO had discussed with WNRMB of QFD on wildlife damage prevention and compensation. The project will continue to build up blown bear fence for herder in Suojia and Qumahe where there are intensive wildlife damage cases and conduct pilot compensation for wildlife damage.

Regarding the recommendation 14c, we will train herders in garbage classification and appropriate treatment to avoid burning of solid waste.

Regarding the recommendation 14d and 14e, PMO may take these into considerations and make efforts to assists cooperatives in development of alternative livelihood opportunities and cooperative herding arrangements.

**Recommendation 15: Traditional knowledge on conservation of biodiversity and cultural resources should be captured in one or more case studies (knowledge products) and disseminated to a broad spectrum of relevant stakeholders.**

Two traditional knowledge research reports was developed and PMO will integrate it into a traditional knowledge productfor herders and other stakeholders.

**Recommendation16：A separate division should be formed within the QFD for dealing with collaborative management and community relations issues.**

Setting-up a division for co-management within QFD is beyond the Project scope, becausedivision(WNRMB) in QFD is responsible overall management of all nature reserves rather than such specific issues. The nature reserves are responsible for the community relations, thus the nature reserves should have or create a division to deal with collaborative management and community relations issues. This has been recommended in the report of institutional analysis and training needs assessment. PMO would emphasize this arrangement in their management plan development. PSC discussed this recommendation carefully on the PSC meeting on 21 October 2015 and decided that this recommendation was not applicable.

**III. Clarification**

MTR Recommendations are comprehensive and practical focusing on addressing actual issues and challenges project has encountered as well as those would be confronted in future. There are a few specific concerns against Recommendation 8c, Project needs to further consult and discuss with relevant agencies and authorities(i.e. Land resources) for more practical decisions and actions based on local realities.

Afterfully discussion and recognition of local realities of Qinghai and Sanjiangyuan Region, PMO would like to clarify the issues related to some specific recommendations:

* as to Recommendation 8d, PMO believe that to fund some preliminary research, such as the design of the pylon structures, is beyond the GEF project scope;
* As to Recommendation 9a, the ecological compensation programs have been strictly supervised and financially inspected by government agencies, the recommended task force is not necessary;
* As to Recommendation 12, PMO took this recommendation and consulted with some key stakeholders to develop a plan as suggested during the PSC meeting on 21 October 2015, the PSC decided that this recommendation was beyond the scope of the Project and was not applicable.
* As for specific recommendation 13c, PMO has made comment on the MTR report. It is not inconsistence with the Manual of GEF Fund Management and Property Management;
* As to Recommendation 16, PMO believe that WNRMB in QFD is responsible overall management of all nature reserves rather than such specific issues. The nature reserves are responsible for the community relations, thus the nature reserves should have or create a division to deal with collaborative management and community relationsissues.

On 21 October 2015, the PSC discussed the above-mentioned recommendations carefully and decided that Recommendation 8d, 9a, 12, 13c and 16 are not applicable for further actions.

**IV. Looking Forward**

With comprehensive and considerate recommendations from MTR, strong support from UNDP, provincial stakeholders and PAs, the project team is confident to achieve a satisfactory performance by the end of the project.

MTR process itself is also very good learning opportunity for the project and its partners and stakeholders, reviewing the previous work had been done, summarizing achievements and lessons learned, identifying issues, developing counter-measures, and looking forward to the future. If the counter-measures have been fully conducted, We are sure that the project will achieve better results and occur big development impact in biodiversity conservation in Qinghai.

Though there are lots of arguments in some points between PMO and MTR team, especially the MTR team leader, webelieve the discussion and clarification is worth of time and efforts. Sincere appreciations from the MTR teamand their helpful recommendations, and for the constant help and support from UNDP, local authorities, and PAs.

