

Midterm Review Report

FINAL

11 November 2021

Enhancing conservation of globally significant biodiversity through protected area system strengthening in Gansu (China-Protected Areas System Reform – C-PAR 2)

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GEF project ID#:	9465
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Executing Agency:	UNDP
Implementing Partner:	Government - Forestry and Grassland Bureau of Gansu Province



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Acronyms and Abbreviations

BSAP	Biodiversity Strategy and Action Plan
CBD	Convention on Biological Diversity
CO	Country Office
EAPC	Endangered Animal Protection Center
EC	Ecological corridors
EOP	End-of-project
ESA	Ecologically sensitive areas
ESIA	Environmental and Social Impact Assessment
ESMF	Environmental and Social Management Framework
ESMP	Environmental and Social Management Plan
FPIC	Free and Prior Informed Consent
FYP	Five-Year Plan
GFGB	Gansu Forestry and Grassland Bureau
GMAP	Gender Mainstreaming Action Plan
GRM	Grievance Redress Mechanism
HFGDC	Hezheng Forestry and Grassland Development Center
HS	Highly Satisfactory
HU	Highly Unsatisfactory
HWC	Human-wildlife conflict
IP	Implementing Partner
KAP	Knowledge, Attitude and Practice
KBA	Key Biodiversity Areas
MEE	Ministry of Ecology and Environment
METT	Management Effectiveness Tracking Tool
ML	Moderately Likely
MoF	Ministry of Finance
MS	Moderately Satisfactory
MU	Moderately Unsatisfactory
NC	National consultant
NIM	National implementation modality
NP	National Park
NPSR	National Parks System Pilot Reform
NR	Nature reserve
PA	Protected area
PIR	Project Implementation Report
PMO	Project Management Office
PMU	Project Management Units
PSC	Project Steering Committee
RTA	Regional Technical Advisor
SES	Social and Environmental Standards
SESP	Social and Environmental Screening Procedure
TOR	Terms of Reference

1 Executive Summary

Table 1: Project Information Table

Project Title	Enhancing conservation of globally significant biodiversity through protected area system strengthening in Gansu (China-Protected Areas System Reform – C-PAR 2)		
UNDP Project ID (PIMS #):	5689	PIF Approval Date:	25 Oct 2016
GEF Project ID (PMIS #):	9465	CEO Endorsement Date:	20 Nov 2018
ATLAS Business Unit, Award # Proj. ID:	00096227 00100201	Project Document (ProDoc) Signature Date (date project began):	31 Jan 2019
Country(ies):	China	Date project manager hired:	11 Feb 2019
Region:	Asia-Pacific	Inception Workshop date:	13 May 2019
Focal Area:	Biodiversity	Midterm Review completion date:	11 Nov 2021
GEF Focal Area Strategic Objective:	BD-1	Planned closing date:	31 Jan 2024
Trust Fund [indicate GEF TF, LDCF, SCCF, NPIF]:	GEF TF	If revised, proposed op. closing date:	N/A
Executing Agency/ Implementing Partner:	Government - Forestry and Grassland Bureau of Gansu Province		
Other execution partners:			
Project Financing	<i>at CEO endorsement (US\$)</i>	<i>at Midterm Review (US\$)*</i>	
[1] GEF financing:	2,652,294	1,315,213	
[2] UNDP contribution:	45,000	22,500	
[3] Government:	18,000,000	11,042,000	
[4] Other partners:	-	-	
[5] Total co-financing [2 + 3+ 4]:	18,045,000	11,064,500	
PROJECT TOTAL COSTS [1 + 5]	20,697,294	12,379,713	

1.1 Project Description

The project is designed to remove the barriers for the long-term solution to strengthen the conservation of endemic and globally threatened species in Gansu Province, through reducing threats and strengthening and mainstreaming the protected area (PA) system into government and sectoral planning.

The project has one objective and three outcomes, each comprising several outputs.

The objective is to strengthen the conservation of globally significant biodiversity in Gansu Province through improving the legal and institutional framework, reforming and mainstreaming the protected area system, enhancing habitat connectivity and reducing key threats. The outcomes are:

Outcome 1: Improved legal and institutional framework for Protected Areas (PAs), Key Biodiversity Areas (KBAs) and globally threatened species, and mainstreaming of biodiversity conservation in provincial planning. This outcome is focused on the provincial level to update related legislation and the biodiversity conservation strategy and action plan, develop the PA and ecological corridor network plan, improve the institutional capacity for the PA system and species conservation, and strengthen financial sustainability of the PA system. This outcome has five associated outputs.

Outcome 2: Strengthened West Qinling Mountains - Minshan Mountains PA network and reduction of threats. This outcome is focused on the West Qinling - Minshan Mountains landscape with four target NRs (A'xia, Duo'er, Chagangliang and Yuhe), two ecological corridors in Liangdang and Hezheng County, and the Endangered Animal Protection Center (EAPC) in Wuwei City. This outcome has five associated outputs.

Outcome 3: Improved data and knowledge management, monitoring and evaluation supports biodiversity conservation. This outcome is focused on sharing knowledge with stakeholders and other projects through the C-PAR Program and on raising awareness of biodiversity conservation among key stakeholders. This outcome has two associated outputs.

1.2 Project Progress Summary

The project has had a strong start, with the Project Management Office (PMO) and Implementing Partner rapidly establishing project systems and structures and engaging staff and contractors during the first year. With a strong focus on delivering outputs and activities, at midterm the project has achieved one of the 12 project indicators and is on target to achieve ten and not on target for one; satisfactory progress has been made towards the objective and each of the three outcomes. There is strong engagement with the project's approach from provincial and local government and from local communities. This early efficiency and productivity mean that the project is now set up to focus on high-quality delivery during the second half of implementation. The MTR team has made several recommendations (Table 3) to refine and improve the outputs and approaches that the project has used and to sharpen the project's focus during the remainder of the project.

Remedial action is urgently needed to address shortcomings in the management of social and environmental risks, due to delays in key deliverables as summarized under 'Project Implementation & Adaptive Management' in Table 2. The consequence is that the project implementation has not been consistent with the project document or the project's Environmental and Social Management Framework (ESMF). It is vital that the project adheres to UNDP's Social and Environmental Standards (SES). This must now be the project's highest priority.

Table 2: MTR ratings and achievements table

Measure	MTR Rating	Achievement Description
Project Strategy	Not applicable	The project strategy was logical and clearly articulated with outputs and activities clearly designed to address identified barriers. The project document is very thorough in the assessment of social and environmental risks and provides clear documentation of the steps required for mitigating and managing those risks. The design is also strong in consideration of gender issues.
Progress Towards Results	Objective Achievement: Satisfactory	Good progress has been made towards the project objective. The three objective indicators are assessed as on track to meet end-of-project (EOP) targets, with good progress towards the Indicator 1 targets for project beneficiaries. Careful attention will be required for indicator 2 to clearly define how achievement of corridors will be measured and reported and for indicator 3 to establish a standard transparent data collection, analysis and reporting system for threatened species populations.
	Outcome 1 Achievement:	Very good progress has been made towards Outcome 1. Work revising key biodiversity related laws is ahead of schedule, a

Measure	MTR Rating	Achievement Description
	Satisfactory	draft revised provincial Biodiversity Strategy and Action Plan (BSAP) has been developed, and co-management agreements are in place for the four target NRs. Work is underway to improve the reflection of KBAs in conservation planning and requirements for agency reporting, although careful attention will be required to how achievement of the end-of-project target for Indicator 5 will be measured and verified. Constructive engagement has taken place to mainstream biodiversity into 14th Five-Year Plans, the institutional capacity to manage the provincial PA system has been enhanced, and the funding gap for the provincial PA system has been reduced by 37%, which surpasses the EOP target.
	Outcome 2 Achievement: Satisfactory	Outcome 2 includes two indicators, and good progress has been made in increasing management effectiveness and reducing threats to biodiversity at project sites, although a standard transparent data collection, analysis and reporting system should be established for threat data. Other project outputs include a corridor plan (which would benefit from setting clear ecological objectives); management plans, financing plans and co-management plans for four NRs; and promoting alternative livelihoods and human-wildlife conflict management to reduce pressures on ecosystems and species.
	Outcome 3 Achievement: Satisfactory	Good progress has been made against the various activities under Outcome 3. Gender mainstreaming has been a particular strength of the project. The project is systematically identifying and disseminating lessons learned and presenting them in meetings. The baseline status and targets for the Knowledge, Attitude and Practice (KAP) surveys under Indicator 12 have not yet been established, therefore this is not on target ; however, this can quickly be brought on track by simple remedial action outlined in Recommendation 8 and the work is of good quality.
Project Implementation & Adaptive Management	Moderately Satisfactory	Most aspects of project oversight and implementation have been good. The project has very high levels of government ownership and the level of co-financing by the Gansu provincial government has been high. Communication between UNDP, the PMO and GFGB has been strong and coordination of project oversight and management activities has been efficient. The major shortcomings are in social and environmental risk management. The SESP that was undertaken identified this as a High-risk project, therefore an ESMF was developed and this identified that an ESIA and ESMP would be developed early. Due to various execution difficulties faced by key stakeholders during the formulation of these documents, they have not been finalized, which impairs the project's safeguards risk identification and management. Moreover, the project document and ESMF stated that some outputs and activities should not commence

Measure	MTR Rating	Achievement Description
		until the ESMP is finalized, yet significant progress has been made on most project activities. This is a major risk for the project.
Sustainability	Likely	The project has made good progress towards sustainability of results and there is very high political and government support for the work to continue. In the project locations there is strong engagement with the project's aims and approach. The main risk to sustainability is if villagers return to their previous practices and livelihoods after the project, reversing the project's success in reducing threats to ecosystems and wildlife. The MTR team recommends that, to harness the project's potential and proactively plan for sustainability, a sustainability plan be developed for the project to inform the final two years of implementation.

1.3 Summary of Conclusions and Recommendations

1.3.1 Strengths

Very efficient delivery, with 49.6% of budget spent, in challenging circumstances around departmental restructures and COVID-19

The project was initiated very efficiently and several important outputs have been produced in a timely manner. The project faced several significant challenges—especially restructuring of provincial departments in year 1, COVID-19 in years 2 and 3, and low budget expenditure in year 1—but kept a strong results-focused approach, has spent 49.6 per cent of the GEF budget and is well positioned at midterm.

Very high level of engagement of Implementing Partner (GFGB) and local government

The GFGB has a high level of ownership of the project and is focused on efficient project delivery and on the important role of the project in informing and supporting provincial programs for ecological protection and species conservation. Local governments in each demonstration area also have strong ownership of the project's outcomes and activities.

Protected area management and monitoring capacity improved

The project has implemented extensive targeted capacity building and training for PA managers and staff, leading to real improvements in the capacity for managing biodiversity and monitoring species and threats. This is also a key component of ensuring sustainability of project results.

Positive progress towards alternative livelihoods relieving pressures on ecosystems and species

There is a high level of enthusiasm among project beneficiaries and PA managers for the potential for alternative livelihood activities and human-wildlife conflict (HWC) management to relieve pressures on ecosystems and species and to lead to lasting environmental benefits while improving livelihoods and income for local people.

Proactive and effective gender mainstreaming

The project has had a strong gender mainstreaming focus throughout development and implementation. The gender mainstreaming action plan developed during project design continues to inform annual gender action plans, and all activities are assessed for opportunities to involve women and girls.

1.3.2 Weaknesses and recommendations

Other conclusions and areas for improvement are presented in Table 3, with associated recommendations for the project to improve delivery and improve the likelihood of achieving sustainable results.

Table 3: Recommendations table

No.	Recommendation	Responsibility
Category 1: Environmental and social risk management The SESP for this project found it to be a High-risk project that triggered multiple SES standards. The ESIA, ESMP and Grievance Redress Mechanism have been delayed and are not yet finalized, therefore the associated risk oversight and delivery of some outputs and activities did not follow the requirements set out in the signed project document or the ESMF for the four C-PAR projects. It is important that the ESIA and ESMP are finalized urgently, that all activities (including those completed, in progress and planned) are reviewed when the ESMP is finalized and required adjustments made, and that regional UNDP staff are involved in this. It was clear to the MTR team that the process was complex and difficult for the CO and the project, therefore opportunities should be sought to provide enhanced support and capacity building on safeguards implementation. Also, a review of the processes followed by the project since CEO endorsement, including the reasons for and implications of delays, would enable lessons to be learned, greater clarity to be established and improved safeguards outcomes to be delivered in future projects. The MTR team is aware that there have also been delays in development of the required ESIA's and ESMPs for the C-PAR 1 and C-PAR 3 projects, so a programmatic-level review would maximize the identification of systemic issues, opportunities and lessons learned.		
1	Finalize the Environmental and Social Risk Assessment (ESIA), Environmental and Social Management Plan (ESMP) and Grievance Redress Mechanism (GRM) as a matter of urgency, while ensuring that SES requirements for disclosure are adhered to	PMO, GFGB, UNDP CO
2	When the ESMP is finalized, review all project outputs and activities (including those completed, underway and future) against the ESMP to ensure risks are appropriately managed, make any necessary changes to the design of activities and identify any required remedial actions, and have the findings endorsed by the PSC and RTA	PMO, GFGB, UNDP CO, UNDP Regional Office including safeguards specialists
3	Provide enhanced technical oversight and support, including targeted capacity building, to UNDP Country Office and other stakeholders for the complex processes involved in managing high-risk safeguards projects	UNDP Regional Office including safeguards specialists
4	Review the processes followed in environmental and social risk management in this project since CEO endorsement, identify lessons learned and opportunities to improve safeguards outcomes in future projects	UNDP Regional Office including safeguards specialists, UNDP CO, GFGB
5	Coordinate implementation of the recommendations on environmental and social risk management at a C-PAR programmatic level to maximize identification of systemic issues, opportunities for improvement and lessons learned	C-PAR 1 PMO, UNDP CO

No.	Recommendation	Responsibility
Category 2: Project reporting and oversight The results framework has not been updated since project endorsement and some baselines/targets have still not been confirmed or set. It is also not clear how some indicators/targets will be reported against and, therefore, how the project will provide evidence of success. It is timely for the project to adopt a revised results framework that fully reflects the final strategic direction of the project and that documents the measures that will be used. The MTR team has proposed some suggested amendments to the results framework (Annex 8).		
6	Prepare a revised results framework for approval by the PSC and RTA with all baselines and targets reviewed and confirmed and with clarity around how each will be measured and reported; Annex 8 suggests some amendments to the results framework	PMO, UNDP CO, PSC
7	Develop and document a standard transparent process for data collection, analysis and reporting of species and threats and ensure that this is compatible with the methodologies that were used to establish the indicator baselines	PMO, NRs
8	Establish baseline status and end-of-project targets for the KAP survey and have these approved by the PSC and RTA	PMO
Category 3: Ecological corridors Progress has been slow with the establishment of the four corridors. There is some lack of clarity regarding how the project will measure and report on when each corridor has been successfully established. Also, although a detailed high-level corridor plan has been developed with individual workplans for each corridor, the corridors do not each have a clear ecological objective that outlines the purpose of establishing the corridor and the threat management required to meet that ecological objective.		
9	Clarify how the successful ‘establishment’ of the four corridors will be measured and reported and include this in the revised results framework	PMO, subcontractors
10	Develop a clear ecological objective for each corridor, including simple diagrams showing the corridor in the landscape and the wildlife populations that will benefit	PMO, subcontractors
Category 4: Continuous improvement of support to nature reserves Project funds were allocated to the four target nature reserves (NRs) for them to develop their own PA management plans, which have all been completed. However, the MTR team found that there were low levels of satisfaction among the NRs with the management plans. To make the PA management plans and sustainable financing plans more practical and feasible, the nature reserves (NRs) should continue to have ownership of the plans and should be supported to lead their ongoing improvement and implementation. Also, there is a likelihood of the Yuhe NR management plan, which was prepared by the NR using project funds, becoming redundant as a management plan when the new Giant Panda NP is established. This is because the exact timeframe of the institutional reform around the Giant Panda NP was not clear when the management plan was developed. Nevertheless, the ecological management needs for the area should not have changed significantly and the content of the management plan is likely to still be relevant to managing that part of the new NP.		

No.	Recommendation	Responsibility
11	Continue to refine the content of the PA management plans and sustainable financing plans to focus on practical and feasible measures, and provide ongoing support to the nature reserves for implementation	NRs, subcontractors, PMO
12	Assess the role of the Yuhe NR management plan to inform management of the Giant Panda NP in accordance with the official approval and management plan for the Giant Panda NP	Yuhe NR, PMO
Category 5: Continuous improvement of alternative livelihoods support The activities to develop alternative livelihoods to reduce pressures on wildlife and ecosystems have been effective and participants are enthusiastic. It is timely now to review the areas of training and capacity building to identify gaps and opportunities and develop a carefully designed program for the remainder of the project (e.g. laws and regulations in tourism establishment). Also, some beneficiaries involved in alternative livelihood activities still face fundamental barriers relating to hard infrastructure that hinder the establishment of a sustainable business (e.g. ecotourism businesses facing difficulties with road and amenities infrastructure); assistance with finding creative solutions to overcoming these barriers would increase the likelihood of successful and sustainable uptake.		
13	Undertake a gap analysis of the alternative livelihoods training and capacity building and modify the training and support	PMO, subcontractors
14	Implement research to identify the remaining fundamental barriers to adopting alternative livelihoods, develop recommended approaches to assisting beneficiaries with these barriers, and modify training and support where appropriate	PMO, subcontractors
Category 6: Provincial plans for threatened species conservation Output 1.3 was to prepare provincial plans for conservation of globally threatened species, including the key species mentioned in the results framework. At the time of the MTR, the project has only developed plans for the three species that will be reintroduced into Gansu by the EAPC; also, in 2018 WWF developed a snow leopard plan for Gansu Province 2018–2030, so this project need not develop such a plan.		
15	Develop provincial plans for conservation of other globally threatened species	GFGB, PMO, subcontractors
Category 7: Sustainability The project is well positioned for many results to continue beyond the GEF funding period, especially due to the strong involvement of the GFGB and local governments and the very good capacity building in PA management. For some aspects, sustainability faces more challenges, such as continuing the engagement of communities when funding is unavailable and maintaining the lowered pressure on species and ecosystems due to alternative livelihoods and HWC awareness. A sustainability plan would enable the project to proactively plan for these matters. It is recommended that the sustainability plan be developed before the end of the third year of implementation so that it can inform activities for the final two years of the project. The sustainability plan could also consider how to promote the broader uptake of alternative livelihoods beyond the pilot areas and demonstration villages.		

No.	Recommendation	Responsibility
16	Develop a sustainability plan before the end of the third year of the project to identify how the project's results can be continued beyond the GEF funding and use this to inform activities over the final two years of implementation	PMO, GFGB

2 Introduction

2.1 Purpose and Objectives of the Review

In accordance with the ToR for this midterm review (MTR), the objective of the review is to assess progress towards the achievement of the project objectives and outcomes as specified in the UNDP project document, and assess early signs of project success or failure with the goal of identifying the necessary changes to be made to set the project on track to achieve its intended results.

Further to this, the ToR states that the MTR will:

- review project activities and outputs and project governance and management to date
- synthesize lessons to help improve the project design and implementation of project activities
- assess results, effectiveness, processes and performance of partners to promote accountability for achievement of objectives
- promote learning and knowledge sharing to inform policies, strategies, programmes and projects
- provide recommendations to the project to improve its performance, sustainability, effectiveness and impact.

2.2 Scope and Methodology

The scope of the MTR was to review all relevant sources of evidence since project inception to collect evidence-based information that is credible, reliable and useful.

The MTR was undertaken between August and November 2021. A two-person MTR team implemented the review, comprising an international consultant / team leader (IC) and a national consultant (NC).

The MTR followed the document *Guidance for Conducting Midterm Reviews of UNDP-Supported, GEF-Financed Projects* ('UNDP-GEF MTR Guidance' hereafter).¹

Multiple sources of data and information informed the review. A mixed methods approach was used, adopting a combination of qualitative and quantitative evaluation methods and instruments. These methodologies maximized the variety of information sources and enabled the triangulation of results to justify findings from more than one source and the development of recommendations for critical intervention that are specific, measurable, achievable and relevant.

The following activities were included in the MTR:

- A mission in China, including Beijing and project sites, between 11 and 18 September 2021; due to COVID-19 restrictions, the IC could not attend the mission and participated virtually via video conferencing. The NC was able to conduct some field visits and face-to-face consultations with a wide range of stakeholders. The discussions were 'semi-structured interviews' in a conversational format. The itinerary and interviewees for the mission are provided in Annex 1.
- A desk review of all relevant documents covering project design, implementation progress, and monitoring and review; the list of documents and information is provided in Annex 2.
- Constructing an evaluation matrix that identifies the evaluation questions, the indicators used to consider the questions, the sources of information used and the assessment methodology for each; this is shown in Annex 3.
- Development of specific questions and areas for discussion to guide the semi-structured interviews; these are shown in Annex 4.
- Assessment of the extent to which gender considerations were mainstreamed into the project's design, monitoring, implementation and impact (more detail below).

¹ http://web.undp.org/evaluation/documents/guidance/GEF/mid-term/Guidance_Midterm%20Review%20_EN_2014.pdf

- Consolidating information from various sources on progress against project outputs; this is summarized in Annex 5.
- Assessment of progress towards the midterm and end-of-project (EOP) targets.
- Assignment of ratings (as defined in Annex 7) for:
 - progress towards the project's objective and three outcomes
 - project implementation and adaptive management
 - the likelihood of continued benefits from the project after it ends (sustainability).
- Assessment of provided GEF Tracking Tools.
- Presentation of preliminary findings by the MTR team in an end-of-mission session with UNDP staff on 30 September 2021.

To assess the extent to which gender considerations were mainstreamed by the project, the evaluation used the document and data review, stakeholder interviews and personal observations during the mission to analyse a range of matters, using Annex 9 of the UNDP-GEF MTR Guidance document (Checklist for Gender Sensitive Midterm Review Analysis). Questions considered included:

- Were relevant gender issues addressed in the project document?
- Was a gender analysis undertaken and were gender-specific activities, targets, monitoring and funding established?
- Were gender issues triggered during the environmental and social screening?
- Are sex-disaggregated data collected relating to project activities and outcomes?
- Is there an appropriate gender balance in participation in project activities and in project staff?
- How are women and girls benefiting from project activities?
- Were gender specialists involved throughout project design and implementation stages?

2.3 Structure of the MTR Report

This report structure follows the content guidelines provided on pp. 36–37 of the UNDP-GEF MTR Guidance document (Annex B of the MTR ToR Standard Template).

Background information is first provided on the MTR process (this chapter) and the project (Chapter 3). Chapter 4 then presents detailed findings in the areas of project strategy, progress towards results, project implementation and adaptive management, and sustainability. Finally, Chapter 5 provides specific conclusions and recommendations that provide corrective actions for the design, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of the project.

Annexes provide additional information to supplement the contents of the main body of the report.

3 Project Description

3.1 Development Context

As described in the project document, the West Qinling Mountains-Minshan Mountains landscape in southern Gansu Province, China, is recognized as a biodiversity hotspot, both within China and worldwide. The biome in this region is characterized by a south-north transitional feature with extremely rich biodiversity. The Minshan Mountains are listed as one of the WWF Global 200 Ecoregions, a biodiversity hotspot of global significance, and included in the 25 biodiversity hotspot areas defined by Conservation International. Many Chinese endemic species are distributed in the Bailongjiang area and over 100 species on the IUCN Red List occur in the West Qinling Mountains-Minshan Mountains landscape (including giant panda *Ailuropoda melanoleuca*, golden snub-nosed monkey *Rhinopithecus roxellana*, takin *Budorcas taxicolor*, Chinese giant salamander *Andrias davidianus*, forest musk deer *Moschus berezovskii* and Tibetan black bear *Ursus thibetanus*). Other threatened species occur in different landscapes in Gansu Province, including the snow leopard *Panthera uncia* in the Qilian Mountains, Bactrian camel *Camelus bactrianus* and Przewalski's horse *Equus ferus przewalskii* in the Tengger Desert. The last two species and saiga antelope *Saiga tatarica* are being reintroduced to Gansu.

Thirteen sites have been identified as Key Biodiversity Areas (KBAs) in Gansu and four KBAs have been identified in the West Qinling Mountains-Minshan Mountains (see Figure 1). The four target nature reserves (NRs) for this project (Yuhe, Chagangliang, Axia and Duoer NRs) overlap or are contiguous with these four KBAs (Figure 1).

Gansu's globally significant ecosystems and species are threatened by both infrastructure development and unsustainable land management. The project document identified many factors that constrained the effectiveness of conservation efforts, including lack of sufficient protected area (PA) management capacity; systemic weaknesses in the PA system relating to the legal and regulatory framework; inadequate safeguards for sectoral development planning, land tenure and management jurisdiction; limited PA categories, community engagement and provision of local benefits; and lack of sustainable financing for management. The project document also identified a lack of awareness and knowledge of the KBA approach to spatial conservation efforts and inadequate attention to representation of KBAs in the provincial PA system, and noted that, despite being home to a range of endangered and endemic species, Gansu had no provincial-level conservation and restoration plans to guide effective species conservation efforts.

The long-term vision of the project is to strengthen the conservation of endemic and globally threatened species and globally significant ecosystems in Gansu Province by reducing threats through strengthening and mainstreaming the protected area system into government and sectoral planning.

