



UNDP China

**Poverty Alleviation and Sustainable Development
Demonstration Project in Neixiang County, Henan
Province**

Mid-term Evaluation Report

July 2023

PROJECT AND EVALUATION INFORMATION

Project Information	
Project Name	Poverty Alleviation and Sustainable Development Demonstration Project in Neixiang County, Henan Province
Atlas number	CPR/18/107
Overall Outcomes and Outputs	<p><u>Contribution to the UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs):</u></p> <p>Goal 1: End poverty in all its forms everywhere;</p> <p>Goal 3: Good health and well-being for people. Ensure healthy lives and promote well-being for all at all ages;</p> <p>Goal 6: Ensure availability and sustainable management of water and sanitation for all;</p> <p>Goal 4: Ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all;</p> <p>Goal 5: Achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls;</p> <p>Goal 8: Promote sustained, inclusive and sustainable economic growth, full and productive employment and decent work for all;</p> <p>Goal 9: Industry, innovation, and infrastructure - build resilient infrastructure, promote inclusive and sustainable industrialization, and foster innovation;</p> <p>Goal 10: Reduce income inequality within and among countries;</p> <p>Goal 11: Make cities and human settlements inclusive, safe, resilient, and sustainable;</p> <p>Goal 13: Climate action--take urgent action to combat climate change and its impacts by regulating emissions and promoting developments in renewable energy;</p> <p>Goal 15: Life on land-- protect, restore and promote sustainable use of terrestrial ecosystems, sustainably manage forests, combat desertification, and halt and reverse land degradation and halt biodiversity loss;</p> <p>Goal 16: Promote peaceful and inclusive societies for sustainable development, provide access to justice for all and build effective, accountable and inclusive institutions at all levels;</p> <p>Goal 17: Strengthen the means of implementation and revitalize the global partnership for sustainable development.</p> <p><u>Contribution to UNDP Country Programme Document (CPD) for China 2016-2020</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Outcome 1: More people, particularly the vulnerable and disadvantaged, enjoy improved living conditions and increased opportunities for economic, social and cultural development. ➤ Outcome 2: More people enjoy a cleaner, healthier environment as a result of improved environmental protection and sustainable green growth.

	➤ Outcome 3: The effectiveness of China’s engagement in international cooperation is enhanced for the mutual benefit of China and the world.	
County	China	
Area	Neixiang County, Henan Province	
Date of Project Document Signing	December 20, 2018	
Project Cycle	Start Date	Planned End Date
	January 2019	December 2023
Total Budget	\$4,839,602.54	
Total Project Expenditures up to the Evaluation	Approximately \$1.04 million	
Funding Sources	Neixiang County Government, United Nations Development Programme	
Implementing Partner	China International Center for Economic and Technological Exchanges, People's Government of Neixiang County, Henan Province	

Evaluation Information		
Type of Evaluation (project/outcome/ad hoc report/country programme, etc.)	Project	
Final/Midterm Evaluation/Other	Mid-term evaluation	
Evaluation Cycle	Start Date	End Date
	January 2019	December 2022
Evaluator	Long Wenjin	
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Evaluation Date	Start Date	End Date
	September 26, 2022	June 6, 2023

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LIST OF ACRONYMS AND ABBREVIATIONS

Acronym	English Full name	Chinese
CICETE	China International Center for Economic and Technical Exchanges	中国国际经济技术交流中心
SDG/SDGs	Sustainable Development Goals	可持续发展目标
UNDP	The United Nations Development Programme	联合国开发计划署
PMO	Project Management Office	项目管理办公室
PSC	Project Steering Committee	项目指导委员会
UNV	The United Nations Volunteers Programme	联合国志愿人员组织
NGO	Non-governmental Organization	非政府组织

I. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

In order to reduce poverty and promote the sustainable development in Neixiang County, the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), China International Center for Economic and Technical Exchanges (CICETE) cooperated with the People's Government of Neixiang County to carry out the "Poverty Alleviation and Sustainable Development Demonstration Project in Neixiang County, Henan Province" (Neixiang Project).



The project aims to introduce advanced development concepts, enhance the awareness and capacity of government officials on sustainable development. Further, it plans to mobilize the private sector, social forces and other partners to actively participate in local sustainable development, carry out community governance, eco-tourism and inclusive finance, and improve public services with a special focus on the well-being of women, youth and children. **Focuses of this project include:** promoting international cooperation in sustainable development, creating and sharing knowledge and experiences, strengthening public-private partnerships, integrating relevant technical and financial resources, promoting innovative working mechanisms, and engaging more key stakeholders in addressing environmental challenges, supporting rural rejuvenation, improving public services and education, eradicating inequality, responding to climate change, protecting biodiversity and promoting sustainable development.

The project combines the key demands of the local government and communities as well as UNDP comparative advantages in China. By mainstreaming the SDGs into the development strategies of Neixiang County, the project improves local government's ability to apply the SDGs framework to guide resource planning, support the sustainable development of socio-economy and people's livelihood in Neixiang County. Project strategies include:

- 1) By mainstreaming the SDGs into the social and economic development policies and planning of the Neixiang County, it will enhance the sustainable development capacity of Neixiang County;

- 2) By demonstrating inclusive communities, it will strengthen the community governance capacity of Neixiang County;
- 3) Through sustainable and environmentally friendly approaches, it will promote industrial development and rural rejuvenation in Neixiang County;
- 4) Popularize the SDGs, share and disseminate Neixiang project outcomes.