**Specific management response against each recommendation of MTR**

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| **Recommendation 1: The MTR team recommends the modifications to the strategic results framework, as outlined in the separate table below. The recommended changes are to the indicators and targets; the project objective and outcomes remain the same. These recommended modifications should be reviewed and approved by the project management team, the UNDP CO, the RTA, and finally by the Project Steering Committee (PSC). Upon approval by the PSC, the modified strategic results framework should be the official version used for the remainder of the implementation timeframe and for the terminal evaluation.** |
| **Management Response:** Following the suggestion of the MTR, CTA and PMO will prepare a proposal for the modifications of the strategic results framework. Then, it will be circulated for peer review and approval by the PSC. |
| **Key Action(s)** | **Time Frame** | **Responsible** **Unit(s)** |  **Tracking** |
| **Status** | **Comments** |
| Review and reviseindicators and targetsin the Strategic framework resultsaccording to the suggestions in MTRReport | Sept. 2015 | PMO,CTA,UNDP | Scheduled |  |
| Peer review the revisedindicators and targets and approved by UNDP and PSC. | Oct. 2015 | UNDP, PSC | Scheduled |  |

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| **Recommendation 2: The following actions are recommended to improve inter-linkages between project components and communication/coordination among national and international consultants:** |
| **Management Response:** 1) PMO will establish a website for the project while knowledge management system is in operation in order to set up area for the communications among international and national consultants as well as the project staff and upload the summary of consultants' project report on the website. 2) PMO will keep regular meetings to discuss collaboration issue cross components on a weekly basis. 3) The component managers will prepare annual monitoring and evaluation plans for their respective outcomes, using the updated strategic results framework as a guideline and Quarterly progress reports on the monitoring and evaluation plans will be prepared.  |
| **Key Action(s)** | **Time Frame** | **Responsible** **Unit(s)** |  **Tracking** |
| **Status** | **Comments** |
| PMO will establish a website for the project while knowledge management system is in operation in order to set up area for the communications among international and national consultants as well as the project staff and upload the summary of consultants' project report on the website. | Oct.-Dec. 2015 | PMO | Scheduled |  |
| PMO will keep regular meetings to discuss collaboration issue cross components on a weekly basis. | Sept-Dec.2015 | PMO | In progress |  |
| The component managers will prepare annual monitoring and evaluation plans for their respective outcomes, using the updated strategic results framework as a guideline and Quarterly progress reports on the monitoring and evaluation plans will be prepared. | Oct.-Dec.2015 | PMO,CTA | Scheduled |  |

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| **Recommendation 3: A mentoring program should be designed and implemented to strengthen the capacity of provincial and sub-provincial stakeholders in biodiversity conservation strategic planning and management implementation. A specific group of provincial and sub-provincial staff from QFD and other departments responsible for PA management should be selected for the mentoring program. The design of the program should be adaptive, e.g., responding to opportunities for interaction as part of assignments carried out by national and/or international consultants.** |
| **Management Response:** PMO will take biodiversity conservation strategic planning and management implementation as mentoring programme into capacity building under component. PMO may cooperate with Environment Protection Department together to conduct the mentoring programme. |
| **Key Action(s)** | **Time Frame** | **Responsible** **Unit(s)** |  **Tracking** |
| **Status** | **Comments** |
| Set-up a specific group of provincial l staff from QFD and other departments responsible for PA management for the mentoring program. | Oct-Dec. 2015 | PMO, CTA | Scheduled | Also consult with QFD (especially wild animal and nature reserve bureau) for necessary technical advises |
| Hold a trainging workshop onbiodiversity conservation strategic planning and management implementation | March-April 2016 | PMO, Consultants | Scheduled |  |
| Stakeholder Training Workshop on biodiversity conservation  | May-Dec. 2016 | Consultants | Scheduled |  |

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| **Recommendation 4: A plan should be developed and implemented to increase gender/minority inclusion in the collaborative management arrangements and activities piloted under component 3. The targets of this plan should be integrated into the updated strategic results framework, which is outlined below in Recommendation No. 5.** |
| **Management Response:** PMO will continuously pay attention to gender balance issue and discuss arrangement and criteria to increase women in villageco-management committees and assess to meet women's needs and specifically design project activity to address the needs. |
| **Key Action(s)** | **Time Frame** | **Responsible** **Unit(s)** |  **Tracking** |
| **Status** | **Comments** |
| At least 2 women in village co-management committee | Sept.-Nov. 2015 | PMO, County PMOs | In progress |  |
| Assess women's need | Jan-April2016 | County PMOs, Consultants | Scheduled |  |
| Design and deliver specific activities to address women's need in annual co-management plan | 2016 | County PMOs,  | Scheduled |  |