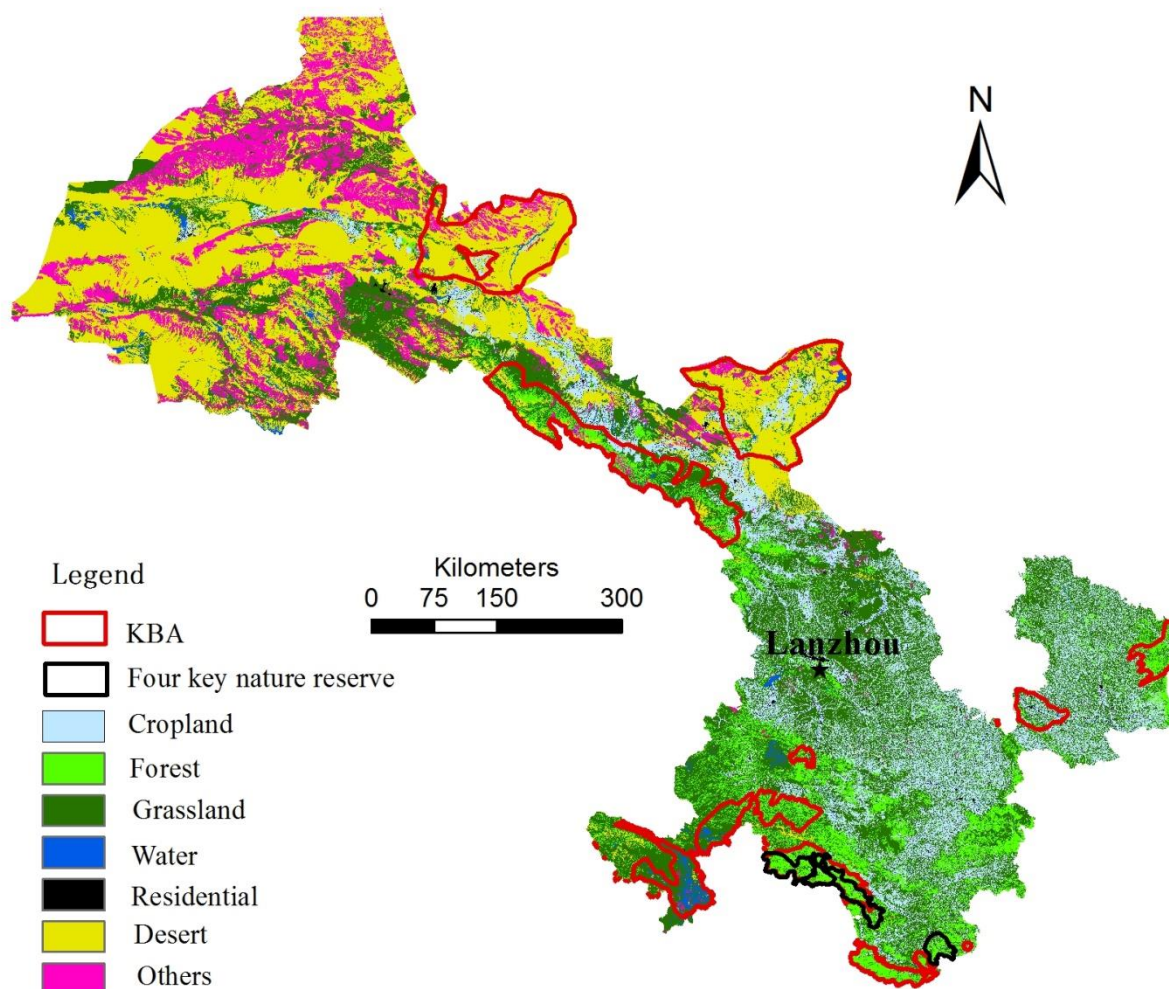


Figure 1: Map of Gansu Province showing land cover, Key Biodiversity Areas (KBAs) and the four target nature reserves (black-bordered areas in the south). Source: Project document.

3.2 Problems that the Project Sought to Address

The project document identified that, although the government has made significant efforts to reduce threats to biodiversity, its efforts have been impeded by a number of barriers, as summarized below:

Barrier 1: Insufficient legal and institutional framework for effective protection of PAs, globally threatened species and their habitats, and weak enforcement of these laws

- Outdated and weak legislation
- Inadequate financing of the PA system
- Weak coordination of planning and implementation of sectoral plans at the provincial level and inadequate safeguards for biodiversity
- Inadequate representativeness, effectiveness and climate-resilience of the current PA system
- Insufficient and inadequate law enforcement.

Barrier 2: Weak institutional and individual capacities for PA management and reducing threats in the West Qinling Mountains-Minshan Mountains PA network

- Spatial layout not ideal for threatened species conservation
- Limited capacity for acquiring and applying biodiversity knowledge in PA management
- Low PA management capacity and site management

- Few opportunities for local people to participate in biodiversity conservation and management
- Limited capacity and support for the reintroduction of globally threatened species.

Barrier 3: Inadequate knowledge management and M&E systems for effective PA system administration and conservation management

- Inadequate knowledge management mechanisms
- No coordinated systematic monitoring and evaluation system for PA management or threatened species.

3.3 Project Description and Strategy

3.3.1 China's Protected Area System Reform (C-PAR) Program

The project is one of six child projects under the Government's GEF-6 China's Protected Area System Reform (C-PAR) Program, which aims to transform China's national protected area system through systematic legal and institutional reform and innovation for conservation of globally significant biodiversity. The C-PAR Program addresses several systematic barriers to effective PA management, including: a) weak framework for coordinated PA system; b) lack of systematic planning/mainstreaming; c) weak management capacity and inadequate resources; d) poor knowledge sharing and coordination. This project is known as C-PAR 2.

The C-PAR Program is coordinated through the national PA reform project (GEF ID 9403), with a national C-PAR Project Steering Committee and Project Management Office (PMO). There is also a C-PAR programmatic results framework to which each C-PAR child project contributes; a table showing the contribution of the Gansu project (C-PAR 2) to the C-PAR Program-level results is reproduced in Annex 9. The C-PAR 1 PMO coordinates reporting on these program-level results. C-PAR projects also collaborate to support coordinated knowledge management and sharing of lessons learned, and to develop coordinated approaches to manage social risks and impacts associated with PA establishment and expansion, including knowledge and best practice transfer.

C-PAR 1 involves a Giant Panda National Park (NP) pilot demonstration, which is a transboundary park that includes Yuhe NR and a planned corridor area in Gansu, therefore these projects coordinate closely on those aspects. This Gansu project (C-PAR 2) also coordinates closely with the Qinghai PA system project (C-PAR 3) on transboundary and shared issues such as the Qinghai - Tibetan Plateau Biodiversity Conservation Network, Qilian Mountains NP pilot, snow leopard conservation planning, HWC strategies and capacity development activities.

3.3.2 Gansu project - C-PAR 2

The project strategy is to address the three identified barriers through an integrated suite of activities grouped under three outcomes.

The project objective is 'to strengthen the conservation of globally significant biodiversity in Gansu Province through improving the legal and institutional framework, reforming and mainstreaming the protected area system, enhancing habitat connectivity and reducing key threats'. The three outcomes are described below.

Outcome 1: Improved legal and institutional framework for Protected Areas (PAs), Key Biodiversity Areas (KBAs) and globally threatened species, and mainstreaming of biodiversity conservation in provincial planning.

This outcome is focused on the provincial level to update related legislation and the biodiversity conservation strategy and action plan, develop the PA and ecological corridor network plan, improve the

institutional capacity for the PA system and species conservation, and strengthen financial sustainability of the PA system. This outcome has five associated outputs.

Outcome 2: Strengthened West Qinling Mountains - Minshan Mountains PA network and reduction of threats.

This outcome is focused on the West Qinling - Minshan Mountains landscape with four target NRs (A'xia, Duo'er, Chagangliang and Yuhe), two ecological corridors in Liangdang and Hezheng County, and the Endangered Animal Protection Center (EAPC) in Wuwei City. This outcome has five associated outputs.

Outcome 3: Improved data and knowledge management, monitoring and evaluation supports biodiversity conservation.

This outcome is focused on sharing knowledge with stakeholders and other projects through the C-PAR Program and on raising awareness of biodiversity conservation among key stakeholders. This outcome has two associated outputs.

3.3.3 Social and Environmental Screening Procedure (SESP)

Overall, the project is expected to result in major long-term positive impacts for biodiversity conservation and socio-economic benefits to China. As part of this, mechanisms have been established to manage social and environmental risks, in accordance with UNDP's Social and Environmental Standards (SES).

The Social and Environmental Screening Procedure (SESP) was finalized during project preparation and the results were summarized in the project document. Ten risks for this project were identified that could have potential negative impacts in the absence of safeguards; two of these risks were rated as low, five moderate and three high. Therefore, the overall SESP risk categorization for the project is High. The three risks with high rating relate to potential physical displacement of local populations from PA pilot core zones and ecological corridors, the potential economic displacement of local populations due to restricted/changed access to land and resources, and the potential that both voluntary resettlement and displacement will affect ethnic minorities.

In accordance with UNDP's SES, an Environmental and Social Management Framework (ESMF) was developed for this High-risk project during the project preparation phase; this ESMF also applies to C-PAR projects 1 and 3 (both also High risk) and 4 (Medium risk). This ESMF sets out the additional safeguards measures that apply to the project during the inception phase, including but not limited to: (i) completion of an Environmental and Social Impact Assessment (ESIA) to further assess potential risks and impacts due to project activities, with an ESIA report; and (ii) the development of an Environmental and Social Management Plan (ESMP) including identified management measures as required based on the ESIA. Free and Prior Informed Consent (FPIC) will be applied for all activities involving ethnic minorities, including but not limited to the implementation of the ESMF. A Grievance Redress Mechanism (GRM) would be developed as part of the ESMP.

Paragraph 108 (p. 58) of the project document stipulates that **no project activities that could result in economic displacement, reduced access to land or resources, or that could provide livelihoods restoration support for resettled and/or economically displaced communities, including ethnic minorities, could commence until the ESIA and ESMP were completed and approved and the identified management measures put in place. Specific outputs and activities were listed that should not start until these conditions were met.**² The ESMP was scheduled to be completed in the first quarter of implementation and would inform the design and implementation of activities.

² Specific activities identified: Output 1.4 - Activities 1.4.4 and 1.4.6; Output 2.1 - Activities 2.1.2, 2.1.3, 2.1.4, 2.1.5 and 2.1.7; Output 2.2 - Activity 2.2.4; Outputs 2.3 and 2.4 (all activities relating to communities that may potentially be resettled in or affected by the proposed corridor areas at Yuhe and Chagangliang NRs).

The updated UNDP SES became effective from 1 January 2021. It should be noted that this project must be delivered in accordance with these new standards and with the endorsed project document and ESMF.

3.4 Project Implementation Arrangements

The project is delivered following UNDP's national implementation modality (NIM), with the Gansu Forestry and Grassland Bureau (GFGB) as the Implementing Partner. The Implementing Partner is responsible and accountable for managing this project, including the monitoring and evaluation of project interventions, achieving project outcomes, and for the effective use of UNDP resources.

The PMO sits within the GFGB in Lanzhou, Gansu. The PMO is led by the Project Manager, and includes a Landscape Coordinator, Chief Technical Advisor (part time), Administration Assistant and other project staff and subcontractors.

There are seven Project Management Units (PMUs), located at the four demonstration NRs (Axia, Chagangliang, Duoer and Yuhe), at the two demonstration corridor sites (Liangdang and Hezheng counties) and at the Gansu EAPC. Each PMU has a Project Site Coordinator, hosted by the relevant local institution.

The National Project Director is the Deputy Director General of GFGB.

A Project Steering Committee (PSC) has been established and meets annually.

UNDP is the GEF Implementing Agency. UNDP provides a three-tier supervision, oversight and quality assurance role involving UNDP staff in the China Country Office (CO) and at regional and headquarters levels. Project assurance is independent of the project management function. The quality assurance role supports the PSC and PMO by carrying out objective and independent project oversight and monitoring functions. This role ensures appropriate project management milestones are managed and completed.

As part of the C-PAR Program, the project receives support from the C-PAR Program Alignment Officer, a position that is part-funded by this project and that ensures harmonization of approaches and coherence in implementation processes across the overall program.

3.5 Project Timing and Milestones

A summary of the key project milestones and their dates is provided in Table 4.

Table 4: Project milestone dates

Milestone	Date
PIF Approval	25 October 2016
CEO Endorsement	20 November 2018
GEF Agency Approval (UNDP ProDoc signature, after Cabinet endorsement)	31 January 2019
Inception Workshop	13 May 2019
Project Manager hired	11 February 2019
Midterm Evaluation	11 November 2021
Terminal Evaluation due	31 October 2023

3.6 Main Stakeholders

The main stakeholders for the project are shown below (modified from Table 10 of the project document).

Stakeholders	Role in the project
National level	
Ministry of Finance (MoF)	MoF is the GEF Operational Focal point of China responsible for coordinating the programming of GEF resources and overseeing the China GEF portfolio with the GEF Agencies. MoF is the recipient of GEF grant on behalf of the Chinese Government.
Ministry of Natural Resources (MNR)	This ministry was created at the end of the PPG phase and is a key stakeholder during implementation of all outputs.
National Forestry and Grassland Administration (NFGA)	NFGA was a key stakeholder in the project at the national level, overseeing the provincial forestry system, as well as the Gansu Endangered Animals Protection Center.
Ministry of Ecology and Environment (MEE; formerly Ministry of Environmental Protection, MEP)	This ministry was created at the end of the PPG phase. Key partner of the overall C-PAR Program, of which this project will demonstrate many of the ongoing and planned national reforms.
United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) – China Country Office	UNDP is GEF Agency for the project and is therefore responsible for oversight and monitoring project implementation and ensuring adherence to UNDP and GEF policies and procedures. The UNDP CO Communications Division will support the development of communications strategy and plans across the C-PAR Program.
Provincial level	
Gansu Forestry and Grassland Bureau (GFGB)	The executing agency for the project, responsible for overall management of project implementation on a daily basis, led by NPD and supported by PMO.
Gansu Provincial Department of Finance	A key partner in reviewing and approving project budgets and ensuring project finance management to be in line with requirements of the government of China and UNDP, in increasing regular financial resources for PAs, and to coordinate other relevant provincial departments to take concerted actions to support the project implementation.
Gansu Development and Reform Commission	Will provide this project with lessons and experiences from other international and national projects, mobilize future government-supported projects to support implementation of recommendations and strategies proposed by this project and partner in drafting and promoting legislative and regulatory changes that may be necessary to achieve the project's objectives.
Gansu Provincial Department of Agriculture and Rural Affairs	Coordinates programs to reduce overgrazing inside PAs, and replicates lessons and experiences from this project in their own projects and daily work.
Gansu Provincial Department of Water Resources	Partners in drafting and promoting legislative and regulatory changes that may be necessary to achieve the project's objectives.

Stakeholders	Role in the project
Gansu Provincial Department of Ecology and Environment	Coordinates all PA work in the province; partners in drafting and promoting legislative and regulatory changes that may be necessary to achieve the project's objectives and replicate lessons and experiences from this project in their projects and daily work.
Gansu Provincial Department of Culture and Tourism	Partners in inter-sectoral mechanism and coordination to mainstream biodiversity concerns into development planning with relevance to tourism, developing tourism plans for pilot sites, and reviewing policy on generation and allocation of tourism revenues, and in drafting and promoting legislative and regulatory changes that may be necessary to achieve the project's objective.
Gansu Provincial People's Congress	Partner in reviewing, assessing, approving laws, and spreading lessons and experiences from this project to others. Key stakeholder for legislative, regulatory and planning changes required to achieve the project's objectives.
Gansu Provincial Department of Justice	Partner in drafting and promoting legislative and regulatory changes that may be necessary to achieve the project's objectives.
Local level	
Pilot PAs: Axia, Duoer, Chagangliang and Yuhe Nature Reserves	Key partners involved in the project design, formulation, and implementation. Key partners for PA planning and site management and outreach and work with local communities.
Local governments, including prefecture, county and township levels, especially Wudu District, Zhouqu County, Diebu County, Liangdang County and Hezheng County and Wuwei City	Critical participants in the project at the local level, participate in the development and implementation of nature reserve business plans, sustainable livelihood development, securing national support for ESAs, and spatial planning for ecological corridor establishment.
Gansu Endangered Animals Protection Center (EAPC)	Key participant for globally threatened species action planning, capacity development for species recovery and reintroduction, and support for threatened species conservation programmes.
WWF-China	WWF-China can provide knowledge and technical support to the project on subjects such as SMART patrolling and HWC response, and snow leopard conservation planning.
Global Protected Area Friendly System (GPAFS)	GPAFS can provide technical advice on sustainable livelihoods development and marketing at target PAs.
Local NGOs	The project document identified that relevant local NGOs will be invited to participate in the project Technical Advisory Group and may be requested to support specific activities (e.g. on training, awareness raising, sustainable livelihoods development, etc) during project implementation.
Universities and research organizations	Partners in providing research support and technical assistance for ecosystem and species assessments, conservation planning, monitoring, targeted research and capacity development.

Stakeholders	Role in the project
Chinese Research Academy of Environmental Sciences (CRAES)	The main executing partner for C-PAR 6 under the C-PAR Program.
Private sector	Partners for mainstreaming biodiversity concerns into development planning and for potential benefit sharing agreements for sustainable livelihoods and tourism development at project sites.
Donors	Financial support for the project baseline and potential additional funding where feasible.
Media sector and schools	Key stakeholders in publicity and environmental education, in disseminating project results and in raising public awareness of biodiversity conservation.
Local Communities	Key local stakeholders for supporting PA co-management, sustainable land uses, and participating in project supported habitat conservation, controlling of poaching, and natural resource management. Local residents, including ethnic minorities, participate in planning corridors and extended PA boundaries as well as the rights and responsibilities of the resident communities over resources within the PAs and in buffer zones. Local communities will participate in HWC pilot demonstrations and contribute towards citizen science projects.

4 Findings

4.1 Project Strategy

4.1.1 Project design

This section presents an analysis of the design of the project as outlined in the project document.

The project effectively built on a previous UNDP/GEF 4 Project ‘Strengthening Globally Important Biodiversity Conservation through Protected Area Strengthening in Gansu Province’ (PIMS 4072, referred to as ‘the GEF 4 project’ hereafter). The project document was effective in using the results and outputs of the GEF 4 project as a foundation and in building lessons into the strategy and approach for this project, while also identifying areas from the GEF 4 project that had become dated. In particular, the project document identified that the outputs from the GEF 4 project needed updating and expansion in view of rapid national policy developments, such as introduction of NP pilots, and stronger global expectations for conservation of KBAs and globally threatened species. Also, the need for PA systems to address climate change resilience for ecosystems and species was identified. Finally, the project document identified the need to introduce an ecological corridor system to connect and increase the conservation effectiveness of existing protected areas, to address both climate change resilience and ensure the viability of small populations of globally threatened species.

The project referred to GEF projects from other countries (Bhutan – GEF project 9199, Nepal – GEF project 9437, and Honduras – GEF project 9262) for guidance on approaches to planning and management of ecological corridors. The project also referred to the Global Snow Leopard and Ecosystem Protection Program for networking and learning on species conservation planning with assistance from WWF-China, including the UNDP/GEF project 5413 ‘Transboundary Cooperation for Snow Leopard and Ecosystem Conservation’. The project document also referred to several other initiatives in a table showing the ‘intersection of related initiatives with project outputs’ (Table 8 on p. 57 of the project document).

The project has very high relevance to national development and environmental agendas, and the recipient country commitment. The project directly addresses priorities for China and is strongly driven by government agencies. There is a significant national-level focus on National Parks System Pilot Reform, which began in 2016. In September 2017, the Master Plan of Establishing National Park System (2017) was launched, which provides the framework, direction and principles of protected area reform. In October 2017, President Xi Jinping announced the intention to strengthen overall planning, organization and leadership for building an Ecological Civilization through new plans for major institutional and regulatory changes, including reform of the protected area system. This project, and the family of C-PAR projects of which this project is a part, was prepared in response to these national priorities (see Section 3.3.1).

The project strategy provides an effective route towards the expected results, via a clear theory of change (Figure 4 on p. 23 of the project document). The approach taken of securing good co-financing and government commitment and building in coordination and collaboration through the C-PAR program meant that a strong framework was established for the delivery of the project.

The project document identifies the following four underlying assumptions in the theory of change (Table 1 on p. 24 of the project document):

1. There is political support for the strengthening of the legal and institutional framework for biodiversity conservation in Gansu province and for mainstreaming biodiversity conservation into provincial planning and management processes.
2. Provincial and local governments support and enable PA and Ecological Corridor Network conservation goals to be achieved through coordinated land use planning, law enforcement actions and sustainable financing for PAs.

3. Improved knowledge management and M&E will increase capacity for more effective conservation management and threat reduction.
4. Habitat loss and fragmentation and human wildlife conflict (HWC) are in reality major negative factors impacting populations of globally threatened species in Gansu province.

The MTR team considers assumptions 1, 3 and 4 to have been sound at the time of project development and to still apply at the time of the MTR. Assumption 2 is less sound, because there have been some challenges in efficiently developing the corridor network plan at the local level in collaboration with relevant stakeholders, backed by ‘coordinated land use planning, law enforcement actions and sustainable financing for PAs’.

The project document also identified assumptions for each of the 12 indicators in the project results framework.

During project development, extensive consultation was undertaken with local bureaus to ensure that project outputs and activities were compatible with and added value to their workplans and legislative requirements.

The project document includes a section ‘Sustainability and Scaling Up’, in which the sustainability and opportunities for upscaling project results are discussed. Importantly, the direct contribution of this project (and the C-PAR family of projects) to the new national policy for the reform of the PA system is considered central to the high likelihood of results being sustainable.

The project document is very thorough in the assessment of social and environmental risks through the UNDP SESP, which was finalized during project preparation as required by UNDP’s SES. The project document provides clear documentation of the steps required for mitigating and managing those risks during implementation. This is described in Section 3.3.3.

The project design considered the perspectives of those who would be affected by project decisions. Provincial and local government agencies were engaged and local communities were involved. During the mission, verbal feedback indicated that this consultation was effective and contributed to improved working relationships between authorities and villagers.

The project design was strong in consideration of gender issues. In summary:

- A gender analysis and Gender Mainstreaming Action Plan (GMAP) was completed during the PPG phase and guides proactive women’s empowerment efforts during implementation.
- A gender specialist was involved in this process and representatives of women were involved throughout.
- Gender issues were triggered during the UNDP SESP. Various mitigation measures were established, in particular the ESIA and ESMP would look at gender angles, including how gender intersects with the multiple risks identified; the gender mainstreaming plan will be updated as required after the completion of the ESIA; and gender mainstreaming actions will be incorporated into the ESMP as required.
- Annual gender mainstreaming plans are developed, based on the GMAP.
- The project includes some sex-disaggregated indicators in the results framework and some gender-specific activities.
- The project was identified as GEN2 based on the relevant GEF and UNDP gender policies, which means the project has great potential to empower women and girls and to effectively promote gender equality.

Regarding the development of the C-PAR Program family of projects, a coordinated approach was taken during project preparation towards the development of individual child projects, which benefited the detailed design of this project. Coordination included two program-level coordination workshops, the

deployment of a team of national specialists providing inputs across all UNDP projects under the coordination of lead national and international consultants, coordinated design of child project results frameworks based on the harmonized program-level results framework, and development of linkages between common activities and knowledge sharing opportunities. Annex 9 reproduces the table from the project showing the contribution of this project (C-PAR 2) to the program-level results framework. The project benefits from the programmatic approach as monitoring and evaluation is closely coordinated through the C-PAR Program / C-PAR national project (C-PAR 1).

4.1.2 Results framework

This section presents a critical analysis of the project's results framework, assessing how SMART the indicators and targets are.

Annex 8 provides a list of suggestions regarding the results framework, including suggested changes to indicators and targets.

SMART analysis: Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Relevant, Timebound.

✓ Meets criterion ✗ Does not meet criterion ? Some ambiguity or clarification needed

Objective

Description of Indicator	Midterm target	End-of-project target	SMART analysis				
			S	M	A	R	T
1. Number of direct project beneficiaries, consisting of: a) Targeted communities at project sites (Axia, Chagangliang, Duoer and Yuhe NRs); b) Gansu FD, Bailongjiang FA and EAPC staff at demo PAs and Ecological Corridors and other stakeholders receiving training	Number (% women) a) 3,800 (60%) b) 300 (40%)	Number (% women) a) 3,800 (60%) b) 750 (40%)	✓	✓	?	✓	✓
2. Ecological corridors (EC) established and PA System expanded by more than 25,000 ha, increasing coverage of KBAs and with emphasis on habitat connectivity	To be confirmed at project inception	a) Yuhe NR: 4,376 ha (NP corridor) b) Chagangliang NR / Zhouqu County: 6,920 ha c) Liangdang County: c.2,973 ha d) Hezheng County: c.12,000 ha	?	?	✓	✓	✓

3. Improvements in status of globally threatened species in Gansu Province as measured by: stable or increased populations of indicator species	All stable – as baseline	All Stable – as baseline, except for reintroduced species: Przewalski's horse EN – increase of 7 at EAPC Bactrian camel CR – increase of 5 at EAPC Saiga antelope CR – increase of 30 at EAPC	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
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For Indicator 1, the midterm target of **3,800 beneficiaries was not achievable** and the midterm target being identical to the EOP target is unusual. For Indicator 2, the language around 'corridors established' could be more specific and measurable (e.g. is a corridor considered established when a change of tenure or management responsibility occurs? when an approved management plan is in place?); the remainder of this indicator meets the SMART criteria. Also, note that a midterm target for Indicator 2 was to be confirmed at project inception, which did not occur.

Outcome 1

Description of Indicator	Midterm target	End-of-project target level	SMART analysis				
			S	M	A	R	T
4. Extent to which legal, policy and institutional frameworks reflect current national policy for biodiversity conservation	a) Proposals updating and revision of five biodiversity related laws presented to Gansu provincial govt for review by 2020 b) Updated Biodiversity Strategy and Action Plan for Gansu fully reflecting national biodiversity policy presented to provincial government for approval c) Community co-management agreements established for Axia, Chagangliang, Duoer and Yuhe NRs	a) Proposals for updating and revision of five biodiversity related laws submitted and approved by Gansu Province People's Congress b) Updated Biodiversity Strategy and Action Plan for Gansu fully reflecting national biodiversity policy is approved c) Community co-management agreements for Axia, Chagangliang, Duoer and Yuhe NRs under implementation	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
5. Revised provincial laws for wildlife conservation and NR management reflecting KBAs including agency responsibilities for monitoring and reporting on KBA and globally threatened species status	Recommendations provided for the reflection of KBAs in conservation planning and requirement for agency reporting on KBA and globally threatened species status	Revised provincial laws for wildlife conservation and NR management reflecting KBAs and the need for their coverage by the PA system and EC network and requires agency reporting on KBA and globally threatened species status	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓

6. Biodiversity conservation integrated as a mainstreamed task in the Provincial Five-Year Plan (FYP) with provision for enhanced protection of KBAs and globally threatened species	Proposals for strengthened biodiversity conservation incorporating KBAs submitted to provincial government agencies for inclusion in the ongoing 13th and upcoming 14th FYP	Safeguards for biodiversity conservation, KBAs and globally threatened species included in 13th and 14th FYP for key sectors Note: sectors to be finalized by relevant Task Force	?	✓	✓	✓	✓
7. Improved institutional capacity to administer the provincial PA System and globally threatened species conservation, indicated by UNDP capacity development scorecard (see Annex N) for: a) Gansu Forestry Department b) Bailongjiang Forestry Administration c) Gansu Endangered Animal Protection Center	a) 65% b) 50% c) 70%	a) 84% b) 72% c) 84%	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
8. PA system financing gap	PA system financing gap reduced to at least USD 73,566,000 for basic management costs (10% reduction)	PA system financing gap reduced to at least USD 57,218,000 for basic management costs (30% reduction)	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓

For Indicator 6, the language in the EOP target is different from that in the indicator and midterm targets, including the use of the term ‘safeguards’, which creates some ambiguity.

Outcome 2

Description of Indicator	Midterm target	End-of-project target level	SMART analysis				
			S	M	A	R	T
9. Increased management effectiveness of targeted PAs covering approx. 355,530 ha indicate “sound” mgt (as measured by the METT: a) Axia NR b) Chagangliang NR c) Duoer NR d) Yuhe NR	a) 53% b) 65% c) 57% d) 64%	a) 67% b) 76% c) 71% d) 79%	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓

10. Threats to biodiversity reduced at project demonstration sites. Threats: firewood, grazing cattle, medicinal herbs	Less than half of EOP targets	a) Axia NR: i) Firewood: 20% decrease ii) Grazing cattle: 10% decrease b) Chagangliang NR: i) Firewood: 30% decrease ii) Grazing cattle: 30% decrease c) Duoer NR: i) Firewood: 30% decrease ii) Grazing cattle: 6% decrease d) Yuhe NR: i) Firewood: 40% decrease ii) Medicinal herbs: 60% decrease	✓	?	?	✓	✓
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For Indicator 10, the detailed methodologies for measuring the threats (tonnes of firewood, number of cattle and tonnes of medicinal herbs) in the different NRs were not specified (although an outline of the technique is provided in the METT for each NR), so it is not clear whether the indicators as described are measurable; also, it is difficult to assess whether the targets are achievable.

Outcome 3

Description of Indicator	Midterm target	End-of-project target level	SMART analysis				
			S	M	A	R	T
11. Extent of documentation and dissemination of project lessons learned to other projects and stakeholders through the C-PAR Program: a) Number of lessons learned disseminated via project website/C-PAR biodiversity knowledge platform b) Number of participants attending meetings where lessons learned were presented.	a) 10 lessons learned completed and uploaded to project website/C-PAR biodiversity knowledge platform b) 300	a) 20 lessons learned completed and uploaded to project website/C-PAR biodiversity knowledge platform; and usage statistics indicate increasing reach of C-PAR Program lessons learned. b) 600	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
12. Improved awareness of the value of biodiversity conservation among key target groups including: a) Gansu provincial government decision makers, b) local government agencies, and c) local communities at project sites, indicated by KAP surveys conducted at the start and end of the project	Mid Term KAP Target to be established in year 1 using methodology in Annex V	Project Completion KAP Target to be established in year 1 using methodology in Annex V	✓	✓	?	✓	✓

It was not achievable to set a midterm target for Indicator 12, because it was not feasible in the first half of the project to conduct the baseline, set a meaningful midterm target and then repeat the KAP survey at midterm to measure progress against that target; the indicator refers to KAP surveys being conducted at

the start and end (not midterm) of the project, which is appropriate. Also, the achievability of the EOP target could not be assessed because it had not yet been set.

4.2 Progress Towards Results

4.2.1 Progress towards outcomes analysis

This section presents an analysis of the project's progress against the midterm and EOP targets for each indicator. An "Achievement Rating" is assigned for the objective and each outcome.

Annex 6 provides the Progress Towards Results Matrix, which documents the findings for progress towards the objective and outcome-level results, provides a justification for each of these ratings, and summarizes the analysis of progress against each indicator and target.

Tables showing the detailed analysis for the objective and each outcome are provided below.

Project Objective: To strengthen conservation of globally significant biodiversity in Gansu Province through improving the legal and institutional framework, reforming and mainstreaming the protected area system, enhancing habitat connectivity and reducing key threats

Progress towards Objective: SATISFACTORY

Indicator 1: Number of direct project beneficiaries, consisting of: a) Targeted communities at project sites (Axia, Chagangliang, Duoer and Yuhe NRs); b) Gansu FD, Bailongjiang FA and EAPC staff at demo PAs and Ecological Corridors and other stakeholders receiving training				
Baseline	Midterm target	End-of-project Target	Status at MTR	MTR Assessment
0	Number (% women) a) 3,800 (60%) b) 300 (40%)	Number (% women) a) 3,800 (60%) b) 750 (40%)	Number (% women) a) 607 (45%) b) 986 (24%) (From 2021 PIR)	ON TARGET

Under sub-target (a), the project has conducted many training sessions for the community, including community ecotourism, HWC management, online sales and marketing strategies and techniques, and PA personnel training. Under sub-target (b), the project has organized 21 training workshops on various topics for provincial and PA-level agencies.

The table above shows reporting from the 2021 PIR under 'Status at MTR'. The MTR team was provided with additional data during the MTR that shows total participation in project activities of 3,600 people, of which 2,435 (68%) were women, although this information was not broken down into the two categories of beneficiaries in the sub-targets. The total of EOP sub-targets (a) and (b) is 4,550, therefore the MTR team considers the project is on target to meet this total; nevertheless, clear reporting will be required against the two sub-targets for the terminal evaluation. The EOP sub-target (b) for number of beneficiaries has already been met.

The 2021 PIR reporting suggests that the project will face challenges to meet the sub-targets for the percentage of participants who are women, especially for sub-target (b). The PMO advised the MTR team that women comprise less than 40 per cent of the workforce in some agencies under sub-target (b). With such low fixed numbers of women in these agencies, the percentage of participants who are women is

likely to decrease as the total number of trainees increases, which creates an unwanted disincentive for the project to train more men. Therefore, as suggested by the PMO, the MTR team recommends that the project aims to achieve the target of the number of women represented by EOP sub-target (b): 40 per cent of 750, which is 300 women. The current number indicated under 'Status at MTR' is 237 women (24 per cent of 986), which shows that good progress has been made and that with a concerted effort the target of 300 appears achievable, which would be an excellent achievement. Training of men should also continue, and reporting at terminal evaluation should report against total numbers, the target of 300 women and the overall percentage that were women, and must clearly explain the approach that has been taken.

The MTR team has assessed the indicator as 'on target' because good progress has been made against total numbers and, with the suggested approach to aiming to achieve the number of women represented in sub-target (b), the gender participation targets are considered achievable.

Regarding midterm targets, when assessed using the 2021 PIR data the midterm sub-target (a) for total beneficiaries was not achieved (although this was unlikely to be achievable, as noted in Section 4.1.2) and sub-target (b) was exceeded.

Indicator 2: Ecological corridors (EC) established and PA System expanded by more than 25,000 ha, increasing coverage of KBAs and with emphasis on habitat connectivity				
Baseline	Midterm target	End-of-project Target	Status at MTR	MTR Assessment
Baseline area 2017: PA system: 10,033,410 ha Ecological Corridors: None	To be confirmed at project inception	a) Yuhe NR: 4,376 ha (NP corridor) b) Chagangliang NR / Zhouqu County: 6,920 ha c) Liangdang County: c.2,973 ha d) Hezheng County: c.12,000 ha	a) Yuhe NR: Achieved. 7,426 ha increase. b) Chagangliang NR/Zhouqu County: In progress. 0 ha increase. c) Liangdang County: In progress. 0 ha increase. d) Hezheng County: In progress. 0 ha increase. (From 2021 PIR)	ON TARGET

The expansion of Yuhe NR has been completed; the MTR team viewed an official diagram from June 2021 from the Giant Panda NP Yuhe branch office that showed the new boundaries, which provided evidence for the increase in area of 7,426 ha. It should be noted that the project had limited involvement in negotiating this expansion. Work has also commenced in the three remaining corridors, including planning and threat management in each and reforestation in Hezheng. Also, the 2021 PIR reported that, through optimization and integration of PAs, the corridor in Liangdang County has been adjusted to 4,845.6 ha and that a Master Plan is in development for consideration by the Gansu provincial government.

The MTR team considers the project 'on target' for this indicator because planning and implementation is underway in the remaining three corridors. The status at MTR from the 2021 PIR for these three corridors reflects the fact that, as described in Section 4.1.2, it is not yet clear what criteria the project will use to assess when each corridor is successfully 'established'. For example, the remaining three corridors are still under the 'Forest Farm' tenure and conversion to a different tenure (e.g. nature reserve) may be required to provide required protection. It is recommended that the project clarifies the criteria for the successful 'establishment' of the four corridors and how this will be reported and verified for the terminal evaluation.

As reported in Section 4.1.2, progress cannot be reported against a midterm target because a target was not established during project inception.

Indicator 3: Improvements in status of globally threatened species in Gansu Province as measured by: stable or increased populations of indicator species (at Axia = ANR, Chagangliang = CNR, Duoer = DNR, Yuhe = YNR, QMNR = Qilian Mountains NNR, Endangered Animals Protection Center = EAPC)				
Baseline	Midterm target	End-of-project Target	Status at MTR	MTR Assessment
Baseline year is 2017. a) Golden snub-nosed monkey EN – 1006 YNR b) Giant panda VU – 5 ANR, 4 CNR, 100 DNR, 1 YNR (132 in Gansu) c) Forest musk deer EN – NA ANR, 200 CNR, 100 DNR, NA YNR d) Takin VU – 2 ANR, NA CNR, 70 DNR, 75 YNR e) Tibetan black bear VU – 10 ANR, NA CNR, c.100 DNR f) Chinese giant salamander CR – present in 5 rivers in 5.09km ² of habitat YNR g) Snow leopard VU – 306-576 QMNR h) Przewalski's horse EN – 98 EAPC i) Bactrian camel CR – 19 EAPC j) Saiga antelope CR – 107 EAPC	All stable – as baseline	All Stable – as baseline, except for reintroduced species: Przewalski's horse EN – increase of 7 at EAPC Bactrian camel CR – increase of 5 at EAPC Saiga antelope CR – increase of 30 at EAPC	a) Stable b) Stable c) Increase of 10 ANR, stable in CNR, increase of 40 DNR, stable YNR d) Increase of 18 ANR, increase of 50 CNR, increase of 140 DNR, stable YNR e) Increase of 40 ANR, increase of 100 CNR, increase of 10 DNR f) Stable g) Stable; the second survey on terrestrial wildlife resources in Gansu is underway and new data will be available by end of the year h) Increase of 27 EAPC i) Increase of 3 EAPC j) Decrease of 86 due to animal epidemics (From 2021 PIR)	ON TARGET

All populations of the globally threatened species are reported as stable or increasing, except for the saiga antelope at EAPC, which suffered a population decline. The midterm target is considered achieved. This is a very positive result for biodiversity conservation in Gansu and is an achievement for the project and for national and provincial policymakers.

The MTR team was not provided additional data or analyses from that reported above (from the 2021 PIR), therefore was unable to verify the results. Most species monitoring is undertaken by PA and EAPC staff (although snow leopard and giant panda monitoring is also undertaken as part of broader conservation and monitoring strategies) and the data are provided to the PMO for reporting purposes. The methodologies for data collection and analysis differ between NRs and are not clearly documented, although an outline of the technique is provided in the METT for each NR (see Indicator 9). Also, it is not clear whether the monitoring methodologies are the same as those used to develop the baselines; this is

important for the valid detection of change. It is recommended that a standard transparent process is developed and documented for data collection, analysis and reporting of species populations.

Outcome 1: Improved legal and institutional framework for Protected Areas (PAs), Key Biodiversity Areas (KBAs) and globally threatened species, and mainstreaming of biodiversity conservation in provincial planning

Progress towards Outcome 1: SATISFACTORY

Indicator 4: Extent to which legal, policy and institutional frameworks reflect current national policy for biodiversity conservation				
Baseline	Midterm target	End-of-project Target	Status at MTR	MTR Assessment
a) Five key biodiversity-related laws are out of date in relation to current national laws and require strengthening See PPG report in Annex R b) No provincial level full BSAP at present c) No formal community co-management mechanisms at sites, although a conservation society is active at Duoer NR	a) Proposals updating and revision of five biodiversity related laws presented to Gansu provincial govt for review by 2020 b) Updated Biodiversity Strategy and Action Plan for Gansu fully reflecting national biodiversity policy presented to provincial government for approval c) Community co-management agreements established for Axia, Chagangliang, Duoer and Yuhe NRs	a) Proposals for updating and revision of five biodiversity related laws submitted and approved by Gansu Province People's Congress b) Updated Biodiversity Strategy and Action Plan for Gansu fully reflecting national biodiversity policy is approved Community co-management agreements for Axia, Chagangliang, Duoer and Yuhe NRs under implementation	a) The project's proposal to revise the Regulations of Gansu Province on Environmental Protection was adopted by the Gansu Province People's Congress in December 2019; two revisions have already been completed and adopted and the other is scheduled for 2021 b) The draft updated BSAP for Gansu reflecting national biodiversity policy has been prepared and submitted to provincial departments c) Completed; co-management agreements for Axia, Chagangliang, Duoer and Yuhe NRs established and under implementation (From 2021 PIR and discussions with PMO)	ON TARGET

Progress against sub-target (a) has been impressive and very efficient. Work commenced in October 2020 and is being guided by a Legal Consultation Expert Group. The project identified early that only three laws required revision (rather than five as identified in the results framework) and reporting in the 2020 and 2021 PIRs has been against a target of three laws, despite the results framework not being changed. It is recommended that this baseline and target be formally changed in the revised results framework, and endorsed by the PSC and RTA, to reflect the updated understanding. An explanation of the process and the laws being reviewed was provided in a presentation during the mission. The three laws are (from the 2021 PIR): the Revised Measures of Gansu Province for the Implementation of the Forest Law of the People's

Republic of China; the Management Measures for Provincial Important Wetlands in Gansu Province; and the Regulations on Wetland Protection in Gansu Province

For sub-target (b), a draft BSAP has been developed and consultation with provincial departments has been conducted; the draft has been revised in response to that consultation and is currently in its third version. This version was viewed by the MTR team. The draft BSAP will be reviewed again and finalized after the 15th Conference of the Parties (COP 15) to the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD) in 2021 and 2022.

For sub-target (c), the MTR team viewed the co-management agreements that had been negotiated and signed between the NRs and communities. These agreements were developed for the stakeholders by project subcontractors. The EOP sub-target has been achieved.

Indicator 5: Revised provincial laws for wildlife conservation and NR management reflecting KBAs including agency responsibilities for monitoring and reporting on KBA and globally threatened species status				
Baseline	Midterm target	End-of-project Target	Status at MTR	MTR Assessment
Existing policy and legal framework is evolving but does not yet reflect KBAs or the need to include them in the PA system and EC network, no agency reporting requirement for status of KBAs and globally threatened species	Recommendations provided for the reflection of KBAs in conservation planning and requirement for agency reporting on KBA and globally threatened species status	Revised provincial laws for wildlife conservation and NR management reflecting KBAs and the need for their coverage by the PA system and EC network and requires agency reporting on KBA and globally threatened species	The Intended Plan for Integration and Optimization of Protected Areas in Gansu Province was prepared by the PA Management Division of GFGB, and includes recommendations regarding protection and reporting on KBAs and threatened species (From 2021 PIR)	ON TARGET

The MTR team viewed the ‘Intended Plan’ document referred to in the 2021 PIR and considers that the midterm target was met. However, the contribution of the Intended Plan to achievement of the EOP target is not clear, because it does not address revised provincial laws; therefore, the project should consider carefully how it will interpret the wording of the indicator and EOP target and how achievement of the target will be measured and verified in the terminal evaluation.

Indicator 6: Biodiversity conservation integrated as a mainstreamed task in the Provincial Five-Year Plan (FYP) with provision for enhanced protection of KBAs and globally threatened species				
Baseline	Midterm target	End-of-project Target	Status at MTR	MTR Assessment
The Outline of Gansu 13th FYP Chapter 17 describes key projects on NRs and wildlife conservation and key ecological function zones	Proposals for strengthened biodiversity conservation incorporating KBAs submitted to provincial government agencies for inclusion in the ongoing 13th and upcoming 14th FYP	Safeguards for biodiversity conservation, KBAs and globally threatened species included in 13th and 14th FYP for key sectors Note: sectors to be finalized by relevant Task Force	The project has liaised with several provincial government agencies regarding mainstreaming biodiversity into the 14th FYPs, primarily through the revised BSAP (From 2021 PIR)	ON TARGET

Good progress has been made on this indicator. The midterm target has been met, because the project submitted the BSAP for inclusion in the 14th FYPs. The MTR team viewed correspondences and meeting

papers that showed extensive engagement by the project with several provincial departments seeking input to the draft BSAP (see also Indicator 4b) and to mainstreaming the BSAP into sectoral 14th Five-Year Plans (FYPs). Constructive and supportive feedback was received from eight sectors. The ‘key sectors’ identified in the results framework (under the EOP target) were included in this engagement. However, because the BSAP has not been finalized, it is not yet possible to verify whether mainstreaming the BSAP into the FYPs would lead to ‘safeguards for biodiversity conservation, KBAs and globally threatened species’ being included (as described in the EOP target).

The project must carefully consider how the EOP target will be measured. In particular, the word ‘safeguards’ in the EOP target is ambiguous and the project should consider how achievement of this will be measured. If the BSAP is used for this reporting, it will be important to identify which components of the BSAP accurately meet the EOP target. The project should also consider changing the wording of this EOP target if necessary for clarity.

Indicator 7: Improved institutional capacity to administer the provincial PA System and globally threatened species conservation, indicated by UNDP capacity development scorecard (see Annex N) for: a) Gansu Forestry Department b) Bailongjiang Forestry Administration c) Gansu Endangered Animal Protection Center				
Baseline	Midterm target	End-of-project Target	Status at MTR	MTR Assessment
a) 53%	a) 65%	a) 84%	a) 69%	ON TARGET
b) 38%	b) 50%	b) 72%	b) 66%	
c) 57%	c) 70%	c) 84%	c) 73%	
			(From scorecard dated August 2021)	

All three midterm targets for the capacity development scorecards were achieved and the project is on track to achieve the EOP targets. The MTR team considers the assessments in the scorecards to be fair and to reflect broad improvements across each agency. This represents substantial improvements in the institutional capacity to administer the provincial PA system and threatened species conservation.

Indicator 8: PA system financing gap				
Baseline	Midterm target	End-of-project Target	Status at MTR	MTR Assessment
The provincial PA system is centrally financed with little diversification of funding sources. PA system financing gap of USD 81,740,000 for basic management costs	PA system financing gap reduced to at least USD 73,566,000 for basic management costs (10% reduction)	PA system financing gap reduced to at least USD 57,218,000 for basic management costs (30% reduction)	PA system financing gap (using 2020 data) is USD 51,383,976 for basic management costs (37% reduction) (From financial sustainability scorecard provided in August 2021)	ACHIEVED

The PA system financing gap has been reduced by 37 per cent, which means that the midterm and EOP targets have both been met. This information was provided in a completed financial sustainability scorecard using financial accounts from the Planning and Finance Division of GFGB, which showed that the 2020 provincial government allocation increased by approximately \$25 million.

Outcome 2: Strengthened West Qinling Mountains-Minshan Mountains PA and Ecological Corridor Network and reduction of threats
Progress towards Outcome 2: SATISFACTORY

Indicator 9: Increased management effectiveness of targeted PAs covering approx. 355,530 ha indicate “sound” mgt (as measured by the METT: a) Axia NR b) Chagangliang NR c) Duoer NR d) Yuhe NR				
Baseline	Midterm target	End-of-project Target	Status at MTR	MTR Assessment
a) 42%	a) 53%	a) 67%	a) 53%	ON TARGET
b) 55%	b) 65%	b) 76%	b) 65%	
c) 45%	c) 57%	c) 71%	c) 57%	
d) 52%	d) 64%	d) 79%	d) 68%	
			(From METT provided August 2021)	

The project has achieved the midterm target for each of the four NRs, as measured by the GEF Management Effectiveness Tracking Tool (METT), and is on track to meet the EOP targets. The MTR team noted that the midterm score was identical to the midterm target for three of the four NRs and made enquiries to assess whether the process was undertaken rigorously. The MTR team was provided with a detailed report on the METT ('Report on the METT for Midterm Evaluation for Gansu Project'), which confirmed that an appropriate participatory approach was used for the collection of the data, with discussions and video / telephone feedback on the four NRs involving the decision makers, protection station managers, and local township and village community personnel.

Indicator 10: Threats to biodiversity reduced at project demonstration sites. Threats: firewood, grazing cattle, medicinal herbs				
Baseline	Midterm target	End-of-project Target	Status at MTR	MTR Assessment
a) Axia NR: i) Firewood: 4,439t ii) Grazing cattle: 49,961	Less than half of EOP targets	a) Axia NR: i) Firewood: 20% decrease ii) Grazing cattle: 10% decrease	a) Axia NR: i) Firewood: 75% decrease ii) Grazing cattle: 22% decrease	ON TARGET
b) Chagangliang NR: i) Firewood: 2,205t ii) Grazing cattle: 726		b) Chagangliang NR: i) Firewood: 30% decrease ii) Grazing cattle: 30% decrease	b) Chagangliang NR: i) Firewood: 33% decrease ii) Grazing cattle: 30% decrease	
c) Duoer NR: i) Firewood: 13,300t ii) Grazing cattle: 15,200		c) Duoer NR: i) Firewood: 30% decrease ii) Grazing cattle: 6% decrease	c) Duoer NR: i) Firewood: 47% decrease ii) Grazing cattle: 24% decrease	
d) Yuhe NR: i) Firewood: 50t ii) Medicinal herbs: 10t		d) Yuhe NR: i) Firewood: 40% decrease ii) Medicinal herbs: 60% decrease	d) Yuhe NR: i) Firewood: 83% decrease ii) Medicinal herbs: 92% decrease	

			(From 2021 PIR)	
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The results under this indicator represent a high level of reduction of the threats to biodiversity across broad areas. The 2021 PIR reported significant reductions in threats, meeting the midterm target (which is to reduce threats by less than half of the EOP target) at all sites. The reported reductions were at the levels of the EOP targets, therefore the project is on target for meeting this target if the work to reduce the threats continues. During mission interviews, there was good awareness in the NRs of the importance of this work.

The MTR team was not provided additional data or analyses from that reported above, therefore was unable to verify the results. As with the species monitoring (Indicator 3), most threat monitoring is undertaken by NR staff and community members and the data are provided to the PMO for reporting purposes. The methodologies for data collection and analysis differ between NRs and are not clearly documented, although an outline of the technique is provided in the METT for each NR (see Indicator 9). Importantly, it is not clear whether the monitoring methodologies are the same as those used to develop the baselines; this is important for the valid detection of change. It is recommended that a standard transparent process is developed and documented for data collection, analysis and reporting of threat reduction.

Outcome 3: Knowledge Management, M&E and Gender Mainstreaming

Progress towards Outcome 3: SATISFACTORY

Indicator 11: Extent of documentation and dissemination of project lessons learned to other projects and stakeholders through the C-PAR Program:				
a) Number of lessons learned disseminated via project website/C-PAR biodiversity knowledge platform b) Number of participants attending meetings where lessons learned were presented.				
Baseline	Midterm target	End-of-project Target	Status at MTR	MTR Assessment
0	a) 10 lessons learned completed and uploaded to project website/C-PAR biodiversity knowledge platform b) 300	a) 20 lessons learned completed and uploaded to project website/C-PAR biodiversity knowledge platform; and usage statistics indicate increasing reach of C-PAR Program lessons learned b) 600	a) 10 lessons learned generated and disseminated through different means, including the WeChat public account and workshops b) 679 (Data provided by the PMO during the mission)	ON TARGET

The project is successfully documenting and disseminating lessons learned. The midterm targets were achieved, although some lessons learned were not delivered through the website (i.e. the WeChat public account); it is recommended that some information is uploaded for each lesson to ensure that the project meets the target at the time of the terminal evaluation. The EOP target for the number of participants attending meetings has already been met.