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| **Recommendation 5: A thorough assessment should be made of the each of the tracking tools, for both the baseline and midterm figures. The indicators and targets of the strategic results framework should be then reformulated and/or reconciled.** |
| **Management Response:** PMO and consultant will review both the baseline and midterm figures of tracking tools and reconcile the indicators and targets of the strategic results framework. Then, it will be circulated for peer review and the final version will be officially approved by the PSC. |
| **Key Action(s)** | **Time Frame** | **Responsible** **Unit(s)** |  **Tracking** |
| **Status** | **Comments** |
| Review both the baseline and midterm figures of tracking tools of each of nature reserves and reconcile the indicators and targets of the strategic results framework. | Sept.-Oct. 2015 | PMO,CTA | Finished |  |
| Peer review and approval ofthe revised indicators and targets of the strategic results framework. | Sept.-Oct. 2015 | PMO,CTA | Finished | Reviewed and approved by PSC on 21 October 2015 |

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| **Recommendation 6: A knowledge management strategy should be developed, including (1) defining the roles and responsibilities for interpreting information inputs; (2) formulating a strategy for developing management responses to ecosystem perturbations; (3) outlining roles/responsibilities and processes for interpreting PA management effectiveness; and (4) describing how PA management results and lessons learned will be disseminated. In addition to the KMS strategy, a value-for-money analysis should be carried out, comparing the costs and benefits of having an information management system hosted by the QFD to the option of expanding the existing information management system operated by the Qinghai Environmental Monitoring Centre.** |
| **Management Response:** PMO and WNRMB will together develop a KMS management strategy in 2016. |
| **Key Action(s)** | **Time Frame** | **Responsible** **Unit(s)** |  **Tracking** |
| **Status** | **Comments** |
| Define the roles and responsibilities for KMS management | Nov.-Dec. 2015 | PMO,Sub-contractor, WNRMB | Scheduled |  |
| Formulate a strategy including interpreting PA management effectiveness, management responses and sharing PA management results and lessons learned and so on. | 2016 | PMO,Sub-contractor, WNRMB | Scheduled | Submit for approval in the PSC meeting in 2016. |

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| **Recommendation 7: The QBSAP should be strengthened by including: (1) actions addressing potential climate change impacts to biodiversity, (2) an itemization of the major ecosystem services and some approximate economic values, and (3) actions associated with improving the PA staffing and funding shortfalls within the Qinghai PA system.** |
| **Management Response:** PMO will immediately coordinate with Qinghai BSAP working group and recommend the integrating the research results and issues listed above into the BSAP. |
| **Key Action(s)** | **Time Frame** | **Responsible** **Unit(s)** |  **Tracking** |
| **Status** | **Comments** |
| PMO shares the research reports of climate change resilience and adoptive biodiversity conservation strategy and executive summary of research report ofmajor ecosystem services and some approximate economic valuesin Qinghai Province with Qinghai BSAP working group, and recommend the integrating the research results and issues listed above into the QBSAP. | Sep-Nov. 2015 | PMO,QBSAP working group | Scheduled |  |
| Actions associated with improving the PA staffing and funding shortfalls within the Qinghai PA system to be integrated into QBSAP | Oct 2015 | PMO, PPCC | Scheduled | Combined with actions in Recommendation9. |

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| **Recommendation 8: Recommendation: The MTR team recommends the following actions to strengthen the biodiversity mainstreaming efforts:** |
| **Management Response:1)** PMO has coordinated with Qinghai Office of Legislative Affairs, Provincial Land Resources Department, to collect the review reports from key departments as the department has conducted desk review of existing regulations and policies. PMO have included Provincial Land Resources Department into advisory group in mainstreaming biodiversity conservation to 13th Five-Year Plan and sectoral plans.2) PMO will seek for the existing global good practice for the sectors.  |
| **Key Action(s)** | **Time Frame** | **Responsible** **Unit(s)** |  **Tracking** |
| **Status** | **Comments** |
| PMO has coordinated with Qinghai Office of Legislative Affairs to collect the review reports from key departments andtrack what extend the regulations and guidelines have been applied in practices. | Nov.-Dec.2016 | PMO, Qinghai Office of Legislative Affairs, sectors | In progress |  |
| PMO will coordinate with county land resource division whether it is feasible to integrate Key Ecological Function Area Plan into county land use plan. | 2016 | PMO | To be discussed | Also consult with county land resource division for necessary technical advises |
| Identify linkages between provincial departments and academic institutions to facilitate applied research, e.g., the effects of the pylon structures used for electrical transmission developments. The project should try to fund some preliminary research as a means of operationalizing the partnerships. |  |  | Not applicable | On 21 October 2105, PSC decided that it was not applicable for further actions. |