Indicator 12: Improved awareness of the value of biodiversity conservation among key target groups including: a) Gansu provincial government decision makers, b) local government agencies, and c) local communities at project sites, indicated by KAP surveys conducted at the start and end of the project				
Baseline	Midterm target	End-of-project Target	Status at MTR	MTR Assessment
Baseline KAP status to be established in year 1 using methodology in Annex V	Mid Term KAP Target to be established in year 1 using methodology in Annex V	Project Completion KAP Target to be established in year 1 using methodology in Annex V	Baseline KAP status established in 2020, including KAP scores for the three target groups; no baseline, midterm or project completion targets formally established (Report provided during the mission)	NOT ON TARGET

The Baseline KAP Survey Report defined the scores for Knowledge, Attitude and Practice for the three key target groups identified in the indicator. This was finalized in year 2 of the project, rather than in year 1 as envisaged in the indicator. At the time of the MTR, the baseline status, midterm targets and EOP targets have not been formally established; for this reason, the MTR team has assessed the indicator as ‘Not on target’. Nevertheless, the project can quickly get back on track with this indicator by developing baselines and EOP targets for approval by the PSC and RTA, implementing appropriate activities, and scheduling a final survey to assess progress. The MTR team understands that project experts have proposed using the measures from 2020 as the baselines and have proposed a set of EOP targets, but these have not yet been approved by the PSC or RTA so the progress is limited. Also, as described in Section 4.1.2, establishing and measuring progress against midterm targets was not achievable.

4.2.2 Remaining barriers to achieving the project objective

The three barriers identified in the project document remain. The MTR team provides the following observations on progress towards addressing these barriers.

Barrier 1: Insufficient legal and institutional framework for effective protection of PAs, globally threatened species and their habitats, and weak enforcement of these laws

- Legislation significantly updated and strengthened
- Financing gap for the PA system reduced by 37%
- Good progress towards mainstreaming biodiversity into provincial sectoral plans
- Limited improvements to representativeness, effectiveness and climate-resilience of the PA system
- Law enforcement and patrolling substantially improved.

Barrier 2: Weak institutional and individual capacities for PA management and reducing threats in the West Qinling Mountains-Minshan Mountains PA network

- Limited changes to spatial layout so it is still not ideal for threatened species conservation
- Progress towards improved system for acquiring and applying biodiversity knowledge in PA management
- Significantly improved PA management capacity and site management
- Good opportunities for local people to participate in biodiversity conservation and management
- Significantly improved capacity and support for the reintroduction of globally threatened species.

Barrier 3: Inadequate knowledge management and M&E systems for effective PA system administration and conservation management

- Good progress towards a high-quality knowledge management mechanism
- Improved coordination of systematic monitoring and evaluation system for PA management or threatened species.

4.3 Project Implementation and Adaptive Management

Project Implementation and Adaptive Management is rated as **Moderately Satisfactory**.

This is rated as Moderately Satisfactory because, although most aspects of project oversight and implementation have been good, there are substantial shortcomings that require remedial action in the management of environmental and social risks, as described in the following sections.

4.3.1 Social and environmental risk management

As described in Section 3.3.3, the project document clearly spelled out the processes to be followed to manage the environmental and social risks for this High-risk project. The early development of an ESIA, ESMP and GRM was a critical part of these processes. The project document envisaged the ESMP being finalized in the first quarter of the project and identified several outputs and activities that should not commence until the ESMP and GRM were completed.

At the time of the MTR, the ESIA, ESMP and GRM have not yet been finalized, which impairs the project's safeguards risk identification and management. The MTR team viewed a draft document (dated August 2021) that consolidates these requirements into a single ESIA Report. From discussions with the PMO, UNDP CO and other stakeholders, it is apparent that this has been in active development for an extended period, and the 2020 Annual Progress Report (for the period 1 January to 31 December 2020) notes that 'the draft ESIA/ESMP has been developed'.

Furthermore, progress has been made against several of the project outputs and activities that were intended to not start until the ESMP was finalized. As a consequence of the ESIA, ESMP and GRM not being in place while these aspects of the project have proceeded, the project is not being delivered in accordance with the project document and ESMF.

There are several reasons why the required documents have not been finalized. The MTR team understands that the processes for developing the ESIA, ESMP and GRM are complex and time-consuming. There has been input from many people into the draft documents (including an international safeguards specialist, national consultant and local specialists), which is positive and reflects the project document's proposed approach. However, frequent document reviews and recommendations, follow-up field visits and consultation with stakeholders means that the process is taking a very long time. Further to this, the MTR team was advised by the RTA (in comments on the draft MTR report) that the quality of early draft documents did not adhere to required international standards. These factors have been compounded by the delay due to C-PAR 1 starting later than this project and by delays in meetings and consultations due to COVID-19.

The final significant factor in the delays is that these C-PAR projects are the first time that the China CO has been required to undertake such extensive planning for social and environmental risk management and implemented GEF projects with a High safeguards risk rating. It is also the first time that the IP (GFGB) has undertaken such planning. From extensive discussions with these parties and with the PMO and contractors, it is evident that the process and agency safeguards requirements were found to be complex and difficult to understand and that it was difficult to explain them to project staff and agency staff.

This combination of factors resulted in shortcomings in execution of the social and environmental risk management. In addition, there were shortcomings in oversight and these are discussed in Section 4.3.2 ‘Management arrangements’.

Given these complexities and delays, the MTR team considers it unrealistic for the ESMP to have been finalized in the first quarter of the approach as proposed in the project document.

4.3.2 Management arrangements

GEF Partner Agency (UNDP)

Support from UNDP to the Implementing Partner (IP) and PMO has been strong. The UNDP CO holds scheduled bimonthly meetings with the PMO and engages proactively in other meetings and discussions as required. The CO is in regular contact with the PMO to provide support on routine project matters (such as finance, workplans and reporting).

As Partner Agency for the C-PAR 1 project, UNDP also plays an important role in providing oversight to the sharing of technical knowledge on the projects’ implementation and on PA management and related matters. Because the C-PAR 1 project commenced 9 months after this project (C-PAR 2), the ‘parent’ role of C-PAR 1 developed late and has only recently started to provide tangible support to the child projects.

UNDP has had an appropriate focus on results. Generally, reporting in PIRs was candid and reported realistically on progress and challenges; the exception is the reporting of environmental and social risks as described below.

As described in Section 4.3.1, the ESIA, ESMP and GRM have not been finalized. Despite this, significant progress has been made on several outputs and activities that were identified in the project document as to not start until the ESMP was finalized. Under the ESMF (which is shared across C-PAR projects 1, 2, 3 and 4), UNDP has various responsibilities, including:

- Provide oversight on all matters related to safeguards
- Ensure adherence to the SES for project activities ... and undertake appropriate measures to address any shortcomings
- Verify and document that all UNDP SES requirements have been addressed
- Provide technical guidance on implementation of the ESMF.

Given these responsibilities, and the ongoing delivery of project activities without the targeted risk management agreed to in the project document and ESMF, the MTR team considers there to have been shortcomings in UNDP oversight and that enhanced oversight is warranted for such a high-risk project. The urgency to complete the ESIA and ESMP was clearly expressed by the RTAs in both the 2020 and 2021 PIRs. However, the reasons for the urgency were not made so clear – the fact that, in the absence of the ESIA/ESMP, key aspects of project delivery were not aligned to the project document or ESMF, which sets out the project’s safeguards requirements in accordance with the SES for a High-risk project.

The ESIA/ESMP delay was discussed in the Risk Management section of the 2021 PIR. The risk rating for this was not increased, although it was reported that the PMO issued, at the RTA’s request, two letters to UNDP to provide assurances of SES compliance; this is described further in Section 4.3.5 ‘Project-level monitoring and evaluation systems’. It should be noted that this provides limited additional assurance, because the IP already has this obligation as a signatory to the project document; nevertheless, it was useful as a measure to ensure that social and environmental risk management remained in focus while the ESIA and ESMP are finalized.

As described in Section 4.3.1, there are several reasons for the delays with the ESIA, ESMP and GRM. This includes the fact that these C-PAR projects are the first time that the China CO has been required to undertake such extensive planning for social and environmental risk management, and the fact that the

process was found to be complex, difficult to understand and difficult to explain to project staff and agency staff. Although relevant training and capacity building was provided to the CO, IP and PMO, it is likely that a higher level of technical support and enhanced oversight from the Regional Office (including safeguards specialists) would have facilitated a better and more timely outcome.

Generally UNDP was responsive to implementation problems, except for the shortcomings described with the social and environmental risk management.

Implementing Partner (GFGB)

The Gansu Forestry and Grassland Bureau (GFGB) has maintained a good focus on results and timeliness. The project has been efficient at delivering outputs and is on target for most indicators.

Management inputs and processes have been well suited to the project's delivery. Formal procurement processes are in place, including open bidding processes, and record keeping and reporting of these is strong.

The GFGB has contributed to the two PIRs and reported realistically on project governance and management matters. The MTR team viewed various other rigorous record keeping and data collection procedures for project activities.

Government ownership of the project is high. The alignment with national environmental priorities was high at the time of project development and has become even higher during implementation.

There were shortcomings in the management of environmental and social risks by the GFGB. Although UNDP has responsibility for overall oversight of safeguards and adherence to the SES, as the IP GFGB also has various responsibilities under the ESMF, including:

- Ensure that the ... ESIA ... and assessment report and the ... ESMP ... are developed, disclosed for public consultation and approved, and management measures are adopted and integrated during project implementation
- Ensure all requirements of UNDP's SES and national regulatory/policy frameworks and relevant international standards have been addressed
- Hold responsibility and accountability to UNDP for overall management of the project, including compliance with UNDP SES.

Given these responsibilities, the MTR team considers there to have been shortcomings in GFGB oversight. Issues around the complexity and long duration of the development of the ESIA, ESMP and GRM are described in Section 4.3.1. However, the delays were not mentioned in the Implementing Partner section of the 2020 or 2021 PIRs, nor was there mention of the need to complete this planning so that the project was being implemented in accordance with the project document and ESMF.

Because these C-PAR projects are the first time that such extensive assessments and management plans for social and environmental risks have been required for GEF projects in China, the MTR team considers it likely that the GFGB had limited awareness of the importance of this work. Furthermore, the UNDP CO explained that the process was difficult to communicate to project staff and GFGB staff. As with the UNDP CO, it is likely that enhanced technical support from the Regional Office (including safeguards specialists) would have facilitated a better and more timely outcome.

Other than the shortcomings with safeguards risk identification and management, risk management has been satisfactory.

4.3.3 Work planning

The project started on 31 January 2019 and the inception workshop was held approximately three months later. The project was efficient in the first year at establishing the PMO, PMUs at project sites and PSC, and in recruiting project staff, consultants and subcontractors.

The project develops detailed quarterly work plans and two-year work plans, based on the long-term work plan in the project document. These work plans clearly align the work undertaken and the expenditure to the components, outputs and activities in the project document, providing a high level of transparency to work planning.

The results framework has not been changed during the project and is not used as a management tool. Some baselines and indicators were scheduled to be updated at project inception but this did not occur (partly because the project was focused in the early phase on the establishment of project governance and management systems and personnel recruitment, as described). Consequently, there is lack of clarity around some indicators and targets and how they will be measured and it is recommended that the results framework be reviewed.

4.3.4 Finance and co-finance

The total committed budget in the project document was \$20,697,294, of which the GEF component was \$2,652,294 and co-financing contributions were \$18,045,000. The planned allocation of the GEF funds during the project is shown in Table 5.

Table 5: Summary of budgeted GEF funds (USD); source: project document

Funding source	Year 1	Year 2	Year 3	Year 4	Year 5	Total
Outcome 1	165,995	192,495	168,995	62,494	50,021	640,000
Outcome 2	272,458	472,458	399,208	351,521	132,355	1,628,000
Outcome 3	75,817	26,852	73,352	23,852	60,127	260,000
Project Management	33,660	22,060	23,260	22,060	23,253.58	124,294
TOTAL	547,930	713,865	664,815	459,927	265,756.58	2,652,294

A spot check on programme disbursements relating to the project by the IP (GFGB) was commissioned by UNDP in 2020; this is summarized in Section 4.3.5 'Project-level monitoring and evaluation systems'. An audit was conducted in late September 2021, although the report from this audit was not available at the time of the MTR.

There were no changes to fund allocations arising from budget revisions.

Expenditure

The annual expenditure is shown in Table 6. Although expenditure was low relative to planned expenditure in the first year (40.4%), this improved markedly in the second and third years. By 30 September 2021, \$1,315,213 had been expended, which is 49.6% of the total budget. Given the low level of expenditure in 2019 and the challenges addressed in project delivery during the COVID-19 pandemic, this is an impressive performance at the midterm of the project.

Table 6: Summary of project expenditure by year (US dollars) at 30 September 2021; source: UNDP CO

Year	Budgeted expenditure	Actual expenditure	Actual as % of budgeted
2019	328,226	132,538	40.4
2020	684,736	599,113	87.5
2021 (to 30 September)	913,017	583,562	63.9
TOTAL (2019-2021)	1,925,979	1,315,213	68.3
TOTAL (Project)	2,652,294	1,315,213	49.6

Table 7 shows the breakdown of expenditure by component against the project budget. Expenditure is progressing at a similar rate across the components; it is lowest for Project Management (39.7%).

Table 7: Summary of project expenditure by component (US dollars) at 30 Sept. 2021; source: UNDP CO

Activity	Project Budget	Total	%
Outcome 1	310,942	640,000	48.6
Outcome 2	892,900	1,628,000	54.8
Outcome 3	111,134	260,000	42.7
Project Mgt	49,384	124,294	39.7
Exchange rate gain/loss	-49,143		
Total	1,315,213	2,652,294	49.6

Co-financing

Table 8 shows the actual co-financing received by the project from the two co-financing parties. 61.3 per cent of the contribution from the Gansu provincial government has already been received. This contribution is wide-ranging across the project sites and provides a very strong foundation on which the successful activities are building and contributes significantly to the likelihood of the project's results being sustainable. It reflects the high importance that the Gansu provincial government attaches to the project. The Gansu Provincial Department of Finance has allocated RMB1 million to support the project. The project has received 50 per cent of the co-financing contribution from UNDP, which represents an important quality assurance role, supporting the PSC and PMO by carrying out objective and independent project oversight and monitoring functions.

Table 8: Project co-financing (USD); source: PMO and UNDP CO

Sources of co-funding	Name of co-financer	Type of co-financing	Amount confirmed at CEO endorsement (USD)	Actual amount contributed at stage of midterm review (USD)	Actual % of expected amount
GEF Implementing Partner	Gansu Provincial Government	In-kind	18,000,000	11,042,000	61.3
GEF Partner Agency	UNDP	Grant	45,000	22,500	50.0

4.3.5 Project-level monitoring and evaluation systems

The Section 7 ‘Monitoring and Evaluation Plan’ in the project document establishes M&E and oversight responsibilities, including standard M&E activities and allowances for these in the M&E budget. This budget is USD 215,000, approximately 8% of the GEF grant (USD 2,652,294), plus \$36,000 of co-financing. Although this is a relatively high percentage allocation for M&E, it includes various ‘non-core’ M&E activities that are important for the project, such as a gender action plan (\$9,000), lessons learned and knowledge generation (\$10,000), and monitoring of environmental and social risks as part of the ESIA and ESMP (\$41,000). Allocations for the MTR and terminal evaluation are \$44,500 and \$36,500 respectively, and the allocation for the inception workshop and report is \$9,000. The MTR team considers that the budget allocations are appropriate, although some of the ‘non-core’ M&E activities could have been included in other components of the budget. These resources are being allocated effectively.

There are weaknesses in monitoring of some project indicators, as described later. There is also some lack of clarity around how some indicators and targets are being interpreted and reported against. Recommendations are provided to address these weaknesses.

There is alignment with national monitoring programmes and partnerships for the snow leopard and giant panda.

The project is developing a landscape scale biodiversity survey, monitoring and information system for the West Qinling – Minshan Mountains demonstration area, and this will be integrated with provincial data systems.

The project is using inclusive and participatory monitoring, especially by involving nature reserve staff and community members in monitoring of species and threats.

There was some adaptive management in response to PIRs. Most of the recommendations of the RTA from the 2020 PIR were implemented (including improving financial performance and proactively planning for COVID-19 challenges). However, despite a detailed RTA recommendation in the 2020 PIR to prioritize finalizing the ESIA, ESMP and GRM, these had not been completed by the time of the 2021 PIR. In an adaptive management measure, the project issued letters to UNDP in February and July 2021 to assure that the project will not support voluntary or involuntary resettlement or any related activities in any way during implementation of the ESMF and that it will remain in compliance with UNDP’s SES. However, delivery of project outputs and activities continued without being informed by an ESMP and without a GRM in place.

Prior to commencement of the project (June 2018), UNDP commissioned a micro assessment from an independent company to assess the financial and operations management policies, procedures, systems and internal controls of the IP (then Forestry Department of Gansu Province, now GFGB). This report was viewed by the MTR team. The micro assessment concluded that the overall risk rating for the IP was low

because the IP strictly follows the internal control procedures and government policies and receives close and regular supervisions from the Provincial Audit Department and National Audit Office.

In accordance with the M&E plan, an independent auditing company was engaged to complete a spot check on programme disbursements relating to the project by the IP (GFGB) as at 30 September 2020; this spot check was viewed by the MTR team. The spot check found some changes to the IP's management internal controls arising from organizational structure changes, which led to some lack of clarity of responsibilities that affected the efficiency of some work; it was found that clarity had been improved and efficiency was gradually improving. The spot check authors recommended that employees learn the new internal control regulations as soon as possible to improve work efficiency. No other issues were identified.

The MTR team viewed 10 back to office reports from site visits for project implementation, monitoring and assurance activities.

4.3.6 Stakeholder engagement

The project has been very effective at developing and leveraging partnerships with stakeholders.

During the mission, the MTR team found that interviewees had a high level of engagement and knowledge of the project's aims (especially reducing pressure on wildlife and ecosystems by alternative livelihoods and reducing HWC). This included government (provincial and local government) and community stakeholders.

Participation and public awareness are leading to positive outcomes. For example, the project has succeeded in raising awareness of the importance of wildlife and HWC mitigation among the community and the MTR team heard from local stakeholders that the attitudes to wildlife among villagers is improving.

The community is having an active role in project decision-making through village-level committees and the development of co-management agreements, particularly on alternative livelihood and ecological protection actions.

Many project beneficiaries have invested interest in the project's long-term success. The project has demonstrated to some stakeholders the long-term potential of industries that receive some investment (e.g. ecotourism, cherries, tea).

4.3.7 Reporting

The project undertook quarterly reporting until Quarter 3 of 2020, after which a decision was made to switch to preparing 'project progress reports' that cover a six-month period (two quarters). The first such report was prepared in July 2021 and covered the first two quarters of 2021. These reports provide detailed reporting focused on the project's outputs under each component/outcome, risk management, monitoring and oversight activities, gender mainstreaming, partnerships, and communication activities and media exposure. An Annual Progress Report was prepared in 2019 and 2020.

There has been limited adaptive management during the project's implementation. Most recommendations from PIRs have been followed through, although completion of recommendations relating to social and environmental risk planning was a shortcoming, as described elsewhere (Sections 4.3.2 and 4.3.5).

In the 2021 PIR, it was identified that Risk 10 from the SESP ('the project demonstration area is vulnerable to natural disasters, which may limit the success and long-term results of the project') should be increased from medium to high, based on advice that pest hazards and other natural disasters had high impact and high probability. This change was reflected in the draft ESIA report and four actions have been suggested to mitigate this risk.

There are currently few lessons to be shared regarding adaptive management measures. Generally, the project is proactive in identifying, documenting and sharing lessons learned.

PIRs and two-year work plans were shared at PSC meetings.

4.3.8 Communications

Internal project communication is regular and effective. WeChat (a social media and messaging application that is widely used in China) is the primary communication tool. WeChat groups are used for different project activities and WeChat is used for communication between C-PAR projects. As described in Section 4.3.2, communication between UNDP CO and the PMO is regular and effective and the CO is responsive in providing support and oversight activities.

The MTR team is not aware of any stakeholders being left out of communication. Communication with communities and villages becomes complex when additional bureaus become involved in delivering activities, and measures could be taken by the project to coordinate and plan such communication to meet the community's needs.

WeChat is also the primary means of external communication, especially via a shared C-PAR 'public account', which provides a comparable service to a website and reaches a very large audience in China. Each C-PAR project shares information and updates on this public account, providing good outreach and public awareness campaigns.

The primary possibility for expansion of the external communications is to develop and implement measures to ensure that communications and public awareness of the importance of the work of the project (especially protected areas, threatened species, ecological connectivity, KBAs, alternative livelihoods and HWC management) continue beyond the life of the GEF project. The MTR team has recommended that a sustainability plan be developed, and communications and public awareness should be part of that plan.

Opportunities could be pursued to provide specific, focused education activities for schools. In addition, from a strategic perspective, education was one of the eight sectoral agencies that provided feedback on mainstreaming the BSAP into 14th FYPs (reported under Indicator 6); the project should pursue any opportunities to mainstream relevant awareness and understanding through this mechanism.

This engagement of provincial agencies in mainstreaming the BSAP into the 14th FYPs was very effective external communication by the project.

4.3.9 Gender mainstreaming

Gender mainstreaming has been a strength of the project through development and implementation.

The project recruited a gender specialist early in implementation, whose activities are directed by the GMAP in the project document. In collaboration with the PMO, the gender specialist conducted the following activities: (i) prepared and implemented an annual gender mainstreaming action plan; (ii) developed gender training materials for different audience targets; (iii) developed templates for collecting information on gender and the GMAP at various levels; (iv) separately conducted gender training to the PMO staff, the project IAs, the project consulting service teams, etc.; and (v) collected relevant information and prepared an implementation report on the GMAP during the first two years of the project. The MTR team viewed this implementation report.

Implementation of the GMAP is generally on track. Some targets in the GMAP have been met, such as women's equal participation in technical training courses on key subjects, direct women beneficiaries in the community-level activities, and women's equal participation in patrolling capacity strengthening activities. Some targets are not yet met, such as women's equal participation in village-level project

committees, and women's equal participation in the annual project stakeholder workshops. Also, the project did not meet the midterm targets for Indicator 1 for the percentage of project beneficiaries who are women and a careful focus on these aspects will be required for the remainder of the project.

4.4 Sustainability

Rating: Overall sustainability of the project is rated as **Likely**.

The project has made good progress towards sustainability of results and there is very high political and government support for the work to continue. In the project locations there are high levels of enthusiasm and engagement with the project's aims and approach. The MTR team recommends that, to harness the potential and proactively plan for sustainability, a sustainability plan be developed for the project.

4.4.1 Financial risks to sustainability

Government allocations for managing the protected area system of Gansu continue to increase, as reported on under Indicator 8 (Section 4.2.1). It can be expected that these resources will continue to be available after the GEF assistance ends. Nevertheless, a PA system financing gap remains (currently approximately \$51 million, down from the baseline of \$82 million).

The financing plans prepared by the project (under Output 2.2) for the four NRs are important tools for identifying sustainable sources of funding. The plans that have been developed provide good initial direction but the MTR team found that ownership by the NRs of the plans was low. These plans have significant potential for identifying and pursuing financing solutions if they are refined further, if they focus on practical and feasible measures, and if NR managers are closely supported in their implementation.

There will be a funding gap for the alternative livelihoods activities that the project is supporting. The financing plans can contribute to addressing this gap for communities in and near the NRs.

Another opportunity to consider is the national Targeted Poverty Alleviation programme. Under this programme, villages apply for funds for poverty alleviation initiatives. Using the alternative livelihood modalities and capacity that the GEF project has developed, target villages may now be able to submit improved applications to this programme. The recommended sustainability plan could investigate the feasibility of such an approach.

4.4.2 Socio-economic risks to sustainability

During the mission, villagers expressed a strong awareness of the project and a strong interest in the continuation of the activities and approaches. This included an interest in both the conservation outcomes (species and ecosystem protection) and the alternative livelihood and HWC outcomes.

The MTR team did not identify any substantive political risks to sustainability. The national political priorities provide even stronger support for the project's objective and approaches than when the project was developed. Provincial and local government support will continue to be strong because of this national mandate.

The level of public awareness of the objectives of the project is not clear. However, the project is aiming to improve awareness of the value of biodiversity conservation among the project's key target groups, measured by KAP surveys conducted at the start and end of the project (as reported under Indicator 12). At the time of the MTR, the project had collected baseline data but had not set EOP targets or identified activities to help achieve the targets.

Lessons learned are being documented by the project, as reported under Indicator 11. The six projects under the C-PAR family interact and share knowledge effectively on relevant matters (protected area

reform, ecological connectivity, alternative livelihoods, etc). The recommended sustainability plan should consider opportunities for knowledge sharing to continue after completion of the project.

4.4.3 Institutional framework and governance risks to sustainability

There are frequent changes in leadership at different levels of government and in villages in China. With each leadership change there is a risk that awareness and support for project objectives and activities will be lower and that there may be delays in approvals of important processes (e.g. work plans, budgets).

The project is putting in place a variety of frameworks and governance processes that will assist with sustainability, including mainstreaming BSAP into 14th FYPs, legislative reform, the C-PAR knowledge platform, village committees, co-management agreements, and sustainable financing plans and management plans for NRs.

An important component of institutional capacity that has been built is the assignment by the GFGB of a project coordinator and PMU at each of the demonstration sites. As GFGB staff, these coordinators play an important role in contributing to institutional ownership. Also, the Director of the GFGB is actively interested in the work of the project.

These systems and structures are effective for the successful delivery of the project, however they may not all continue after the project, so some project results may not continue. The recommended sustainability plan should identify those systems and structures that could be retained/modified and supported beyond the life of the project to maximize sustainability of results. The sustainability plan could also identify other approaches to enabling and empowering project stakeholders to continue the work of the project.

The extensive training and development that the project is undertaking, for agency staff and communities, will make an important contribution to improving long-term capacity to effectively manage PAs and threatened species, pursue alternative livelihoods, and manage HWC.

4.4.4 Environmental risks to sustainability

A key measured result of the project is reduced threats to wildlife and ecosystems, especially through alternative livelihoods and HWC management. Related to this, the MTR team heard from community members and others that the attitudes of villagers to wildlife had improved due to the work undertaken and that relationships between villagers and NR staff were improved. These important outcomes would be at risk if villagers returned to their previous practices and livelihoods after GEF funding was not available. The recommended sustainability plan should consider these risks.

4.5 Conclusions and Recommendations

4.5.1 Conclusions

4.5.1.1 Strengths

Very efficient delivery, with 49.6% of budget spent, in challenging circumstances around departmental restructures and COVID-19

The project was initiated very efficiently and several important outputs have been produced in a timely manner (including NR management plans and financing plans, co-management agreements, a draft revised BSAP, legal reform, and the corridor plan). The project faced several significant challenges—especially restructuring of provincial departments in year 1, COVID-19 in years 2 and 3, and low budget expenditure in year 1—but kept a strong results-focused approach, has spent 49.6 per cent of the GEF budget and is well positioned to maximize the quality of the results for the remainder of the project.

Very high level of engagement of Implementing Partner (GFGB) and local government

The GFGB has a high level of ownership of the project and is focused on efficient project delivery and on the important role of the project in informing and supporting provincial programs for ecological protection and species conservation. Local governments in each demonstration area also have strong ownership of the project's outcomes and activities. This is important for maximizing the likelihood that the project results will be sustainable after the GEF project ends.

Protected area management and monitoring capacity improved

The project has implemented extensive targeted capacity building and training for PA managers and staff, leading to real improvements in the capacity for managing biodiversity and monitoring species and threats. This is also a key component of ensuring sustainability of project results.

Positive progress towards alternative livelihoods relieving pressures on ecosystems and species

There is a high level of enthusiasm among project beneficiaries and PA managers for the potential for alternative livelihood activities and HWC management to relieve pressures on ecosystems and species and to lead to lasting environmental benefits while improving livelihoods and income for local people.

Proactive and effective gender mainstreaming

The project has had a strong gender mainstreaming focus throughout development and implementation. The gender mainstreaming action plan developed during project design continues to inform annual gender action plans, and all activities are assessed for opportunities to involve women and girls.

4.5.1.2 Weaknesses

Other conclusions and areas for improvement are presented in the following section, with associated recommendations for the project to improve delivery and improve the likelihood of achieving sustainable results.

4.5.2 Recommendations

No.	Recommendation	Responsibility
Category 1: Environmental and social risk management <p>The SESP for this project found it to be a High-risk project that triggered multiple SES standards. The ESIA, ESMP and Grievance Redress Mechanism have been delayed and are not yet finalized, therefore the associated risk oversight and delivery of some outputs and activities did not follow the requirements set out in the signed project document or the ESMF for the four C-PAR projects. It is important that the ESIA and ESMP are finalized urgently, that all activities (including those completed, in progress and planned) are reviewed when the ESMP is finalized and required adjustments made, and that regional UNDP staff are involved in this. It was clear to the MTR team that the process was complex and difficult for the CO and the project, therefore opportunities should be sought to provide improved support and capacity building on safeguards implementation. Also, a review of the processes followed by the project since CEO endorsement, including the reasons for and implications of delays, would enable lessons to be learned, greater clarity to be established and improved safeguards outcomes being delivered in future projects. The MTR team is aware that there have also been delays in development of the required ESIA's and ESMPs for the C-PAR 1 and C-PAR 3 projects, so a programmatic-level review would maximize the identification of systemic issues, opportunities and lessons learned.</p>		
1	Finalize the Environmental and Social Risk Assessment (ESIA), Environmental and Social Management Plan (ESMP) and Grievance Redress Mechanism (GRM) as a matter of urgency, while ensuring that SES requirements for disclosure are adhered to	PMO, GFGB, UNDP CO
2	When the ESMP is finalized, review all project outputs and activities (including those completed, underway and future) against the ESMP to ensure risks are appropriately managed, make any necessary changes to the design of activities and identify any required remedial actions, and have the findings endorsed by the PSC and RTA	PMO, GFGB, UNDP CO, UNDP Regional Office including safeguards specialists
3	Provide enhanced technical oversight and support, including targeted capacity building, to CO and other stakeholders for the complex processes involved in managing high-risk safeguards projects	UNDP Regional Office including safeguards specialists
4	Review the processes followed in environmental and social risk management in this project since CEO endorsement, identify lessons learned and opportunities to improve safeguards outcomes in future projects	UNDP Regional Office including safeguards specialists, UNDP CO, GFGB
5	Coordinate implementation of the recommendations on environmental and social risk management at a C-PAR programmatic level to maximize identification of systemic issues, opportunities for improvement and lessons learned	C-PAR 1 PMO, UNDP CO

No.	Recommendation	Responsibility
Category 2: Project reporting and oversight The results framework has not been updated since project endorsement and some baselines/targets have still not been confirmed or set. It is also not clear how some indicators/targets will be reported against and, therefore, how the project will provide evidence of success. It is timely for the project to adopt a revised results framework that fully reflects the final strategic direction of the project and that documents the measures that will be used. The MTR team has proposed some suggested amendments to the results framework (Annex 8).		
6	Prepare a revised results framework for approval by the PSC and RTA with all baselines and targets reviewed and confirmed and with clarity around how each will be measured and reported; Annex 8 suggests some amendments to the results framework	PMO, UNDP CO, PSC
7	Develop and document a standard transparent process for data collection, analysis and reporting of species and threats and ensure that this is compatible with the methodologies that were used to establish the indicator baselines	PMO, NRs
8	Establish baseline status and end-of-project targets for the KAP survey and have these approved by the PSC and RTA	PMO
Category 3: Ecological corridors Progress has been slow with the establishment of the four corridors. There is some lack of clarity regarding how the project will measure and report on when each corridor has been successfully established. Also, although a detailed high-level corridor plan has been developed with individual workplans for each corridor, the corridors do not each have a clear ecological objective that outlines the purpose of establishing the corridor and the threat management required to meet that ecological objective.		
9	Clarify how the successful ‘establishment’ of the four corridors will be measured and reported and include this in the revised results framework	PMO, subcontractors
10	Develop a clear ecological objective for each corridor, including simple diagrams showing the corridor in the landscape and the wildlife populations that will benefit	PMO, subcontractors
Category 4: Continuous improvement of support to nature reserves Project funds were allocated to the four target nature reserves (NRs) for them to develop their own PA management plans, which have all been completed. However, the MTR team found that there were low levels of satisfaction among the NRs with the management plans. To make the PA management plans and sustainable financing plans more practical and feasible, the nature reserves (NRs) should continue to have ownership of the plans and should be supported to lead their ongoing improvement and implementation. Also, there is a likelihood of the Yuhe NR management plan, which was prepared by the NR using project funds, becoming redundant as a management plan when the new Giant Panda NP is established. This is because the exact timeframe of the institutional reform around the Giant Panda NP was not clear when the management plan was developed. Nevertheless, the ecological management needs for the area should not have changed significantly and the content of the management plan is likely to still be relevant to managing that part of the new NP.		

No.	Recommendation	Responsibility
11	Continue to refine the content of the PA management plans and sustainable financing plans to focus on practical and feasible measures, and provide ongoing support to the nature reserves for implementation	NRs, subcontractors, PMO
12	Assess the role of the Yuhe NR management plan to inform management of the Giant Panda NP in accordance with the official approval and management plan for the Giant Panda NP	PMO, Yuhe NR
Category 5: Continuous improvement of alternative livelihoods support The activities to develop alternative livelihoods to reduce pressures on wildlife and ecosystems have been effective and participants are enthusiastic. It is timely now to review the areas of training and capacity building to identify gaps and opportunities and develop a carefully designed program for the remainder of the project (e.g. laws and regulations in tourism establishment). Also, some beneficiaries involved in alternative livelihood activities still face fundamental barriers relating to hard infrastructure that hinder the establishment of a sustainable business (e.g. ecotourism businesses facing difficulties with road and amenities infrastructure); assistance with finding creative solutions to overcoming these barriers would increase the likelihood of successful and sustainable uptake.		
13	Undertake a gap analysis of the alternative livelihoods training and capacity building and modify the training and support	PMO, subcontractors
14	Implement research to identify the remaining fundamental barriers to adopting alternative livelihoods, develop recommended approaches to assisting beneficiaries with these barriers, and modify training and support where appropriate	PMO, subcontractors
Category 6: Provincial plans for threatened species conservation Output 1.3 was to prepare provincial plans for conservation of globally threatened species, including the key species mentioned in the results framework. At the time of the MTR, the project has only developed plans for the three species that will be reintroduced into Gansu by the EAPC; also, in 2018 WWF developed a snow leopard plan for Gansu Province 2018–2030, so this project need not develop such a plan.		
15	Develop provincial plans for conservation of other globally threatened species	GFGB, PMO, subcontractors
Category 7: Sustainability The project is well positioned for many results to continue beyond the GEF funding period, especially due to the strong involvement of the GFGB and local governments and the very good capacity building in PA management. For some aspects, sustainability faces more challenges, such as continuing the engagement of communities when funding is unavailable and maintaining the lowered pressure on species and ecosystems due to alternative livelihoods and HWC awareness. A sustainability plan would enable the project to proactively plan for these matters. It is recommended that the sustainability plan be developed before the end of the third year of implementation so that it can inform activities for the final two years of the project. The sustainability plan could also consider how to promote the broader uptake of alternative livelihoods beyond the pilot areas and demonstration villages.		

No.	Recommendation	Responsibility
16	Develop a sustainability plan before the end of the third year of the project to identify how the project's results can be continued beyond the GEF funding and use this to inform activities over the final two years of implementation	PMO, GFGB

Annexes

- Annex 1. MTR mission itinerary and people interviewed
- Annex 2. List of documents reviewed
- Annex 3. MTR evaluation matrix
- Annex 4. Interview guide used for data collection
- Annex 5. Progress against outputs
- Annex 6. Progress towards results matrix
- Annex 7. Ratings scales
- Annex 8. Suggested amendments to results framework
- Annex 9. Contribution of the Gansu Project (C-PAR 2) to the C-PAR Program-level results
- Annex 10. Signed UNEG Code of Conduct form
- Annex 11. MTR Terms of Reference (excluding ToR annexes)
- Annex 12. Signed MTR final report clearance form

Annexed in a separate file: Audit trail from received comments on draft MTR report

Annexed in a separate file: Relevant midterm tracking tools

Annex 1: MTR mission itinerary and people interviewed

Date/ Time	Activities	Participants
11 September 2021: Travel to Lanzhou, Gansu Province		
16:20-18:40	Beijing – Lanzhou CA1221	MTR national consultant
12 September 2021: Interviews with GFGB staff and project consultants		
09:00-12:00	Progress report by PMO	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Mr. Su Kejian, NPD, DDG of GFGB Mr. Sun Peijian, Chief of Technology and Information Division, GFGB Ms. Ma Yan, PM Mr. Fan Longqing, CTA Mr. Ding Wenguang, Director of YSYS Mr. Li Xiaohong, Director of Longyou
14:30-18:00	Interviews with consultants (mostly online)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Mr. Song Zengming, Biodiversity mainstreaming specialist Mr. Ouyang Feng, Biodiversity planning specialist Mr. Zhao Zhong, Social inclusion specialist (national) Ms. Zhang Xuemei, Gender mainstreaming specialist Ms. Wang Qianqian, Communication specialist
13 September 2021: Interview with PSC members and then travel to Duo'er NR		
9:00-10:30	Face-to-face interview with Provincial Department of Finance staff	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ms. Zhou Mei, Principal section chief, International Division, DOF Ms. Lei Xin, Deputy chief, International Division, DOF
11:00-12:00	Face-to-face interview with Provincial Department of Ecology and Environment staff	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ms. Zhang Ruhai, Chief of Ecological Division, DEE
12:00-20:00	Travel to Duo'er NR in Diebu County	MTR national consultant, PMO staff
14 September 2021: Interview with Duo'er NR staff, Houxizang Villagers and Dayi Villagers		
9:00-12:00	Face-to-face interview with Duo'er NR staff	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Mr. Yang Xiaofeng, Director of Duo'er NR Management Bureau Mr. Leng Bai, Deputy Director of Duo'er NR Management Bureau Mr. Zhao Baolin, Duo'er staff Mr. Li Bin, Duo'er staff Mr. Jiabao Ciren, Duo'er staff
13:00-15:00	Travel to Houxizang Village, Pilot village	MTR national consultant, PMO staff
15:00-16:00	Face-to-face interview with Houxizang Villagers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Mr. Ri Zi, Village head Mr. Gao Baoji, Villager
16:00-17:00	Travel to Dayi Village, Pilot village	MTR national consultant, PMO staff
17:00-18:30	Face-to-face interview with Dayi Villagers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Mr. Chen Xi, Longyou staff Ms. Zha Heiping, member of peasant cooperative Ms. Ban Maocao, Villager Ms. Ga Rangcao, Villager Ms. Kang Zhucao, Villager
15 September 2021: Interview with Cuoxi Villagers and A'xia, Chagangliang NR staff		
08:30-10:00	Travel to Cuoxi Village	MTR national consultant, PMO staff

10:00-13:00	Face-to-face interview with Cuoxi Villagers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Mr. Ga Jiayi, Village head Ms. Ding Zicao, Women director Mr. Zhang Jirong, Leader of Wangzang Protection Station
14:00-16:00	Travel to A'xia NR	MTR national consultant, PMO staff
16:30-18:30	Face-to-face interview with A'xia and Chagangliang NR staff	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Mr. Dong Jinlin, Director of A'xia NR Management Bureau Mr. Zhang Cheng'an, Deputy director of A'xia NR Management Bureau Mr. Zeng Wei, Project coordinator, Chief of technology and publicity section, A'xia NR Mr. Wang Jianhua, Chief of conservation section, Chagangliang NR Mr. Li Huihua, Deputy chief of publicity section, Chagangliang NR
16 September 2021: Interview with Yuhe NR staff and Zhaoqianba villagers		
08:30-11:00	Travel to Yuhe NR	MTR national consultant, PMO staff
11:00-12:00	Face-to-face interview with Yuhe NR staff	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Mr. Bai Yongxing, Secretary of Yuhe NR management bureau Mr. Li Hui, Project coordinator, Chief of community section, Yuhe NR Mr. Ma Xiaoqiang, Yuhe NR staff
12:00-14:30	Travel to Zhao Qianba village	MTR national consultant, PMO staff
15:30-17:30	Face-to-face interview with Zhaoqianba villagers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Mr. Zhou An'yin, Leader of Fengping village cooperative Ms. Jia Yuhua, Leader of Women's e-commerce group, Zhaoqianba village Mr. Yuan Peng, PM, Gansu Shichuang
17 September 2021: Interview with Hezheng Forestry and Grassland Development Center (HFGDC) staff		
08:30-14:00	Travel to Hezheng County	MTR national consultant, PMO staff
16:00-18:00	Face-to-face interview with Hezheng staff	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Mr. Yang Yonglin, Project coordinator, Senior engineer, HFGDC Ms. Bai Wenjing, HFGDC staff Mr. Zhu Falong, Senior engineer, HFGDC Ms. Meng Xiaoli, Engineer, HFGDC Ms. Yang Xiuqing, Engineer, HFGDC
18:00-19:00	Additional interview with PMO staff	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ms. Ma Yan, PM Mr. Wang Wei, Engineer, PMO Ms. Wang Huali, Landscape Coordinator
18 September 2021: Back to Beijing		
08:30-10:30	Travel to Lanzhou Zhongchuan airport and departure from Lanzhou	MTR national consultant, PMO staff
11:25-13:45	Lanzhou – Beijing CA1274	MTR national consultant

Annex 2: List of documents reviewed

1. PIF
2. UNDP Initiation Plan
3. Project Document
4. CEO Endorsement Request
5. UNDP Social and Environmental Screening Procedure
6. Environmental and Social Management Framework
7. Draft Environmental and Social Impact Assessment
8. Draft Environmental and Social Management Plan
9. Gender Mainstreaming Action Plan
10. Annual Gender Action Plans (2019-2020 and 2020-2021) and Progress Report
11. Project Inception Report
12. 2020 and 2021 PIRs
13. Quarterly progress reports, project progress reports, and annual project reports
14. Budget reporting
15. Co-financing reports
16. Work plans of the various implementation task teams
17. Micro Assessment Report for Forestry Department of Gansu Province (June 2018)
18. Spot Check Report of Gansu Forestry and Grassland Bureau (December 2020)
19. Finalized GEF focal area Tracking Tools at CEO endorsement and midterm, including METT and Financial Sustainability Scorecard
20. Completed Capacity Development Scorecard
21. Back to office reports by UNDP and other partners
22. Minutes of the Project Steering Committee meetings
23. Reports prepared by project consultants
24. Relevant national strategic and legal documents
25. Training workshops and disseminated booklets
26. Diagram showing increased area of Yuhe Natural Reserve
27. Draft Biodiversity Strategy and Action Plan (BSAP) for Gansu Province
28. Communications and meeting papers related to engagement with provincial departments on BSAP and mainstreaming biodiversity in 14th Five-Year Plans
29. Notice on Regulations of Gansu Province on Environmental Protection was adopted by the Gansu Province People's Congress
30. West Qinling – Min Mountain Landscape Network Implementation Plan
31. Intended Plan for Integration and Optimization of Protected Areas in Gansu Province
32. Management plans for four nature reserves
33. Financing plans for four nature reserves
34. Co-management agreements between four nature reserves and communities

Annex 3: MTR evaluation matrix

Evaluation questions	Indicators	Sources	Methodology
Project Strategy: To what extent is the project strategy relevant to country priorities, country ownership, and the best route towards expected results?			
Project Design	Project design effective at achieving desired results	Project document, PIF, CEO endorsement request, PIR, GEF strategies, Chinese national strategies and plans	Desk review, interviews
Results Framework	Indicators and targets meet SMART criteria	Project document, amended results framework, PIR, tracking tools	Desk review, interviews
Progress Towards Results: To what extent have the expected outcomes and objectives of the project been achieved thus far?			
Progress Towards Outcomes	Indicators in results framework	PIR, quarterly reports, results framework, project document, stakeholder interviews, midterm tracking tools	Desk review, interviews, field visits
Remaining Barriers to Achieving Project Objective	Status of barriers at midterm	PIR, quarterly reports, project document, stakeholder interviews	Desk review, interviews, field visits
Project Implementation and Adaptive Management: Has the project been implemented efficiently, cost-effectively, and been able to adapt to any changing conditions thus far? To what extent are project-level monitoring and evaluation systems, reporting, and project communications supporting the project's implementation?			
Management Arrangements	Quality of support to and execution of the project	PIR, quarterly reports, PB minutes, stakeholder interviews	Desk review, interviews
Work planning	Work planning is results-based and project uses results framework as a management tool	PIR, quarterly reports, annual and multi-year work plans, PB minutes, results framework, stakeholder interviews	Desk review, interviews
Finance and co-finance	Effectiveness of financial management and level of co-financing relative to that originally committed	Budget and expenditure reports, audit reports, quarterly reports, PB minutes, co-financing reports, stakeholder interviews	Desk review, interviews
Project-level monitoring and evaluation systems	Quality and implementation of M&E plan	PIR, quarterly reports, project document, results framework, Tracking Tools, stakeholder interviews	Desk review, interviews
Stakeholder engagement	Adequacy of stakeholder engagement throughout project cycle	Project document, PIR, quarterly reports, stakeholder interviews	Desk review, interviews, field visits
Reporting	Reporting meets requirements and is used effectively to communicate and share within project	PIR, quarterly reports, back to office reports, PB minutes, stakeholder interviews	Desk review, interviews

Evaluation questions	Indicators	Sources	Methodology
Communications	Internal and external communication is regular, effective and appropriate	PIR, quarterly reports, back to office reports, PB minutes, social media posts, stakeholder interviews	Desk review, interviews, field visits
Sustainability: To what extent are there financial, institutional, socio-economic, and/or environmental risks to sustaining long-term project results?			
Financial risks to sustainability	Likelihood and opportunities for financial sustainability beyond project	Quarterly reports, PIR, PB minutes, stakeholder interviews	Desk review, interviews, field visits
Socio-economic risks to sustainability	Level of stakeholder ownership of project and level of knowledge transfer	PIR, quarterly reports, back to office reports, PB minutes, stakeholder interviews	Desk review, interviews, field visits
Institutional framework and governance risks to sustainability	Risks identified and mitigation measures in place	PIR, quarterly reports, back to office reports, PB minutes, stakeholder interviews	Desk review, interviews, field visits
Environmental risks to sustainability	Risks identified and mitigation measures in place	PIR, quarterly reports, back to office reports, PB minutes, project document, stakeholder interviews	Desk review, interviews, field visits

Annex 4: Interview guide for data collection

The MTR team used the following questions to guide the semi-structured interviews with stakeholders. Questionnaires were not used.

Q	Objective / Outcome	Output / Indicator	Question / further information needed	Explanation (PPR = Project Progress Report)
1	Objective	Indicator 2	Was a midterm target confirmed at project inception?	Results framework says midterm target will be confirmed at inception
2	Objective	Indicator 2	Is there a reason why Yuhe NR expansion has been progressed and is reported here but not the other expansions?	2021 PIR reports Yuhe NR increase
3	Objective	Indicator 3	Can we see some reports or methodology for the populations of globally threatened species?	2021 PIR provides data on populations
4	Outcome 1	Output 1.2 / Indicator 4b and Indicator 6	Discuss the Biodiversity Strategy and Action Plan, including: - overall structure and content - how will it be integrated into development plans of sectoral agencies? - how will it be integrated into 14th Five Year Plans?	See reporting in PIR and July 2021 PPR
5	Outcome 1	Output 1.3	Discuss 'provincial plans for conservation of priority globally threatened species' - Is EAPC developing these? - How many will be prepared and will they cover the full range of the species in the province?	July 2021 PPR notes that the PMO issued an 'official document' for EAPC which provided technical guidance
6	Outcome 1	Output 1.4	Discuss the work on 'endangered species gap analysis and PA planning' by Tianshui City Longyou Environmental Conservation Association - How does this relate to other planning and plan being done by the project?	Mentioned in 2021 PPR
7	Outcome 1	Indicator 4c	Discuss co-management agreements - is the agreement that the PMO provided a template? - how were they developed? How are they negotiated and agreed to? - have they been finalized?	2021 PIR notes that 'the four target NRs have signed co-management agreements'

8	Outcome 1	Indicator 5	Discuss the 'Intended Plan for Integration and Optimization of Protected Areas in Gansu Province' prepared by the PA Management Division of GFGB	Mentioned under Indicator 5 in 2021 PIR
9	Outcome 2	Indicator 10	Discuss the methodology for measuring threats to biodiversity	2021 PIR provides data on threat reduction
10	Outcome 2	Output 2.1	Discuss the 'West Qinling - Min Mountain Landscape Network Implementation Plan' - its status (finalized or in development), purpose and objectives, and its relationship to other plans	Mentioned in 2021 PPR
11	Outcome 2	Output 2.3	Discuss livelihoods improvement activities	2021 PPR describes various activities under Output 2.3, including eco-tourism and marketing products
12	Outcome 2	Output 2.5	Discuss progress towards 'Development of landscape scale biodiversity survey, monitoring and information system for Qinling - Minshan Mountains demonstration area'	
13	Outcome 3	Indicator 11	Discuss how lessons learned will be documented and shared - Collaboration with other CPAR projects?	
14	Outcome 3	Indicator 12	Were the baseline, midterm target and end of project target established in Year 1?	Results framework says that these will be established in Year 1
15	Management arrangements		How has support from the UNDP been?	Focus on results? Adequacy of technical support? Responsive to implementation problems? Quality of risk management?
16	Sustainability		Discuss approach and challenges to maintaining project results after GEF funding	

17	Social and environmental risks		<p>Discuss:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Status of ESIA/ESMP - adopted or in development? - Reasons for delays with ESIA and ESMP - Was this affected by CPAR 1 starting 10 months later (Nov 2019) - Combining ESIA and ESMP - Is the ESMP only the contents of Table 6.2 on p43? - Is a Grievance Redress Mechanism (GRM) included? - Discuss progress on outputs before ESMP finalized, including Yuhe NR increase and co-management agreements signed 	Note that the project document listed several outputs and activities that would not commence until the ESMP was finalized
18	Gender		Summarise and discuss gender mainstreaming plan and associated activities	
19	COVID-19		<p>Discuss:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Impacts on planned activities - Adaptive management response (e.g. online workshops) - Were some activities cancelled? 	
20	GEF funding		<p>Discuss:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - The impact of GEF funding - Whether approaches to protected area and threatened species management are improved due to the GEF funding 	
21	Stakeholder engagement		<p>Discuss involvement of local and other stakeholders and their interest in and ownership of the project's aims and priorities.</p> <p>Do local stakeholders support the project and have an active role in decision-making?</p>	

Annex 5: Progress against outputs

The following brief assessment of progress against project outputs (and associated activities) has been prepared by the MTR team, using a variety of information sources, particularly the quarterly reports, project progress reports and interviews. It is not intended as a comprehensive progress report or critical assessment of progress.