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| **Recommendation 9:Based upon the findings of the MTR mission and recommendations included in reports prepared by national and international consultants, the following actions are recommended for the second half of the project in terms of strengthening the sustainable financing capacity of the PA system.** |
| **Management Response:**Following recommendation 9a, PMO could establish a task force to review the reviewing ecological compensation programs and making recommendations of how the funds are allocated.Regarding recommendation 9b and 9c, PMO is coordinating with provincial Political Consultative Conference to identify the management, financial and staffing issues PAs in Qinghai are facing and make proposals to the provincial decision makers. |
| **Key Action(s)** | **Time Frame** | **Responsible** **Unit(s)** |  **Tracking** |
| **Status** | **Comments** |
| PMO could establish a task force to review the reviewing ecological compensation programs and making recommendations of how the funds are allocated |  |  | Not applicable | On 21 October 2105, PSC decided that it was not applicable for further actions. |
| PMO is coordinating with provincial Political Consultative Conference(PPCC) to hold a meeting in identifing the management, financial and staffing issues PAs in Qinghai are facing. | Oct. 2015 | PMO, PPCC | Scheduled | Combined with actions in Recommendation 7. |
| Provincial Political Consultative Conference(PPCC) makes and submitsrecommendationsto the provincial decision makers. | 2016 | PMO, PPCC | To be discussed |  |

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| **Recommendation 10:The project should develop and implement a site level pilot of a collaborative arrangement between thegovernment run Public Service Program and community co-management structures as means of addressing shortfalls in PA staff** |
| **Management Response:** The project will coordinate with SNNR and county level as well as site level to establish collaboration between co-management and Public Service Program and will continue to make effort on this linkage. |
| **Key Action(s)** | **Time Frame** | **Responsible** **Unit(s)** | **Tracking** |
| **Status** | **Comments** |
| The PMO will coordinate with SNNR Administrationto establish collaboration between co-management and Public Service Program and will continue to make effort on this linkage. | 2016 | PMO,SNNR | To be discussed | Also consult with SNNR Administration for necessary technical advises |
| The PMO will coordinate with county level and site level to establish collaboration between co-management and Public Service Program and will continue to make effort on this linkage. | 2016 | PMO,County level stakeholders and local project offices | To be decided |  |

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| **Recommendation 11:The following actions are recommended to strengthen the nature reserve management plans.** |
| **Management Response:** PMO will provide the recommendations to nature reserves and management plan development specialist to ensure the recommendations are integrated in the development of management plans. |
| **Key Action(s)** | **Time Frame** | **Responsible** **Unit(s)** | **Tracking** |
| **Status** | **Comments** |
| PMO will provide the recommendations to nature reserves and management plan development specialist to ensure the recommendations are integrated in the development of management plans. | Oct. 2015 | PMO, consultant, nature reserves | Scheduled |  |

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| **Recommendation 12: The MTR team recommends creating a task force or advisory committee, including but not limited to the following stakeholders: representatives of the provincial focal agency for the PSP program, the QFD, the SNNR Administration, and the project management team. The task force (or advisory committee) should develop a plan for linking the top-down PSP program with bottom-up project model.** |
| **Management Response:**PMO will take this recommendation into the workplan and coordinate with key stakeholders on this issue. |
| **Key Action(s)** | **Time Frame** | **Responsible** **Unit(s)** | **Tracking** |
| **Status** | **Comments** |
| PMO will coordinate with key stakeholders to discuss the fesibility of linkage between PSP prgoram and co-management model. | 2016 | PMO,SNNR and other stakeholders | To be decided |  |