Output	Progress as assessed by MTR team
Outcome 1: Improved legal and institutional framework for Protected Areas (PAs), Key Biodiversity Areas (KBAs) and globally threatened species, and mainstreaming of biodiversity conservation in provincial planning	
1.1: Strengthened legal and enforcement framework for protection of globally threatened species and Key Biodiversity Areas (KBAs), with subsidiary regulations, and compliance monitoring and evaluation system	The project's proposal to revise Regulations of Gansu Province on Environmental Protection was adopted by the Gansu Province People's Congress in December 2019; two revisions have already been completed and adopted and the other is scheduled for 2021.
1.2: Provincial Biodiversity Strategy and Action Plan updated and biodiversity conservation integrated as a mainstreamed task for key sectors in the Provincial Five-Year Plan (FYP) with provision for enhanced protection of KBAs and globally threatened species	<p>The draft updated BSAP for Gansu reflecting national biodiversity policy has been prepared and submitted to provincial departments.</p> <p>There was extensive engagement by the project with several provincial departments seeking input to the draft BSAP and to mainstreaming the BSAP into sectoral 14th FYPs. The draft BSAP will be reviewed again after the 15th Conference of the Parties (COP 15) to the CBD in 2021 and 2022.</p>
1.3: Provincial level plans for conservation, rehabilitation and reintroduction of priority globally threatened species	Plans developed for the three species to be reintroduced (Przewalski's horse, saiga antelope, Bactrian camel); in 2018 WWF developed a snow leopard plan for Gansu Province 2018–2030, so this project need not develop such a plan. No plans developed for other threatened species.
1.4: Assessments and plans completed for PA system functional integrity supported by an ecological corridor network for the province	Gansu endangered species gap analysis and PA planning development is being developed by Tianshui City Longyou Environmental Conservation Association.
1.5: Provincial PA system and threatened species conservation strengthened through capacity development, support for national park governance, introduction of professional competence standards, provision of training modules and technical support to the Gansu Endangered Animals Protection Center	Gansu Yishan Yishui Center for Environmental and Social Development undertook the tasks of PA system capacity building plan and training module development and PA system personnel training service. Currently, the results of the first contract have passed project review and two training sessions were organized in May and June of 2021.
Outcome 2: Strengthened West Qinling Mountains-Minshan Mountains PA network and reduction of threats	
2.1: Development and expansion of the Protected Area and ecological corridor network by over 25,000 ha, increasing coverage of KBAs and improving habitat connectivity	<p>Yuhe NR expansion of 7,426 ha.</p> <p>Threat management and reforestation activities in place. No changes yet to tenure or management responsibility in corridor locations.</p>

Output	Progress as assessed by MTR team
2.2: Strengthened coordination and management of the PA and ecological corridor network in the West Qinling – Minshan Mountains	<p>West Qinling – Min Mountain Landscape Network Implementation Plan developed, providing detailed implementation plans for corridors (with a work plan for each corridor).</p> <p>Threat management and reforestation activities in place. No changes yet to tenure or management responsibility in corridor locations.</p> <p>Management plans and financing plans finalized for each NR. The PMO allocated funds to the NRs for them to develop their own plans, with the intention that the NRs took the initiative and developed the plans to reflect their perspectives. However, during mission interviews the MTR team found that there were low levels of satisfaction among the NRs with the plans, due partly to insufficient communication among key stakeholders, particularly local governments and subcontractors.</p> <p>One of the four management plans was for Yuhe NR, which will soon become part of the Giant Panda NP, therefore the plan may soon become redundant. When this management plan was developed, the exact timeframe (the start and end date) of the institutional reform around the Giant Panda NP was not clear. Therefore, the management plan was developed based on the agency and staff situation at that time. Nevertheless, the substantial content of the management plan is focused on the PA, which has not changed and should still be relevant to managing that part of the new NP.</p> <p>Training plans and grant funds approved for each NR. Office equipment and other equipment purchased for PMUs.</p> <p>See also reporting under Output 1.5.</p>
2.3: Effective community co-management and engagement in PA management achieving livelihoods improvement and threat reduction	<p>The project contracted Gansu Yishan Yishui Center for Environmental and Social Development to establish the co-management mechanism between piloting NRs and local community. The co-management plans have been developed with joint efforts of Yuhe NR and Zhangjiayuan Community, A'xia NR and Cuoxi Village, Chagangliang NR and Lamajie Community, Duo'er NR and Dayi Village and the co-management agreements have been signed.</p> <p>Gansu Shichuang Culture Media Co., Ltd. is building the marketing capacity of the community and providing online training. Tianshui City Longyou Environmental Conservation Association is undertaking a PA community ecotourism implementation plan and two pilot villages are participating (Dayi and Gaoji).</p> <p>Small grants programme has supported several beneficiaries in alternative livelihoods: production and marketing of cherries, ecotourism, PA-friendly tea, and prickly ash improvement.</p>
2.4: Pilot interventions to demonstrate mechanisms for the prevention, management and compensation of human-wildlife conflict (HWC) damage adjacent to PAs and Ecological Corridors	<p>Gangri Neichog Research and Conservation Center is delivering the West Qinling – Min Mountain Human-Wildlife Conflict (HWC) management demonstration project. They have conducted field visits and conducted many interviews and questionnaires. A good understanding of the HWC situation has been obtained. A HWC Prevention Program and a HWC Prevention Manual have been finalized. Houxizang Village has been selected as the HWC mitigation demonstration village and a basic prevention facility has been set up in the village.</p>
2.5: Development of a landscape scale biodiversity survey, monitoring and information system for West Qinling Mountains-Minshan Mountains demonstration area	<p>Sichuan Zhiya Technology Co., Ltd. is contracted to develop the technical plan for Gansu PA biodiversity conservation information system. Company to develop the system is being selected.</p>

Output	Progress as assessed by MTR team
Outcome 3: Improved data and knowledge management, monitoring and evaluation supports biodiversity conservation	
3.1: Improved data and knowledge management, monitoring and evaluation supports biodiversity conservation	<p>The project website (a WeChat public account) serves as the main platform to release project information. Since operation of the website, activities conducted by PMO and PMUs have been frequently updated on the site.</p> <p>Various project briefs, video works and other communication works have been issued.</p> <p>The project participated in the project management capacity building workshop organized by UNDP in 2021.</p> <p>The project is preparing for the Qinghai-Tibetan Plateau Biodiversity Conservation Network symposium.</p>
3.2: M&E system incorporating gender mainstreaming developed and implemented for adaptive project management	<p>The SAPA manual and PA staff training material have been translated.</p> <p>Various work undertaken in association with the environmental and social risk management and gender mainstreaming.</p>

Annex 6: Progress towards results matrix

Indicator	Baseline	Midterm Target	End-of-project Target	Level in 1 st PIR - 2020 (self-reported)	MTR Assessment	Achievement Rating	Justification
Objective: To strengthen conservation of globally significant biodiversity in Gansu Province through improving the legal and institutional framework, reforming and mainstreaming the protected area system, enhancing habitat connectivity and reducing key threats							
1. Number of direct project beneficiaries, consisting of: a) Targeted communities at project sites (Axia, Chagangliang, Duoer and Yuhe NRs); b) Gansu FD, Bailongjiang FA and EAPC staff at demo PAs and Ecological Corridors and other stakeholders receiving training	0	Number (% women) a) 3,800 (60%) b) 300 (40%)	Number (% women) a) 3,800 (60%) b) 750 (40%)	In progress	<p>On target</p> <p>Number (% women)</p> <p>a) 607 (45%)</p> <p>b) 986 (24%)</p> <p>(From 2021 PIR)</p> <p>The MTR team was provided with additional data shortly before finalizing the draft report that shows total participation in project activities of 3,600 people, of which 2,435 (68%) were women, but this was not reported against the categories in the sub-targets.</p> <p>It is recommended that the project focuses on achieving the target of the <u>number</u> of women represented by EOP sub-target (b): 40 per cent of 750, which is <u>300 women</u>. On this basis, the project has made good progress (24% of 986 is 237 women). Training of men should also continue, and clear reporting will be required to explain this approach for the terminal evaluation.</p> <p>Assessed as ‘on target’ because of good progress against total numbers and, with the suggested approach to focusing on the</p>	Satisfactory	Good progress has been made towards the project objective. Strong general progress has been made towards improving the legal and institutional framework, reforming and mainstreaming the protected area system, enhancing habitat connectivity and reducing key threats. The three objective indicators are assessed as on track to meet EOP targets, with good progress towards the Indicator 1 targets for project beneficiaries. Careful attention will be required for indicator 2 to clearly define how achievement of corridors will be measured and reported and for indicator 3 to establish a standard transparent data collection, analysis and reporting system for threatened species populations.

Indicator	Baseline	Midterm Target	End-of-project Target	Level in 1 st PIR - 2020 (self-reported)	MTR Assessment	Achievement Rating	Justification
					number of women in sub-target (b), the gender participation targets appear achievable. Midterm targets partially achieved.		
2. Ecological corridors (EC) established and PA System expanded by more than 25,000 ha, increasing coverage of KBAs and with emphasis on habitat connectivity	Baseline area 2017: PA system: 10,033,410 ha Ecological Corridors: None	To be confirmed at project inception	a) Yuhe NR: 4,376 ha (NP corridor) b) Chagangliang NR / Zhouqu County – 6,920 ha c) Liangdang County: c.2,973 ha d) Hezheng County: c.12,000 ha	Yuhe: achieved Chagangliang: not started Liangdang: in progress Hezheng: not started	On target a) Yuhe NR: Achieved. 7,426 ha increase. b) Chagangliang NR/Zhouqu County: In progress. 0 ha increase. c) Liangdang County: In progress. 0 ha increase. d) Hezheng County: In progress. 0 ha increase. (From 2021 PIR) Considered on target for EOP target because planning and implementation is underway in the remaining three corridors; the status at MTR for these corridors reflects the fact that criteria are yet to be determined for how the project will assess when each corridor is successfully 'established'. Progress cannot be reported against a midterm target because a target was not established during project inception.		
3. Improvements in status of globally threatened species in Gansu Province as	Baseline year is 2017. a) Golden snub-nosed monkey EN – 1006 YNR	All stable – as baseline	All Stable – as baseline, except for reintroduced species:	In progress	On target a) Stable		

Indicator	Baseline	Midterm Target	End-of-project Target	Level in 1 st PIR - 2020 (self-reported)	MTR Assessment	Achievement Rating	Justification
measured by: stable or increased populations of indicator species	b) Giant panda VU – 5 ANR, 4 CNR, 100 DNR, 1 YNR (132 in Gansu) c) Forest musk deer EN – NA ANR, 200 CNR, 100 DNR, NA YNR d) Takin VU – 2 ANR, NA CNR, 70 DNR, 75 YNR e) Tibetan black bear VU – 10 ANR, NA CNR, c.100 DNR f) Chinese giant salamander CR – present in 5 rivers in 5.09km ² of habitat YNR g) Snow leopard VU – 306-576 QMNR h) Przewalski's horse EN – 98 EAPC i) Bactrian camel CR – 19 EAPC j) Saiga antelope CR – 107 EAPC All stable – as baselineAll Stable – as baseline, except for reintroduced species: Przewalski's horse EN – increase of 7 at EAPC Bactrian camel CR – increase of 5 at EAPC		Przewalski's horse EN – increase of 7 at EAPC Bactrian camel CR – increase of 5 at EAPC Saiga antelope CR – increase of 30 at EAPC		b) Stable c) Increase of 10 ANR, stable in CNR, increase of 40 DNR, stable YNR d) Increase of 18 ANR, increase of 50 CNR, increase of 140 DNR, stable YNR e) Increase of 40 ANR, increase of 100 CNR, increase of 10 DNR f) Stable g) Stable; the second survey on terrestrial wildlife resources in Gansu is underway and new data will be available by end of the year h) Increase of 27 EAPC i) Increase of 3 EAPC j) Decrease of 86 due to animal epidemics (From 2021 PIR) Midterm target largely achieved and on track for EOP target; standard transparent data collection, analysis and reporting is needed.		

Indicator	Baseline	Midterm Target	End-of-project Target	Level in 1 st PIR - 2020 (self-reported)	MTR Assessment	Achievement Rating	Justification
	Saiga antelope CR – increase of 30 at EAPC						
Outcome 1: Improved legal and institutional framework for Protected Areas (PAs), Key Biodiversity Areas (KBAs) and globally threatened species, and mainstreaming of biodiversity conservation in provincial planning							
4. Extent to which legal, policy and institutional frameworks reflect current national policy for biodiversity conservation	<p>a) Five key biodiversity-related laws are out of date in relation to current national laws and require strengthening See PPG report in Annex R</p> <p>b) No provincial level full BSAP at present</p> <p>c) No formal community co-management mechanisms at sites, although a conservation society is active at Duoer NR</p>	<p>a) Proposals updating and revision of five biodiversity related laws presented to Gansu provincial govt for review by 2020</p> <p>b) Updated Biodiversity Strategy and Action Plan for Gansu fully reflecting national biodiversity policy presented to provincial government for approval</p> <p>c) Community co-management agreements established for Axia, Chagangliang, Duoer and Yuhe NRs</p>	<p>a) Proposals for updating and revision of five biodiversity related laws submitted and approved by Gansu Province People's Congress</p> <p>b) Updated Biodiversity Strategy and Action Plan for Gansu fully reflecting national biodiversity policy is approved</p> <p>Community co-management agreements for Axia, Chagangliang, Duoer and Yuhe NRs under implementation</p>	In progress	<p>On target</p> <p>a) The project's proposal to revise the Regulations of Gansu Province on Environmental Protection was adopted by the Gansu Province People's Congress in December 2019; two revisions have already been completed and adopted and the other is scheduled for 2021</p> <p>b) The draft updated BSAP for Gansu reflecting national biodiversity policy has been prepared and submitted to provincial departments</p> <p>c) Completed; co-management agreements for Axia, Chagangliang, Duoer and Yuhe NRs established and under implementation</p> <p>(From 2021 PIR and discussions with PMO)</p>	Satisfactory	Very good progress has been made towards Outcome 1. Work revising key biodiversity related laws is ahead of schedule, a draft revised provincial BSAP has been developed, and co-management agreements are in place for the four target NRs. Work is underway to improve the reflection of KBAs in conservation planning and requirements for agency reporting, although the project should consider carefully how the EOP target for Indicator 5 will be interpreted and reported against. Constructive engagement has taken place to mainstream biodiversity into 14 th FYPs, the institutional capacity to manage the provincial PA system has been enhanced, and the funding gap for the provincial PA system has been reduced by 37%, which surpasses the EOP target for Indicator 8.
5. Revised provincial laws for wildlife conservation and NR management reflecting KBAs including agency responsibilities for monitoring and reporting on KBA and	Existing policy and legal framework is evolving but does not yet reflect KBAs or the need to include them in the PA system and EC network, no agency reporting requirement for status of KBAs and	Recommendations provided for the reflection of KBAs in conservation planning and requirement for agency reporting on KBA and globally	Revised provincial laws for wildlife conservation and NR management reflecting KBAs and the need for their coverage by the PA system and EC network and requires	In progress	<p>On target</p> <p>The Intended Plan for Integration and Optimization of Protected Areas in Gansu Province was prepared by the PA Management Division of GFGB, and includes recommendations regarding</p>		

Indicator	Baseline	Midterm Target	End-of-project Target	Level in 1 st PIR - 2020 (self-reported)	MTR Assessment	Achievement Rating	Justification
globally threatened species status	globally threatened species	threatened species status	agency reporting on KBA and globally threatened species		protection and reporting on KBAs and threatened species (From 2021 PIR) Midterm target met but clarity needed on interpretation of the indicator and EOP target and whether the 'Intended Plan' will fulfill them.		
6. Biodiversity conservation integrated as a mainstreamed task in the Provincial Five-Year Plan (FYP) with provision for enhanced protection of KBAs and globally threatened species	The Outline of Gansu 13th FYP Chapter 17 describes key projects on NRs and wildlife conservation and key ecological function zones	Proposals for strengthened biodiversity conservation incorporating KBAs submitted to provincial government agencies for inclusion in the ongoing 13th and upcoming 14th FYP	Safeguards for biodiversity conservation, KBAs and globally threatened species included in 13th and 14th FYP for key sectors Note: sectors to be finalized by relevant Task Force	In progress	On target The project has liaised with several provincial government agencies regarding mainstreaming biodiversity into the 14th FYPs, primarily through the revised BSAP (From 2021 PIR)		
7. Improved institutional capacity to administer the provincial PA System and globally threatened species conservation, indicated by UNDP capacity development scorecard (see Annex N) for: a) Gansu Forestry Department b) Bailongjiang Forestry Administration c) Gansu Endangered	a) 53% b) 38% c) 57%	a) 65% b) 50% c) 70%	a) 84% b) 72% c) 84%	Not started	On target a) 69% b) 66% c) 73% (From scorecard dated August 2021)		

Indicator	Baseline	Midterm Target	End-of-project Target	Level in 1 st PIR - 2020 (self-reported)	MTR Assessment	Achievement Rating	Justification
Animal Protection Center							
8. PA system financing gap	The provincial PA system is centrally financed with little diversification of funding sources. PA system financing gap of USD 81,740,000 for basic management costs	PA system financing gap reduced to at least USD 73,566,000 for basic management costs (10% reduction)	PA system financing gap reduced to at least USD 57,218,000 for basic management costs (30% reduction)	Not started	Achieved PA system financing gap (using 2020 data) is USD 51,383,976 for basic management costs (37% reduction) (From financial sustainability scorecard provided in August 2021) The midterm and EOP targets are both achieved.		
Outcome 2: Strengthened West Qinling Mountains-Minshan Mountains PA and Ecological Corridor Network and reduction of threats							
9. Increased management effectiveness of targeted PAs covering approx. 355,530 ha indicate “sound” mgt (as measured by the METT: a) Axia NR b) Chagangliang NR c) Duor NR d) Yuhe NR	a) 42% b) 55% c) 45% d) 52%	a) 53% b) 65% c) 57% d) 64%	a) 67% b) 76% c) 71% d) 79%	Not started	On target a) 53% b) 65% c) 57% d) 68% (From METT provided August 2021) Midterm targets achieved.	Satisfactory	Outcome 2 includes two indicators, and good progress has been made in increasing management effectiveness (as measured by the METT) and reducing threats to biodiversity at project sites. A standard transparent data collection, analysis and reporting system should be established for threat reduction activities. Various other project outputs have contributed to achievements for Outcome 2, including a corridor plan (which is very detailed but would benefit from setting clear ecological objectives for the four corridors), management plans and financing plans for the four NRs, community co-management plans for the NRs, and initiatives to promote alternative livelihoods and HWC management to reduce pressures on ecosystems and species.
10. Threats to biodiversity reduced at project demonstration sites. Threats: firewood, grazing cattle, medicinal herbs	a) Axia NR: i) Firewood: 4,439t ii) Grazing cattle: 49,961 b) Chagangliang NR: i) Firewood: 2,205t ii) Grazing cattle: 726	Less than half of EOP targets	a) Axia NR: i) Firewood: 20% decrease ii) Grazing cattle: 10% decrease b) Chagangliang NR: i) Firewood: 30%	Achieved and surpassed all	On target a) Axia NR: i) Firewood: 75% decrease ii) Grazing cattle: 22% decrease		

Indicator	Baseline	Midterm Target	End-of-project Target	Level in 1 st PIR - 2020 (self-reported)	MTR Assessment	Achievement Rating	Justification
	c) Duoer NR: i) Firewood: 13,300t ii) Grazing cattle: 15,200 d) Yuhe NR: i) Firewood: 50t ii) Medicinal herbs: 10t		decrease ii) Grazing cattle: 30% decrease c) Duoer NR: i) Firewood: 30% decrease ii) Grazing cattle: 6% decrease d) Yuhe NR: i) Firewood: 40% decrease ii) Medicinal herbs: 60% decrease		b) Chagangliang NR: i) Firewood: 33% decrease ii) Grazing cattle: 30% decrease c) Duoer NR: i) Firewood: 47% decrease ii) Grazing cattle: 24% decrease d) Yuhe NR: i) Firewood: 83% decrease ii) Medicinal herbs: 92% decrease (From 2021 PIR) Midterm target achieved and on track for EOP target; standard transparent data collection, analysis and reporting is needed.		

Indicator	Baseline	Midterm Target	End-of-project Target	Level in 1 st PIR - 2020 (self-reported)	MTR Assessment	Achievement Rating	Justification
Outcome 3: Knowledge Management, M&E and Gender Mainstreaming							
11. Extent of documentation and dissemination of project lessons learned to other projects and stakeholders through the C-PAR Program: a) Number of lessons learned disseminated via project website/C-PAR biodiversity knowledge platform b) Number of participants attending meetings where lessons learned were presented.	0	a) 10 lessons learned completed and uploaded to project website/C-PAR biodiversity knowledge platform b) 300	a) 20 lessons learned completed and uploaded to project website/C-PAR biodiversity knowledge platform; and usage statistics indicate increasing reach of C-PAR Program lessons learned. b) 600	In progress	On target a) 10 lessons learned generated and disseminated through different means, including the WeChat public account and workshops b) 679 (Data provided by the PMO during the mission) EOP sub-target (b) has been achieved.	Satisfactory	Good progress has been made against the various activities under Outcome 3. Gender mainstreaming has been a particular strength of the project. The project is systematically identifying and disseminating lessons learned and presenting them in meetings. The baseline status and targets for the Knowledge, Attitude and Practice (KAP) surveys have not yet been established, therefore the indicator for this is assessed as 'Not on target'; however, this can quickly be brought on track by simple remedial action and the work is of good quality, therefore progress towards Outcome 3 is considered Satisfactory.
12. Improved awareness of the value of biodiversity conservation among key target groups including: a) Gansu provincial government decision makers, b) local government agencies, and c) local communities at project sites, indicated by KAP surveys conducted at the start and end of the project	Baseline KAP status to be established in year 1 using methodology in Annex V	Mid Term KAP Target to be established in year 1 using methodology in Annex V	Project Completion KAP Target to be established in year 1 using methodology in Annex V	In progress	Not on target Baseline KAP status established in 2020, including KAP scores for the three target groups; no baseline, midterm or project completion targets formally established (Report provided during the mission) Assessed as 'Not on target' because no targets set, but can quickly get back on track by developing baselines and targets for approval by PSC and RTA.		

Annex 7: Ratings scales

Ratings for Progress Towards Results: (one rating for each outcome and for the objective)		
6	Highly Satisfactory (HS)	The objective/outcome is expected to achieve or exceed all its end-of-project targets, without major shortcomings. The progress towards the objective/outcome can be presented as “good practice”.
5	Satisfactory (S)	The objective/outcome is expected to achieve most of its end-of-project targets, with only minor shortcomings.
4	Moderately Satisfactory (MS)	The objective/outcome is expected to achieve most of its end-of-project targets but with significant shortcomings.
3	Moderately Unsatisfactory (HU)	The objective/outcome is expected to achieve its end-of-project targets with major shortcomings.
2	Unsatisfactory (U)	The objective/outcome is expected not to achieve most of its end-of-project targets.
1	Highly Unsatisfactory (HU)	The objective/outcome has failed to achieve its midterm targets, and is not expected to achieve any of its end-of-project targets.

Ratings for Project Implementation & Adaptive Management: (one overall rating)		
6	Highly Satisfactory (HS)	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”.
5	Satisfactory (S)	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.
4	Moderately Satisfactory (MS)	Implementation of some of the seven components is leading to efficient and effective project implementation and adaptive management, with some components requiring remedial action.
3	Moderately Unsatisfactory (MU)	Implementation of some of the seven components is not leading to efficient and effective project implementation and adaptive, with most components requiring remedial action.
2	Unsatisfactory (U)	Implementation of most of the seven components is not leading to efficient and effective project implementation and adaptive management.
1	Highly Unsatisfactory (HU)	Implementation of none of the seven components is leading to efficient and effective project implementation and adaptive management.

Ratings for Sustainability: (one overall rating)		
4	Likely (L)	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
3	Moderately Likely (ML)	Moderate risks, but expectations that at least some outcomes will be sustained due to the progress towards results on outcomes at the Midterm Review
2	Moderately Unlikely (MU)	Significant risk that key outcomes will not carry on after project closure, although some outputs and activities should carry on
1	Unlikely (U)	Severe risks that project outcomes as well as key outputs will not be sustained.