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| **Recommendation 13: A sustainability strategy should be developed for Outcome 3 and include, but not limited to, the following.** |
| **Management Response:** PMO has also thought these issues and will address these with consultants' support in the second half of the project by strengthening the collaboration with SNNR |
| **Key Action(s)** | **Time Frame** | **Responsible** **Unit(s)** | **Tracking** |
| **Status** | **Comments** |
| Assist vilalge co-management committees in obtaining legal status | 2016 | PMO,local PMO and village co-management committee | To be decided |  |
| PMO will discuss partnership arrangementswith SNNR for co-management committees after project closure. | 2016 | PMO, SNNR | To be decided |  |
| PMO will discuss with county stakeholders to integrate village conservation areas into county land use plans and the village regulations. | 2016 | PMO,local PMO and village co-management committee | To be decided |  |
| Consider adjusting the flow of financial and material support extended to the coordination committees, by having the SNNR Administration disburse the funds and assets to the communities rather than the PMO. This would require an agreement between the SNNR Administration and the PMO |  |  | Not applicable | On 21 October 2105, PSC decided that it was not applicable for further actions. |
| Support the co-management commitees and the SNNR Administration in preparation of annual NR management reports. | 2016 | PMO, local PMO and consultant | Scheduled |  |
| PMO will prepare simple operation and maintenance instructions for equipment provided in Tibetan language. | 2016 | PMO | Scheduled |  |

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| **Recommendation 14: A few additional actions recommended to strengthen the results under Outcome 3 include the following** |
| **Management Response:1）**PMO will adjust work plan and budget for the second half of the project to speed up the spending of project fund under outcome 3. **2）**PMO had discussed with WNRMB of QFD on wildlife damage prevention and compensation arrangements. The project will continue to build up blown bear prevention fence for herders in Suojia and Qumahe where there are intensive wildlife damage cases and conduct pilot compensation for wildlife damage. 3) PMO will train herders in garbage classification and appropriate treatment. 4) The project will hire cooperatives development specialist and other specialists in improvement of cooperatives operations and management and provide technical training in development of alternative livelihood opportunities. |
| **Key Action(s)** | **Time Frame** | **Responsible** **Unit(s)** | **Tracking** |
| **Status** | **Comments** |
| PMO will adjust work plan and budget for the second half of the project to speed up the spending of project fund under outcome 3 | Dec.2015 | PMO | Scheduled |  |
| The project will continue to build up blown bear prevention fence for herders in Suojia and Qumahe where there are intensive wildlife damage cases and conduct pilot compensation for wildlife damage.  | 2015-2016 | PMO | In Progress |  |
| PMO and WNRMBreached a consensus to set up a pilot wildlife damage compensation project in Suojia and Qumahe which will be conducted in 2016. | March-2016-2017 | PMO,WNRMB | Scheduled | Also consult with WNRMB for necessary technical advice. |
| PMO will train herders in garbage classification and appropriate treatment.  | 2016 | PMO,consultant | Scheduled |  |
| Cooperatives development specialist will provide guideance in the improvement of cooperative operations and management and and other specialists will provide technical training in development of alternative livelihood opportunities. | 2016 | PMO,consultants | To be decided |  |

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| **Recommendation 15: Traditional knowledge on conservation of biodiversity and cultural resources should be captured in one or more case studies (knowledge products) and disseminated to a broad spectrum of relevant stakeholders.** |
| **Management Response:** Two traditional knowledge research reports will be integrated into a traditional knowledge book for herders and other stakeholders. |
| **Key Action(s)** | **Time Frame** | **Responsible** **Unit(s)** | **Tracking** |
| **Status** | **Comments** |
| Two traditional knowledge research reports will be integrated into a traditional knowledge book for herders and other stakeholders. | 2016 | PMO, consultant | In Progress |  |

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| **Recommendation 16:A separate division should be formed within the QFD for dealing with collaborative management and community relations’ issues.** |
| **Management Response:**Nature reserves should have a division to deal with co-management and community relations issues. This has been recommended in the report of institutional analysis and training needs assessment. PMO would emphasize this arrangement in their management plan development. |
| **Key Action(s)** | **Time Frame** | **Responsible** **Unit(s)** | **Tracking** |
| **Status** | **Comments** |
| A separate division should be formed within the QFD for dealing with collaborative management and community relations’ issues. |  |  | Not applicable | On 21 October 2105, PSC decided that it was not applicable for further actions. |