Annex 8: Suggested amendments to results framework

Indicator	End-of-project target	Suggestions
Objective		
1. Number of direct project beneficiaries, consisting of: a) Targeted communities at project sites (Axia, Chagangliang, Duoer and Yuhe NRs); b) Gansu FD, Bailongjiang FA and EAPC staff at demo PAs and Ecological Corridors and other stakeholders receiving training	Number (% women) a) 3,800 (60%) b) 750 (40%)	No suggested changes (target cannot be changed as it is an objective indicator) For sub-target (b), because the number of women in some agencies is low, recommend aiming to achieve the target of the <u>number</u> of women represented by EOP sub-target (b): 40% of 750, which is <u>300 women</u> Training of men should also continue, and report against total numbers, the target of 300 women, and the overall percentage that were women Document this approach as part of revised results framework and clearly explain at the time of the terminal evaluation
2. Ecological corridors (EC) established and PA System expanded by more than 25,000 ha, increasing coverage of KBAs and with emphasis on habitat connectivity	a) Yuhe NR: 4,376 ha (NP corridor) b) Chagangliang NR / Zhouqu County: 6,920 ha c) Liangdang County: c.2,973 ha d) Hezheng County: c.12,000 ha	A midterm target was to be confirmed at project inception, but this did not occur; there is no benefit to setting a midterm target at this stage of the project so <u>recommend</u> replacing 'To be confirmed at project inception' with 'No midterm target' Document how 'corridors established' will be interpreted, measured and reported for the terminal evaluation
3. Improvements in status of globally threatened species in Gansu Province as measured by: stable or increased populations of indicator species	All Stable – as baseline, except for reintroduced species: Przewalski's horse EN – increase of 7 at EAPC Bactrian camel CR – increase of 5 at EAPC Saiga antelope CR – increase of 30 at EAPC	No suggested changes Clarify and document data collection, analysis and reporting methods and provide strong evidence at terminal evaluation
Outcome 1		
4. Extent to which legal, policy and institutional frameworks reflect current national policy for biodiversity conservation	a) Proposals for updating and revision of five biodiversity related laws submitted and approved by Gansu Province People's Congress b) Updated Biodiversity Strategy and Action Plan for Gansu fully reflecting national biodiversity policy is approved c) Community co-management agreements for Axia, Chagangliang, Duoer and Yuhe NRs under implementation	a) Change EOP target to 'three biodiversity-related laws'

Indicator	End-of-project target	Suggestions
5. Revised provincial laws for wildlife conservation and NR management reflecting KBAs including agency responsibilities for monitoring and reporting on KBA and globally threatened species status	Revised provincial laws for wildlife conservation and NR management reflecting KBAs and the need for their coverage by the PA system and EC network and requires agency reporting on KBA and globally threatened species status	No suggestions
6. Biodiversity conservation integrated as a mainstreamed task in the Provincial Five-Year Plan (FYP) with provision for enhanced protection of KBAs and globally threatened species	Safeguards for biodiversity conservation, KBAs and globally threatened species included in 13th and 14th FYP for key sectors Note: sectors to be finalized by relevant Task Force	Consider rewording EOP target to improve consistency with the wording of the indicator and midterm target Carefully assess the content of the BSAP to determine whether this fully meets the intent of the project document for this indicator Document in the revised results framework how measurement and reporting will be conducted
7. Improved institutional capacity to administer the provincial PA System and globally threatened species conservation, indicated by UNDP capacity development scorecard (see Annex N) for: a) Gansu Forestry Department b) Bailongjiang Forestry Administration c) Gansu Endangered Animal Protection Center	a) 84% b) 72% c) 84%	No suggestions
8. PA system financing gap	PA system financing gap reduced to at least USD 57,218,000 for basic management costs (30% reduction)	No suggestions
Outcome 2		
9. Increased management effectiveness of targeted PAs covering approx. 355,530 ha indicate “sound” mgt (as measured by the METT: a) Axia NR b) Chagangliang NR c) Duoer NR d) Yuhe NR	a) 67% b) 76% c) 71% d) 79%	No suggestions
10. Threats to biodiversity reduced at project demonstration sites. Threats: firewood, grazing cattle, medicinal herbs	a) Axia NR: i) Firewood: 20% decrease ii) Grazing cattle: 10% decrease b) Chagangliang NR: i) Firewood: 30% decrease ii) Grazing cattle: 30% decrease c) Duoer NR: i) Firewood: 30% decrease ii) Grazing cattle: 6% decrease d) Yuhe NR: i) Firewood: 40% decrease ii) Medicinal herbs: 60% decrease	No suggested changes to indicator or targets Clarify and document data collection, analysis and reporting methods and provide strong evidence at terminal evaluation

Indicator	End-of-project target	Suggestions
Outcome 3		
<p>11. Extent of documentation and dissemination of project lessons learned to other projects and stakeholders through the C-PAR Program:</p> <p>a) Number of lessons learned disseminated via project website/C-PAR biodiversity knowledge platform</p> <p>b) Number of participants attending meetings where lessons learned were presented.</p>	<p>a) 20 lessons learned completed and uploaded to project website/C-PAR biodiversity knowledge platform; and usage statistics indicate increasing reach of C-PAR Program lessons learned.</p> <p>b) 600</p>	No suggestions
<p>12. Improved awareness of the value of biodiversity conservation among key target groups including: a) Gansu provincial government decision makers, b) local government agencies, and c) local communities at project sites, indicated by KAP surveys conducted at the start and end of the project</p>	<p>Project Completion KAP Target to be established in year 1 using methodology in Annex V</p>	<p><u>Recommend</u> the following:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Baseline: replace the current text with the baseline values from the 2020 Baseline Survey KAP Report 2. Midterm: replace the current text with 'No midterm target' 3. EOP: agree on achievable targets for increased KAP scores and replace the text with these target scores

Annex 9: Contribution of the Gansu Project (C-PAR 2) to the C-PAR Program-level results (source: project document Table 2)


C-PAR Program Component	Program Outcomes	C-PAR Program Indicators	C-PAR 2 Gansu Project contributions to C-PAR Program-level results
Objective: Transform China's national protected area system through systematic legal and institutional reform and innovation for conservation of globally significant biodiversity			
Component 1: Improved legal and institutional framework at national and provincial level	<p>1.1 Effective governance and legal framework for the national protected area system – indicated by approved national systems plan and technical regulations allowing for establishment of new PA categories suited for biodiversity protection</p> <p>1.2 Harmonized and effective national system for selecting, designing, managing and monitoring various types of protected areas – indicated by transparent selection, planning and monitoring procedures</p> <p>1.3 Increased government financing for PA management – indicated by an increase of annual investment in PA system operation by >30% over baseline amount to be established during the PPG</p>	<p><u>Indicator 1:</u></p> <p>Extent to which legal, policy and institutional frameworks reflect current national policy for biodiversity conservation</p>	<p>a) Proposals for updating and revision of five biodiversity related laws approved by Gansu Province People's Congress</p> <p>b) Updated Biodiversity Strategy and Action Plan for Gansu fully reflecting national biodiversity policy is approved</p> <p>c) Community co-management agreements for Axia, Chagangliang, Duoer and Yuhe NRs under implementation (Indicator 4)</p> <p>Revised provincial laws for wildlife conservation and NR management reflecting KBAs and the need for their coverage by the PA system and EC network and requires agency reporting on KBA and globally threatened species status (Indicator 5)</p> <p>Biodiversity conservation integrated as a mainstreamed task in the Provincial Five-Year Plan (FYP) with provision for enhanced protection of KBAs and globally threatened species (Indicator 6)</p>
		<p><u>Indicator 2:</u></p> <p>Sustainability of PA financing</p> <p>a) 30% increase in cumulative annual national PA financing (direct), justified by economic valuations, narrowing the gap for basic PA management scenario</p> <p>b) C-PAR4: Establish ecological compensation mechanism</p>	<p>a) PA system financing gap reduced to at least USD 57,218,000 for basic management costs (30% reduction) (Indicator 8)</p> <p>Improved Eco-compensation scheme to support HWC damage claims (Output 1.1)</p>
		<p><u>Indicator 3:</u></p> <p>Improved PA governance, as indicated by new or strengthened collaborative governance mechanisms</p>	<p>Strengthened coordination and management of the PA and Ecological Corridor Network in the West Qinling – Minshan Mountains (Output 2.2)</p> <p>Community co-management agreements for Axia, Chagangliang, Duoer and Yuhe NRs under implementation (Indicator 4c)</p>

C-PAR Program Component	Program Outcomes	C-PAR Program Indicators	C-PAR 2 Gansu Project contributions to C-PAR Program-level results
Component 2: Systematic PA planning and mainstreaming at national, provincial, county spatial planning and sectors	2.1 National protected area system expanded by 2.483 million ha 2.2 Threats to PAs reduced, indicated by increased ESAs and evidence of enforcement, integration of biodiversity concern in development and sector planning and operations, and increased capacity for community engagement	<u>Indicator 4:</u> New areas of terrestrial and marine ecosystems in the national PA system , indicated by coverage of ecologically sensitive areas (ESAs) and/or key biodiversity areas (KBAs) in protected area systems.	Ecological corridors (EC) established and PA System expanded by more than 25,000 ha, increasing coverage of KBAs and with emphasis on habitat connectivity (Indicator 2)
		<u>Indicator 5:</u> Subnational institutional capacities of for protected area planning and management , as indicated by the UNDP Capacity Development Scorecard, tallied across the following five thematic areas: <u>Area 1:</u> Capacity to conceptualize and formulate policies, legislations, strategies and programs <u>Area 2:</u> Capacity to implement policies, legislation, strategies and programs <u>Area 3:</u> Capacity to engage and build consensus among all stakeholders <u>Area 4:</u> Capacity to mobilize information and knowledge <u>Area 5:</u> Capacity to monitor, evaluate, report and learn	Improved institutional capacity to administer the provincial PA System and globally threatened species conservation, indicated by UNDP capacity development scorecard for: a) Gansu Forestry Department (53>84%) b) Bailongjiang Forestry Administration (38>72%) c) Gansu Endangered Animal Protection Center (57>84%) (Indicator 7)
		<u>Indicator 6:</u> Threats to globally significant biodiversity at project demonstration sites reduced.	Threats to biodiversity reduced at 4 project demonstration sites (threats and reduction targets are site specific) (Indicator 10)
Component 3: Site level management and supervision standards raised for different PA types	3.1 Increased management effectiveness of demonstration PAs with globally significant biodiversity and ecosystems - 30% increase indicated by METT plus 20% improvement of EHI over baselines	<u>Indicator 7:</u> Protected area management effectiveness , as indicated by scores recorded in the GEF-6 version of the Management Effectiveness Tracking Tool (METT)	METT score of at least 67% in 4 PAs indicating “sound” management (Indicator 9)
		<u>Indicator 8:</u>	

C-PAR Program Component	Program Outcomes	C-PAR Program Indicators	C-PAR 2 Gansu Project contributions to C-PAR Program-level results
	3.2 Stable or improved status of rare species population – e.g. snow leopard, Przewalski's gazelle, migratory birds	Estimated populations of threatened species , as indicated by biodiversity assessments	Improvements in status of globally threatened species in Gansu Province as measured by: stable or increased populations of indicator species (at Axia = ANR, Chagangliang = CNR, Duoer = DNR, Yuhe = YNR, QMNR = Qilian Mountains NNR, Endangered Animals Protection Center = EAPC) a) Golden snub-nosed monkey EN – 1006 YNR b) Giant panda VU – 5 ANR, 4 CNR, 100 DNR, 1 YNR (132 in Gansu) c) Forest musk deer EN – NA ANR, 200 CNR, 100 DNR, NA YNR d) Takin VU – 2 ANR, NA CNR, 70 DNR, 75 YNR e) Tibetan black bear VU – 10 ANR, NA CNR, c.100 DNR f) Chinese giant salamander CR – present in 5 rivers in 5.09km ² of habitat YNR g) Snow leopard VU – 306-576 QMNR h) Przewalski's horse EN – 98 EAPC i) Bactrian camel CR – 19 EAPC j) Saiga antelope CR – 107 EAPC (Indicator 3)
		<u>Indicator 9:</u> # direct project beneficiaries , a. Communities within/around target sites. b. People receiving training.	a) Targeted communities at project sites (Axia, Chagangliang, Duoer and Yuhe NRs) - 3,800 (60% W, >60% EM) b) Gansu FD, Bailongjiang FA and EAPC staff at demo PAs and Ecological Corridors and other stakeholders receiving training - 750 (40% W) (Indicator 1)
		<u>Indicator 10:</u> Level of inclusiveness in management of the NP system, as indicated through: a. Gender inclusion b. Ethnic minorities inclusion c. Community engagement d. Civil society participation	60% women target for direct beneficiaries in communities achieved, and 40% women target for training achieved (Indicator 1) 60% of project small grants for targeted communities allocated to women and ethnic minority participants (Outputs 2.3, 2.4)
Component 4:		<u>Indicator 11:</u>	N/A

C-PAR Program Component	Program Outcomes	C-PAR Program Indicators	C-PAR 2 Gansu Project contributions to C-PAR Program-level results
Program Coordination, Knowledge Management, and M&E	4.1 Improved knowledge sharing between PAs and uptake of best practices 4.2 Improved understanding among decision makers and the public on value of PA system, indicated by Knowledge, Attitude and Practices surveys to be conducted at start and end of projects	Effectiveness of program coordination, as indicated by: a. Program governance b. Program-level reporting	
		<u>Indicator 12:</u> Extent of knowledge management of C-PAR Program, as indicated through a. Functional biodiversity knowledge platform b. Lessons learned distilled and disseminated c. Knowledge exchange through workshops, seminars, conferences	Extent of documentation and dissemination of project lessons learned to other projects and stakeholders through the C-PAR Program: a) Number of lessons learned disseminated via project website/ C-PAR biodiversity knowledge platform b) Number of participants attending meetings where lessons learned were presented. (Indicator 11)
		<u>Indicator 13:</u> Level of understanding among decision makers and public on value of PA systems, based on results of knowledge, practices, and attitudes (KAP) survey	Improved awareness of the value of biodiversity conservation among key target groups including: a) Gansu provincial government decision makers, b) local government agencies, and c) local communities at project sites, indicated by Knowledge, Attitude and Practices (KAP) surveys conducted at the start and end of the project [Project Completion KAP Target to be established in year 1 using methodology in Annex V] (Indicator 12)
		<u>Indicator 14:</u> Mandatory basic reporting standard for Chinese nature reserve system, as a necessary evaluation part of supervision	N/A

Annex 10: Signed UNEG Code of Conduct forms

<p>Evaluators/Consultants:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 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. 8. Must ensure that independence of judgement is maintained, and that evaluation findings and recommendations are independently presented. 9. Must confirm that they have not been involved in designing, executing or advising on the project being evaluated and did not carry out the project's Mid-Term Review. <p style="text-align: center;">TE Consultant Agreement Form</p> <p>Agreement to abide by the Code of Conduct for Evaluation in the UN System:</p> <p>Name of Evaluator: Adrian Stokes</p> <p>Name of Consultancy Organization (where relevant):</p> <p>I confirm that I have received and understood and will abide by the United Nations Code of Conduct for Evaluation.</p> <p>Signed at: Adelaide, Australia (place) on: 8 September 2021 (date)</p> <p>Signature: </p>
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<p>Evaluators/Consultants:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 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. 8. Must ensure that independence of judgement is maintained, and that evaluation findings and recommendations are independently presented. 9. Must confirm that they have not been involved in designing, executing or advising on the project being evaluated and did not carry out the project's Mid-Term Review. <p style="text-align: center;">TE Consultant Agreement Form</p> <p>Agreement to abide by the Code of Conduct for Evaluation in the UN System:</p> <p>Name of Evaluator:</p> <p>Name of Consultancy Organization (where relevant):</p> <p>I confirm that I have received and understood and will abide by the United Nations Code of Conduct for Evaluation.</p> <p>Signed at <u>Beijing, China</u> (place) on <u>8, September</u> ²⁰²¹ (date)</p> <p>Signature: <u>Lin Shuo</u></p>

Annex 11: MTR Terms of Reference (excluding ToR annexes)

Midterm Review Terms of Reference

Standard Template 2: Formatted information to be entered in [UNDP Jobs website](#)³

BASIC CONTRACT INFORMATION

Location: China

Application Deadline: July 16th, 2021

Type of Contract: Individual Contract

Post Level: International Consultant

Languages Required: English

Starting Date: August 18th, 2021

Duration of Initial Contract: 55 working days

Expected Duration of Assignment: August 18th, 2021 – November 15th, 2021

BACKGROUND

A. Project Titles

- Enhancing conservation of globally significant biodiversity through protected area system strengthening in Gansu (China-Protected Areas System Reform (C-PAR) Program Child Project #2)
- Strengthening the Protected Area System in the Qilian Mountains-Qinghai Lake Landscape Project (China-Protected Areas System Reform (C-PAR) Program Child Project #3)

1.1.1.1 B. Project Description

This is the Terms of Reference for the UNDP-GEF Midterm Review (MTR) of the two full-sized projects:

Project 1: Enhancing conservation of globally significant biodiversity through protected area system strengthening in Gansu (China-Protected Areas System Reform (C-PAR) Program Child Project #2) (PIMS #5689) implemented through the Forestry and Grassland Bureau of Gansu Province, which is to be undertaken in 2019-2024. The project started on the January 31st, 2019 and is in its third year of implementation. This ToR sets out the expectations for these MTRs. The MTR process must follow the guidance outlined in the document *Guidance For Conducting Midterm Reviews of UNDP-Supported, GEF-Financed Projects* (http://web.undp.org/evaluation/documents/guidance/GEF/mid-term/Guidance_Midterm%20Review%20_EN_2014.pdf).

Gansu Province is notable for its topographical, climatic and biological diversity, including the West Qinling - Minshan Mountains landscape which features large tracts of forest that are critical watersheds and part of the south-central China 'biodiversity hotspot'. Gansu Province has more than 60 nature reserves (NRs) that are important for endemic and globally threatened species such as giant panda, golden snub-nosed monkey, etc. However, the connectivity of forested landscapes and viability of key species populations are threatened by infrastructure development and unsustainable land management, exacerbated by climate change. The project is designed to remove the barriers for the long-term solution to strengthen the conservation of endemic and globally threatened species in Gansu Province through reducing threats and strengthening and mainstreaming the protected area (PA) system into government and sectoral planning through three components: 1) Improved legal and institutional framework for protected areas, Key Biodiversity Areas

³ <https://jobs.undp.org/>

(KBAs) and globally threatened species, and mainstreaming of biodiversity conservation in provincial planning; 2) Strengthened West Qinling Mountains-Minshan Mountains PA network and reduction of threats; and 3) Knowledge Management, Monitoring and Evaluation and Gender Mainstreaming.

The project objective is to strengthen the conservation of globally significant biodiversity in Gansu Province through improving the legal and institutional framework, reforming and mainstreaming the protected area system, enhancing habitat connectivity and reducing key threats. The project comprises of three components:

- Outcome 1: Improved legal and institutional framework for Protected Areas (PAs), Key Biodiversity Areas (KBAs) and globally threatened species, and mainstreaming of biodiversity conservation in provincial planning
- Outcome 2: Strengthened West Qinling Mountains-Minshan Mountains PA network and reduction of threats
- Outcome 3: Improved data and knowledge management, monitoring and evaluation supports biodiversity conservation

Activities under component 1 has been focused on provincial level to update related legislation and the biodiversity conservation strategy and action plan, develop the PA and ecological corridor network plan, improve the institutional capacity for PA system and species conservation, and strengthen financial sustainability of the PA system. Activities under component 2 has been focused on the West Qinling - Minshan Mountains landscape with four target NRs (A'xia, Duo'er, Chagangliang and Yuhe), two Ecological Corridors in Liangdang and Hezheng County, and Endanger Animal Protection Center (EAPC) in Wuwei City. Results of the second component include a strengthened PA and ecological corridor network in the West Qinling-Minshan Mountains landscape expanded by more than 25,000 ha; improved management effectiveness and reduced threats at four target NRs covering c.355,530 ha, with strengthened engagement of communities and support for livelihoods. Under the third component, the project has been sharing knowledge with stakeholders and other projects through the C-PAR Program, and awareness of biodiversity conservation raised among key stakeholders.

Implemented by the Provincial Forestry and Grassland Bureau of Gansu (GFGB), Gansu Provincial Forest Fire Warning and Monitoring Information Center (Gansu Provincial Foreign-Funded Forestry Project Management Office) of GFGB has hosted the project management office (PMO). The Project Coordination Office is established in the Provincial Department of Finance. The project duration is 5 years, from January 31st, 2019 to January 31st, 2024. The total budget is \$20,697,293.58, including \$2,652,293.58 of GEF contribution and \$18,045,000 co-financing jointly provided by the provincial government of Gansu and UNDP.

The project launched on May 13th, 2019. The Project Steering Committee (PSC) was established on April 23rd, 2019 and the first PSC meeting was also held on May 13th, 2019. Representatives from GFGB, UNDP and 11 provincial departments attended the meeting.

Project 2: Strengthening the PA system in the Qilian Mountains-Qinghai Lake landscape (China-Protected Areas System Reform (C-PAR) Program Child Project #3) (PIMS #5690) implemented through the Qinghai Forestry and Grassland Bureau, which is to be undertaken in 2019-2024. The project officially signed on the January 31st, 2019 is in its third year of implementation. This ToR sets out the expectations for this MTR. The MTR process must follow the guidance outlined in the document *Guidance For Conducting Midterm Reviews of UNDP-Supported, GEF-Financed Projects* (http://web.undp.org/evaluation/documents/guidance/GEF/mid-term/Guidance_Midterm%20Review%20_EN_2014.pdf).

Consolidation of the protected area system in the Qilian Mountains-Qinghai Lake landscape to conserve globally significant biodiversity and development of landscape level management will promote resilience and a functional natural environment across these critical ecosystems. The project aims to strengthen the enabling conditions both at the institutional and site level, to enhance the participation of local communities

in natural resource management towards achieving mutually beneficial conservation and socioeconomic outcomes. Although the current protected areas in the Qilian Mountains-Qinghai Lake landscape, namely the Qinghai Lake national nature reserve (NNR) and the Qilian Mountains nature reserve (NR), are managed under sustainable use arrangements, e.g., access for local Tibetan herders to grassland ecosystems, there remain threats to globally significant biodiversity that are not being effectively managed. The project is designed to increase participation through collaborative management and innovative conservation financing arrangements, including but not limited to: (1) expansion of the PA system and management under collaborative community arrangements; (2) community and/or herder group agreements to remove or adjust fencing to reduce threats to Przewalski's gazelle and increase habitat connectivity; (3) development of community jobs in support of PA management; (4) support for sustainable alternative livelihoods linked to conservation incentives, e.g., biodiversity friendly eco-tourism; (5) collaborative implementation of grassland restoration, utilizing local herders to patrol and manage the process; (6) collaborative livestock management in high mountain grasslands, reducing seasonal fragmentation of habitat for key species, including the snow leopard; and (7) pilot implementation of innovative conservation financing, e.g., through conservation easement arrangements, including transfer of tenure and/or land use rights, to support restoration and improve habitat management.

The Project Objective is “to strengthen the effectiveness of the protected area system in the Qilian Mountains-Qinghai Lake landscape to conserve globally significant biodiversity, including snow leopard and Przewalski's gazelle”. The project strategy, as the GEF project alternative aimed at removing the barriers outlined above, is broken down into the following three components:

Component 1: Protected Area System Consolidation and Institutional Strengthening

Component 2: Emplacement of Effective PA Management and Incentivising Participatory Conservation

Component 3: Knowledge Management, Monitoring & Evaluation, and Gender and Social Inclusion.

Implementing Partner is the Qinghai Forestry and Grassland Bureau (QFGB), the Project Management Office (PMO) is established under the Qinghai Forestry and Grassland Project Service Center (QFGPSC) of QFGB. The Project Coordination Office is in the Qinghai Department of Finance. The project duration is 5 years, from January 31st, 2019 to January 31st, 2024. The total budget is \$20,697,293.58, including \$2,652,293.58 of GEF grant and \$18,045,000 co-financing jointly provided by the provincial government of Qinghai and UNDP.

The project officially launched on June 19th, 2019. The Project Steering Committee (PSC) was established on April 1st, 2019 and the first PSC meeting was also held on June 19th, 2019. Representatives from QFGB, UNDP and nine provincial PSC member departments attended the meeting.

The outbreak of the Covid-19 pandemic has escalated into a global humanitarian and socio-economic crisis since 2020. As of June 2021, the World Health Organization (WHO) declared COVID-19 a global pandemic as the new coronavirus rapidly spread to all regions of the world. In China, from January 3rd, 2020 to June 10th, 2021, there have been 115,229 confirmed cases of COVID-19 with 5,179 deaths, reported to WHO. As of June 8th, 2021, a total of 808,962,000 vaccine doses have been administered. China responded to the outbreak by implemented a series of strict restrictions to minimize contracting or spreading the virus. In the first and second quarters of 2020, there was a lockdown period. This had a negative impact on the project, resulting in delays to implementation for at least 2 months but with the lifting of restrictions implementation gradually picked up since June. To date, international travel is still limited. Entry restrictions vary depending on departure location. All travelers are strongly advised to check with a local Chinese embassy or consulate to confirm all testing and document verification requirements. All persons (including Chinese nationals) traveling from abroad must have proof of dual negative results for COVID-19 using both a nucleic acid test and a serological test for IgM antibodies. All persons (including Chinese nationals) must undergo a 14-day quarantine at a designated location upon arrival in Mainland China plus a 7-14 days quarantine at home or in the community.

C. MTR Purpose

The overall objective of MTR is to assess progress towards the achievement of the project objectives and outcomes as specified in the Project Documents titled [Enhancing conservation of globally significant biodiversity through protected area system strengthening in Gansu \(China-Protected Areas System Reform \(C-PAR\) Program Child Project #2\) \(PIMS #5689\)](#) and [Strengthening the PA system in the Qilian Mountains-Qinghai Lake landscape \(China-Protected Areas System Reform \(C-PAR\) Program Child Project #3\) \(PIMS #5690\)](#), which are scheduled to end in January 2024, to confirm whether/not the project is on track, especially with respect to project design, timeframe, budget and sustainability and assess early signs of project success or failure with the goal of identifying the necessary changes to be made in order to set the project on-track to achieve its intended results. The MTR will review project activities, output and project governance and management to date and will synthesize lessons to help improve the project design and implementation of project activities. Results, effectiveness, processes, and performance of partners will also be assessed to promote accountability for achievement of objectives. The MTR will promote learning and knowledge sharing to inform policies, strategies, programmes and projects, and recommendations will be provided to the project to improve its performance, sustainability, effectiveness, and impact.

To achieve the objectives of MTR described above, the MTR consultants will review all relevant sources of information including documents prepared during the preparation phase (i.e. PIF, UNDP Initiation Plan, UNDP Environmental & Social Safeguard Policy, the Project Document, project reports including Annual Project Review/PIRs, project budget revisions, lesson learned reports, national strategic and legal documents, and any other materials that the consultant considers useful for this evidence-based review), and summarize assessment methodologies, results, and recommendations in a report. The MTR report should promote accountability and transparency and assess the extent of project accomplishments.

DUTIES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

1.1.1.1.2 D. MTR Approach & Methodology

The MTR reports must provide evidence-based information that is credible, reliable and useful.

The MTR team will review all relevant sources of information including documents prepared during the preparation phase (i.e. PIF, UNDP Initiation Plan, UNDP Social and Environmental Screening Procedure (SESP)), the Project Document, project reports including Annual Project Review/PIRs, project budget revisions, national strategic and legal documents, and any other materials that the team considers useful for this evidence-based review. The MTR team will review the baseline GEF focal area Core Indicators/Tracking Tools submitted to the GEF at CEO endorsement, and the midterm GEF focal area Core Indicators/Tracking Tools that must be completed before the MTR field mission begins.

The MTR team is expected to follow a collaborative and participatory approach⁴ ensuring close engagement with the Project Teams, government counterparts (the GEF Operational Focal Point), the UNDP Country Office(s), the Regional Technical Advisor, direct beneficiaries, and other key stakeholders.

Engagement of stakeholders is vital to a successful MTR.⁵ Stakeholder involvement should include interviews with stakeholders who have project responsibilities, including but not limited to Ministry of Ecology and Environment, Ministry of Finance, Foreign Environmental Cooperation Center, Sub-national Governments; executing agencies, senior officials and task team/ component leaders, key experts and consultants in the subject area, Project Board, project stakeholders, academia, local government and CSOs, etc. [Additionally, the national consultant is expected to conduct field missions to Beijing, Gansu and Qinghai, including the following project sites in cities of Lanzhou, Longnan, Wuwei, Gannan Tibetan Autonomous Prefecture](#)

⁴ For ideas on innovative and participatory Monitoring and Evaluation strategies and techniques, see [UNDP Discussion Paper: Innovations in Monitoring & Evaluating Results](#), 05 Nov 2013.

⁵ For more stakeholder engagement in the M&E process, see the [UNDP Handbook on Planning, Monitoring and Evaluating for Development Results](#), Chapter 3, pg. 93.

and Linxia Hui Autonomous Prefecture for Gansu Project. Xining City, Haibei Tibetan Autonomous Prefecture including Menyuan County, Gangcha County and Haiyan County for Qinghai Project.

The specific design and methodology for the MTR should emerge from consultations between the MTR team and the above-mentioned parties regarding what is appropriate and feasible for meeting the MTR purpose and objectives and answering the evaluation questions, given limitations of budget, time and data. The MTR team must, however, use gender-responsive methodologies and tools and ensure that gender equality and women's empowerment, as well as other cross-cutting issues and SDGs are incorporated into the MTR report.

The final methodological approach including interview schedule, field visits and data to be used in the MTR should be clearly outlined in the Inception Report and be fully discussed and agreed between UNDP, stakeholders and the MTR team.

The final MTR reports must describe the full MTR approach taken and the rationale for the approach making explicit the underlying assumptions, challenges, strengths and weaknesses about the methods and approach of the review.

Considering the travel limitation, the MTR team should develop a methodology that takes this into account the conduct of the MTRs virtually and remotely, including the use of remote interview methods and extended desk reviews, data analysis, surveys and review questionnaires. This should be detailed in the MTR Inception Reports and agreed with the Commissioning Unit. The international consultant will be home-based and provide guidance to the National Consultant, who will do the field visit to the sites (if the travel is permitted). Since part of the MTR is to be carried out virtually then consideration should be taken for stakeholder availability, ability or willingness to be interviewed remotely. These limitations must be reflected in the final MTR reports.

If a data collection/field mission is not possible then remote interviews may be undertaken through telephone or online (skype, zoom etc.). International consultant can work remotely with national consultant support in the field if it is safe for them to operate and travel. No stakeholders, consultants or UNDP staff should be put in harm's way and safety is the key priority.

A short validation mission may be considered if it is confirmed to be safe for staffs, consultants, stakeholders and if such a mission is possible within the MTR schedule.

1.1.1.1.3 E. Detailed Scope of the MTR

The MTR team will assess the following four categories of project progress. See the *Guidance For Conducting Midterm Reviews of UNDP-Supported, GEF-Financed Projects* for extended descriptions.

Considering the MTR team will conduct evaluation for 2 child projects under one programme, despite shared overall programmatic level background, stand-alone report and relevant documents are required for each one of the project.

1. Project Strategy

Project Design:

- Review the problem addressed by the project and the underlying assumptions. Review the effect of any incorrect assumptions or changes to the context to achieving the project results as outlined in the Project Document.
- Review the relevance of the project strategy and assess whether it provides the most effective route towards expected/intended results. Were lessons from other relevant projects properly incorporated into the project design?

- Review how the project addresses country priorities. Review country ownership. Was the project concept in line with the national sector development priorities and plans of the country (or of participating countries in the case of multi-country projects)?
- Review decision-making processes: were perspectives of those who would be affected by project decisions, those who could affect the outcomes, and those who could contribute information or other resources to the process, taken into account during project design processes?
- Review the extent to which relevant gender issues were raised in the project design. See Annex 9 of *Guidance For Conducting Midterm Reviews of UNDP-Supported, GEF-Financed Projects* for further guidelines.
 - Were relevant gender issues (e.g. the impact of the project on gender equality in the programme country, involvement of women's groups, engaging women in project activities) raised in the Project Document?
- If there are major areas of concern, recommend areas for

Results Framework/Logframe:

- Undertake a critical analysis of the project's logframe indicators and targets, assess how "SMART" the midterm and end-of-project targets are (Specific, Measurable, Attainable, Relevant, Time-bound), and suggest specific amendments/revisions to the targets and indicators as necessary.
- Are the project's objectives and outcomes or components clear, practical, and feasible within its time frame?
- Examine if progress so far has led to, or could in the future catalyse beneficial development effects (i.e. income generation, gender equality and women's empowerment, improved governance etc...) that should be included in the project results framework and monitored on an annual basis.
- Ensure broader development and gender aspects of the project are being monitored effectively. Develop and recommend SMART 'development' indicators, including sex-disaggregated indicators and indicators that capture development benefits.

2. Progress Towards Results

- Review the logframe indicators against progress made towards the end-of-project targets; populate the Progress Towards Results Matrix, as described in the *Guidance For Conducting Midterm Reviews of UNDP-Supported, GEF-Financed Projects*; colour code progress in a "traffic light system" based on the level of progress achieved; assign a rating on progress for the project objective and each outcome; make recommendations from the areas marked as "not on target to be achieved" (red).
- **Table. Progress Towards Results Matrix (Achievement of outcomes against End-of-project Targets)**

Project Strategy	Indicator ⁶	Baseline Level ⁷	Level in 1 st PIR (self-reported)	Midterm Target ⁸	End-of-project Target	Midterm Level & Assessment ⁹	Achievement Rating ¹⁰	Justification for Rating
Objective:	Indicator (if applicable):							
Outcome 1:	Indicator 1:							
	Indicator 2:							
Outcome 2:	Indicator 3:							
	Indicator 4:							
	Etc.							
Etc.								

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Indicator Assessment Key

Green= Achieved	Yellow= On target to be achieved	Red= Not on target to be achieved
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⁶ Populate with data from the Logframe and scorecards

⁷ Populate with data from the Project Document

⁸ If available

⁹ Colour code this column only

¹⁰ Use the 6 point Progress Towards Results Rating Scale: HS, S, MS, MU, U, HU

In addition to the progress towards outcomes analysis:

- Compare and analyse the GEF Tracking Tool/Core Indicators at the Baseline with the one completed right before the Midterm Review.
- Identify remaining barriers to achieving the project objective in the remainder of the project.
- By reviewing the aspects of the project that have already been successful, identify ways in which the project can further expand these benefits.

3. Project Implementation and Adaptive Management

Management Arrangements

- Review overall effectiveness of project management as outlined in the Project Document. Have changes been made and are they effective? Are responsibilities and reporting lines clear? Is decision-making transparent and undertaken in a timely manner? Recommend areas for improvement.
- Review the quality of execution of the Executing Agency/Implementing Partner(s) and recommend areas for improvement.
- Review the quality of support provided by the GEF Partner Agency (UNDP) and recommend areas for improvement.
- Do the Executing Agency/Implementing Partner and/or UNDP and other partners have the capacity to deliver benefits to or involve women? If yes, how?
- What is the gender balance of project staff? What steps have been taken to ensure gender balance in project staff?
- What is the gender balance of the Project Board? What steps have been taken to ensure gender balance in the Project Board?

Work Planning

- Review any delays in project start-up and implementation, identify the causes and examine if they have been resolved.
- Are work-planning processes results-based? If not, suggest ways to re-orientate work planning to focus on results?
- Examine the use of the project's results framework/ logframe as a management tool and review any changes made to it since project start.

Finance and co-finance

- Consider the financial management of the project, with specific reference to the cost-effectiveness of interventions.
- Review the changes to fund allocations as a result of budget revisions and assess the appropriateness and relevance of such revisions.
- Does the project have the appropriate financial controls, including reporting and planning, that allow management to make informed decisions regarding the budget and allow for timely flow of funds?
- Informed by the co-financing monitoring table to be filled out by the Commissioning Unit and project team, provide commentary on co-financing: is co-financing being used strategically to help the objectives of the project? Is the Project Team meeting with all co-financing partners regularly in order to align financing priorities and annual work plans?

Sources of Co-financing	Name of Co-financer	Type of Co-financing	Co-financing amount confirmed at CEO	Actual Amount Contributed at stage of	Actual % of Expected Amount

			Endorsement (US\$)	Midterm Review (US\$)	
		TOTAL			

- Include the separate GEF Co-Financing template (filled out by the Commissioning Unit and project team) which categorizes co-financing amounts by source as ‘investment mobilized’ or ‘recurrent expenditures’. (This template will be annexed as a separate file.

Project-level monitoring and evaluation systems

- Review the monitoring tools currently being used: Do they provide the necessary information? Do they involve key partners? Are they aligned or mainstreamed with national systems? Do they use existing information? Are they efficient? Are they cost-effective? Are additional tools required? How could they be made more participatory and inclusive?
- Examine the financial management of the project monitoring and evaluation budget. Are sufficient resources being allocated to monitoring and evaluation? Are these resources being allocated effectively?
- Review the extent to which relevant gender issues were incorporated in monitoring systems. See Annex 9 of *Guidance For Conducting Midterm Reviews of UNDP-Supported, GEF-Financed Projects* for further guidelines.

Stakeholder Engagement

- Project management: Has the project developed and leveraged the necessary and appropriate partnerships with direct and tangential stakeholders?
- Participation and country-driven processes: Do local and national government stakeholders support the objectives of the project? Do they continue to have an active role in project decision-making that supports efficient and effective project implementation?
- Participation and public awareness: To what extent has stakeholder involvement and public awareness contributed to the progress towards achievement of project objectives?
- How does the project engage women and girls? Is the project likely to have the same positive and/or negative effects on women and men, girls and boys? Identify, if possible, legal, cultural, or religious constraints on women’s participation in the project. What can the project do to enhance its gender benefits?

Social and Environmental Standards (Safeguards)

- Validate the risks identified in the project’s most current SESP, and those risks’ ratings; are any revisions needed?
- Summarize and assess the revisions made since CEO Endorsement/Approval (if any) to:
 - The project’s overall safeguards risk categorization.
 - The identified types of risks¹¹ (in the SESP).
 - The individual risk ratings (in the SESP).
- Describe and assess progress made in the implementation of the project’s social and environmental management measures as outlined in the SESP submitted at CEO Endorsement/Approval (and prepared during implementation, if any), including any revisions to those measures. Such management measures might include Environmental and Social Management Plans (ESMPs) or

¹¹ Risks are to be labeled with both the UNDP SES Principles and Standards, and the GEF’s “types of risks and potential impacts”: Climate Change and Disaster; Disadvantaged or Vulnerable Individuals or Groups; Disability Inclusion; Adverse Gender-Related impact, including Gender-based Violence and Sexual Exploitation; Biodiversity Conservation and the Sustainable Management of Living Natural Resources; Restrictions on Land Use and Involuntary Resettlement; Indigenous Peoples; Cultural Heritage; Resource Efficiency and Pollution Prevention; Labor and Working Conditions; Community Health, Safety and Security.

other management plans, though can also include aspects of a project's design; refer to Question 6 in the SESP template for a summary of the identified management measures.

A given project should be assessed against the version of UNDP's safeguards policy that was in effect at the time of the project's approval.

Reporting

- Assess how adaptive management changes have been reported by the project management and shared with the Project Board.
- Assess how well the Project Team and partners undertake and fulfil GEF reporting requirements (i.e. how have they addressed poorly-rated PIRs, if applicable?)
- Assess how lessons derived from the adaptive management process have been documented, shared with key partners and internalized by partners.

Communications & Knowledge Management

- Review internal project communication with stakeholders: Is communication regular and effective? Are there key stakeholders left out of communication? Are there feedback mechanisms when communication is received? Does this communication with stakeholders contribute to their awareness of project outcomes and activities and investment in the sustainability of project results?
- Review external project communication: Are proper means of communication established or being established to express the project progress and intended impact to the public (is there a web presence, for example? Or did the project implement appropriate outreach and public awareness campaigns?)
- For reporting purposes, write one half-page paragraph that summarizes the project's progress towards results in terms of contribution to sustainable development benefits, as well as global environmental benefits.
- List knowledge activities/products developed (based on knowledge management approach approved at CEO Endorsement/Approval).

4. Sustainability

- Validate whether the risks identified in the Project Document, Annual Project Review/PIRs and the ATLAS Risk Register are the most important and whether the risk ratings applied are appropriate and up to date. If not, explain why.
- In addition, assess the following risks to sustainability:

Financial risks to sustainability:

- What is the likelihood of financial and economic resources not being available once the GEF assistance ends (consider potential resources can be from multiple sources, such as the public and private sectors, income generating activities, and other funding that will be adequate financial resources for sustaining project's outcomes)?

Socio-economic risks to sustainability:

- Are there any social or political risks that may jeopardize sustainability of project outcomes? What is the risk that the level of stakeholder ownership (including ownership by governments and other key stakeholders) will be insufficient to allow for the project outcomes/benefits to be sustained? Do the various key stakeholders see that it is in their interest that the project benefits continue to flow? Is there sufficient public / stakeholder awareness in support of the long-term objectives of the project? Are lessons learned being documented by the Project Team on a continual basis and shared/ transferred to appropriate parties who could learn from the project and potentially replicate and/or scale it in the future?

Institutional Framework and Governance risks to sustainability:

- Do the legal frameworks, policies, governance structures and processes pose risks that may jeopardize sustenance of project benefits? While assessing this parameter, also consider if the required systems/ mechanisms for accountability, transparency, and technical knowledge transfer are in place.

Environmental risks to sustainability:

- Are there any environmental risks that may jeopardize sustenance of project outcomes?

Conclusions & Recommendations

The MTR consultant/team will include a section in the MTR report for evidence-based **conclusions**, in light of the findings.

Additionally, the MTR consultant/team is expected to make **recommendations** to the Project Team. Recommendations should be succinct suggestions for critical intervention that are specific, measurable, achievable, and relevant. A recommendation table should be put in the report's executive summary. The MTR consultant/team should make no more than 15 recommendations total.

Ratings

The MTR team will include its ratings of the project's results and brief descriptions of the associated achievements in a *MTR Ratings & Achievement Summary Table* in the Executive Summary of the MTR report. See the TOR Annexes for the Rating Table and ratings scales.

1.1.1.1.4 F. Expected Outputs and Deliverables

The MTR team shall prepare and submit:

- MTR Inception Reports: MTR team clarifies objectives and methods of the Midterm Review no later than **2 weeks** before the MTR mission. To be sent to the Commissioning Unit and project management. Completion date: **August 26th, 2021**
- Presentation: MTR team presents initial findings to project management and the Commissioning Unit at the end of the MTR missions. Completion date: **September 30th, 2021**
- Draft MTR Reports: MTR team submits the draft full reports with annexes **within 3 weeks** of the MTR missions. Completion date: **October 20th, 2021**
- Final Reports*: MTR team submits the revised report with annexed and completed Audit Trail detailing how all received comments have (and have not) been addressed in the final MTR reports. To be sent to the Commissioning Unit **within 1 week** of receiving UNDP comments on draft. Completion date: **November 15th, 2021**

*The final MTR report must be in English. If applicable, the Commissioning Unit may choose to arrange for a translation of the report into a language more widely shared by national stakeholders.

G. Institutional Arrangements

The principal responsibility for managing this MTR resides with the Commissioning Unit. The Commissioning Unit for this project's MTR is the UNDP China.

The Commissioning Unit will contract the consultants and ensure the timely provision of per diems and travel arrangements within the country for the MTR team. The Project Team will be responsible for liaising with the MTR team to provide all relevant documents, set up stakeholder interviews, and arrange field

visits. The Commissioning Unit and Project Team will facilitate and provide all the support that is required to implement remote/ virtual MTR in the event of travel restriction to the country.

H. Duration of the Work

The total duration of the MTR will be approximately **55 days** over a period of *3 months* starting on August 18th, 2021 and shall not exceed five months from when the consultant(s) are hired. The tentative MTR timeframe is as follows:

- *August 18th, 2021*: Prep the MTR Team (handover of project documents)
- *August 26th, 2021 (6 days)*: Document review and preparing MTR Inception Reports (3 days for each project)
- *September 6th, 2021 (8 days)*: Finalization and Validation of MTR Inception Reports
- *September 15th, 2021(8days)*: MTR mission: stakeholder meetings, interviews, field visits in Gansu
- *September 22nd, 2021*: Mission wrap-up meeting & presentation of initial findings for Gansu
- *September 23rd, 2021(8days)*: MTR mission: stakeholder meetings, interviews, field visits in Qinghai
- *September 30th, 2021*: Mission wrap-up meeting & presentation of initial findings for Qinghai
- *October 1st - October 20th, 2021(20 days)*: Preparing draft report
- *November 1st, 2021 (5 days)*: Incorporating audit trail on draft report/Finalization of MTR reports (note: accommodate time delay in dates for circulation and review of the draft report)
- *November 8th, 2021*: Preparation & Issue of Management Response
- *November 15th-30th, 2021*: Expected date of full MTR completion

The date start of contract is **August 18th, 2021**. There should be stand-alone MTR report for each of the 2 projects.

Options for site visits should be provided in the MTR Inception Report.

I. Duty Station

Considering the travel limitation, the MTR team should develop a methodology that takes this into account the conduct of the MTR virtually and remotely, including the use of remote interview methods and extended desk reviews, data analysis, surveys and review questionnaires. This should be detailed in the MTR Inception Report and agreed with the Commissioning Unit. The international consultant will be home-based and provide guidance to the National Consultant, who will do the field visit to the sites (if the travel is permitted).

If a data collection/field mission is not possible then remote interviews may be undertaken through telephone or online (skype, zoom etc.). International consultant can work remotely with national consultant support in the field if it is safe for them to operate and travel. No stakeholders, consultants or UNDP staff should be put in harm's way and safety is the key priority.

Additionally, the national consultant is expected to conduct field missions to Beijing, Gansu Province and Qinghai Province, including the following project sites in cities of Lanzhou, Longnan, Wuwei, Gannan Tibetan Autonomous Prefecture and Linxia Hui Autonomous Prefecture for Gansu Project; Xining City, Haibei Tibetan Autonomous Prefecture including Menyuan County, Gangcha County and Haiyan County for Qinghai Project.

Travel:

- Due to the travel limitation, international travel will not be required during the MTR mission;
- The BSAFE training course must be successfully completed prior to commencement of travel; Herewith is the link to access this training: <https://training.dss.un.org/courses/login/index.php>. These training modules at this secure internet site is accessible to Consultants, which allows for registration with private email.

- Individual Consultants are responsible for ensuring they have vaccinations/inoculations when travelling to certain countries, as designated by the UN Medical Director.
- Consultants are required to comply with the UN security directives set forth under <https://dss.un.org/dssweb/>
- All related travel expenses will be covered and will be reimbursed as per UNDP rules and regulations upon submission of an F-10 claim form and supporting documents.

REQUIRED SKILLS AND EXPERIENCE

J. Qualifications of the Successful Applicants

A team of 2 independent consultants will conduct the MTR - one team leader (with experience and exposure to projects and evaluations in other regions globally), one team expert, usually from the country of the project. The team leader will join online for interviews (where internet connection allows). The consultants cannot have participated in the project preparation, formulation, and/or implementation (including the writing of the Project Document) and should not have a conflict of interest with project's related activities.

The selection of consultants will be aimed at maximizing the overall “team” qualities in the following areas:

1. Qualifications for the Team Leader

Education

- A Master's degree in Biodiversity/Environmental Science/Environmental or other closely related field; (20%)

Experience

- Work experience in biodiversity related management for at least 10 years; (20%)
- Minimum 8 years of experience in conducting evaluation of development projects supported by UNDP/UN agencies, GEF or any donors (15%)
- Experience in evaluating/reviewing projects, experiences in evaluating/reviewing GEF-funded project will be an asset; (5%)
- Experience with result-based management evaluation methodologies and applying SMART targets and reconstructing or validating baseline scenarios; (10%)
- Competence in adaptive management, as applied to CBD; (5%)
- Experience working in China; (5%)
- Demonstrated understanding of issues related to gender and biodiversity; experience in gender sensitive evaluation and analysis; (5%)
- Excellent communication skills; (5%)
- Demonstrable analytical skills; (5%)
- Experience with implementing evaluations remotely will be considered an asset. (5%)

Language

- Fluency in written and spoken English.

2. Qualifications for the National Consultant

Education

- A Master's degree in Biodiversity/Environmental Science/Environmental or other closely related field; (20%)

Experience

- Work experience in biodiversity related management for at least 8 years; (20%)
- Minimum 5 years of experience in conducting evaluation of development projects supported by UNDP/UN agencies, GEF or any donors (15%)
- Experience in evaluating/reviewing projects, experiences in evaluating/reviewing GEF-funded project will be an asset; (5%)
- R
- Experience with result-based management evaluation methodologies and applying SMART targets and reconstructing or validating baseline scenarios; (10%)
- Competence in adaptive management, as applied to CBD; (5%)
- Experience working in China; (5%)
- Demonstrated understanding of issues related to gender and biodiversity; experience in gender sensitive evaluation and analysis; (5%)
- Excellent communication skills; (5%)
- Demonstrable analytical skills; (5%)
- Experience with implementing evaluations remotely will be considered an asset. (5%)

Language

- Fluency in written and spoken English and Chinese.

K. Ethics

The MTR team will be held to the highest ethical standards and is required to sign a code of conduct upon acceptance of the assignment. This MTR will be conducted in accordance with the principles outlined in the UNEG 'Ethical Guidelines for Evaluation'. The MTR team must safeguard the rights and confidentiality of information providers, interviewees and stakeholders through measures to ensure compliance with legal and other relevant codes governing collection of data and reporting on data. The MTR team must also ensure security of collected information before and after the MTR and protocols to ensure anonymity and confidentiality of sources of information where that is expected. The information, knowledge and data gathered in the MTR process must also be solely used for the MTR and not for other uses without the express authorization of UNDP and partners.

L. Schedule of Payments

For Team Leader and National Consultant:

- 20% payment upon satisfactory delivery of the final MTR Inception Reports and approval by the Commissioning Unit
- 40% payment upon satisfactory delivery of the draft MTR reports to the Commissioning Unit
- 40% payment upon satisfactory delivery of the final MTR reports and approval by the Commissioning Unit and RTA (via signatures on the MTR Report Clearance Form) and delivery of completed MTR Audit Trail

Criteria for issuing the final payment of 40%

- The final MTR reports includes all requirements outlined in the MTR TOR and is in accordance with the MTR guidance.
- The final MTR reports are clearly written, logically organized, and is specific for this project (i.e. text has not been cut & pasted from other MTR reports).
- The Audit Trail includes responses to and justification for each comment listed.

In line with the UNDP's financial regulations, when determined by the Commissioning Unit and/or the consultant that a deliverable or service cannot be satisfactorily completed due to the impact of COVID-19 and limitations to the MTR, that deliverable or service will not be paid.

Due to the current COVID-19 situation and its implications, a partial payment may be considered if the consultant invested time towards the deliverable but was unable to complete to circumstances beyond his/her control.

APPLICATION PROCESS

(Adjust this section if a vetted roster will be used)

M. Recommended Presentation of Offer

Recommended Presentation of Proposal:

- a) **Letter of Confirmation of Interest and Availability** using the [template](#)¹² provided by UNDP;
- b) **CV** and a **Personal History Form** ([P11 form](#))¹³;
- c) **Brief description of approach to work/technical proposal** of why the individual considers him/herself as the most suitable for the assignment, and a proposed methodology on how they will approach and complete the assignment; (max 1 page)
- d) **Financial Proposal** that indicates the all-inclusive fixed total contract price and all other travel related costs (such as flight ticket, per diem, etc), supported by a breakdown of costs, as per template attached to the [Letter of Confirmation of Interest template](#). If an applicant is employed by an organization/company/institution, and he/she expects his/her employer to charge a management fee in the process of releasing him/her to UNDP under Reimbursable Loan Agreement (RLA), the applicant must indicate at this point, and ensure that all such costs are duly incorporated in the financial proposal submitted to UNDP.

Applicants are requested to apply online (<http://jobs.undp.org>, etc.) by (June 30th, 2021). Incomplete applications will be excluded from further consideration.

N. Criteria for Selection of the Best Offer

Only those applications which are responsive and compliant will be evaluated. Offers will be evaluated according to the Combined Scoring method – where the educational background and experience on similar assignments will be weighted at 70% and the price proposal will weigh as 30% of the total scoring. The applicant receiving the Highest Combined Score that has also accepted UNDP's General Terms and Conditions will be awarded the contract.

O. Annexes to the MTR ToR

List of documents to be reviewed by the MTR Team

- [ToR ANNEX A: List of Documents to be reviewed by the MTR Team](#)
- [ToR ANNEX B: Guidelines on Contents for the Midterm Review Report](#)¹⁴
- [ToR ANNEX C: Midterm Review Evaluative Matrix Template](#)
- [ToR ANNEX D: UNEG Code of Conduct for Evaluators/Midterm Review Consultants](#)¹⁵

¹²

<https://intranet.undp.org/unit/bom/psa/Support%20documents%20on%20IC%20Guidelines/Template%20for%20Confirmation%20of%20Interest%20and%20Submission%20of%20Financial%20Proposal.docx>

¹³ http://www.undp.org/content/dam/undp/library/corporate/Careers/P11_Personal_history_form.doc

¹⁴ The Report length should not exceed 40 pages in total (not including annexes).

¹⁵ <http://www.unevaluation.org/document/detail/100>

- ToR ANNEX E: MTR Ratings Table and Ratings Scales
- ToR ANNEX F: MTR Report Clearance Form
- ToR ANNEX G: Audit Trail Template
- ToR ANNEX H: Progress Towards Results Matrix
- ToR ANNEX I: GEF Co-Financing Template (provided as a separate file)

Annex 12: Signed MTR final report clearance form


Mid-term Review Report Reviewed and Cleared By: Commissioning Unit

Name: Ma Chaode

Signature:  Date: 22 Nov. 2021

UNDP-GEF Regional Technical Advisor

Name: Bipin Pokharel

Signature:  Date: 23 Nov 2021