As of 2022, the project has entered its fourth year, and it has been slated for a one-year extension. The purpose of this mid-term evaluation is to comprehensively evaluate the project's implementation, and to provide an objective and fair assessment on the overall project, including the progress made by partners, the innovative experiences and methods, the main problems and reasons, and suggestions for improving the project and so on. This mid-term evaluation intends to provide objective evaluation and recommendations on the current progress of the project, so as to influence and optimize the implementation of later projects. The evaluation was conducted in various forms such as desk review, multi-party symposiums, interviews, and field visits.

In general, the project design is closely related to the UN SDGs, UNSDCF and UNDP CPD in China, as well as the priorities of Chinese Government and Neixiang County Government. By the time of evaluation, the project has achieved most of its expected outcomes. The rest of the targets are expected to reach within the remaining period of the project. A small number of unachieved goals cannot be met mainly due to the impact of COVID-19, difficulties in departmental coordination and other reasons. Main findings of this evaluation are listed in the table below.

Table 1 Summary of Key Findings of Project Evaluation

Relevance	Strategic relevance	Finding 1: The project design and activity content are closely aligned with the United Nations' Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and are congruent with the United Nations Development Programme's (UNDP) overarching initiatives and priorities illustrated in the CPD.
	Internal Relevance	Finding 2: The project has carried out activities in multiple directions related to sustainable development, and relevance of activities have been further improved by aligning policy, planning with actual implementation.
Effectiveness	Outcome I	Finding 3: The majority of the deliverables associated with Outcome 1, which aims to bolster the sustainable development capacity of Neixiang County by incorporating the sustainable development goals into its socio-economic development policies and planning, have been successfully accomplished. The initiative has effectively strengthened the competence of Neixiang County officials in executing the SDGs framework and has played an integral role in embedding the SDGs into the county's socioeconomic development policies and planning, thereby facilitating the attainment of SDGs.
	Outcome II	Finding 4: The great majority of the deliverables associated with Outcome 2, which aims to fortify the

		community governance capacity of Neixiang County by showcasing inclusive communities, have been satisfactorily implemented. The project has implemented a well-coordinated sequence of activities that have effectively fostered community governance in a methodical manner. The objective of providing commensurate education opportunities has been successfully achieved, and endeavors to empower women are being adapted and refined to align with local circumstances.
	Outcome III	Finding 5: The majority of the objectives outlined in Outcome 3, which seeks to encourage industrial development and rural revitalization through sustainable and eco-friendly measures, are well on track thus far. However, the tangible impact of these initiatives may require a longer manifestation period before becoming evident.
	Outcome IV	Finding 6: Most planned deliverables under Outcome 4, which seeks to popularize the SDGs, share project outcomes, and disseminate information, have been successfully accomplished. Following an initial phase of refinement, the project has made remarkable progress in terms of communication and publicity, resulting in positive outcomes.
Efficiency	Schedule	Finding 7: The overall progress of the project was delayed, mainly due to the factors such as COVID-19, insufficient professional personnel, etc.
	Finance	Finding 8: The actual project funding in place differed significantly from the original plan, the implementation rate of funds needs to be improved.
	Personnel	Finding 9: The staffing of project management office is somewhat inadequate, which affected project progress. Additionally, significant turnover within the leadership group resulted in delays in project familiarity and underutilization of progress potential.
	Organization	Finding 10: The project adjusted the content and organization of activities in a timely manner to actively respond to the impact of COVID-19 pandemic.
Sustainability	Community development	Finding 11: The project has achieved remarkable outcomes in promoting sustainable development in rural communities, and more exchange visits and learning activities inside and outside the province can be carried out to learn about advanced cases, industrial development, and left-behind groups. Going forward, it is expected that these efforts will continue to improve the living standards and wellbeing of rural communities in a sustainable

		manner, contributing to Neixiang’s broader efforts in achieving sustainable development.
	Industrial development	Finding 12: Neixiang County is rich in cultural and tourism resources, but the supporting support for the cultural and tourism industry in villages and towns has not been formed, and there is still much room for improvement in the development of cultural and tourism industry in the follow-up of the project.
	Overall development	Findings 13: Project's sustainable development efforts in Neixiang County has shown positive impact on government policy, capacity building, equal education, and citizen engagement, but future challenges remain.
	Experience promotion	Finding 14: The project provides an important reference for other localities to coordinate and promote the sustainable development of counties.
Gender and cross-cutting issues	Gender equality	Finding 15: The project has promoted women's empowerment and gender equality in Neixiang County through the establishment of women's organizations and Women's Development Fund.
	Participation of vulnerable groups	Finding 16: The project highly considered the participation of vulnerable groups and focused on protecting their rights and interests through various kinds of activities and initiatives.

Drawn from the above analysis, **in conclusion**, the Neixiang project has made commendable headway by deploying an array of activities geared towards enhancing the capacity of government officials, establishing exemplary educational practices, promoting gender equality and women's empowerment, and strengthening the community's governance capability.

To further improve the project development practice and to draw lessons for similar development projects. **It is recommended** that subsequent projects should elevate consciousness on the project's value and social significance, while taking into full consideration the ramifications of alterations in leadership or adjustments in government priorities during project design. The coordination capacity of the project management office and project personnel must also be taken into account during project implementation. With regard to project content, it is imperative to further enhance its salience and capitalize on the "United Nations" branding, while effectively leveraging external resources such as experts, non-governmental organizations (NGOs), and enterprises. The 9 recommendations that concluded for this report are outlined as bellow:

Table 2. Summary of Evaluation Recommendations

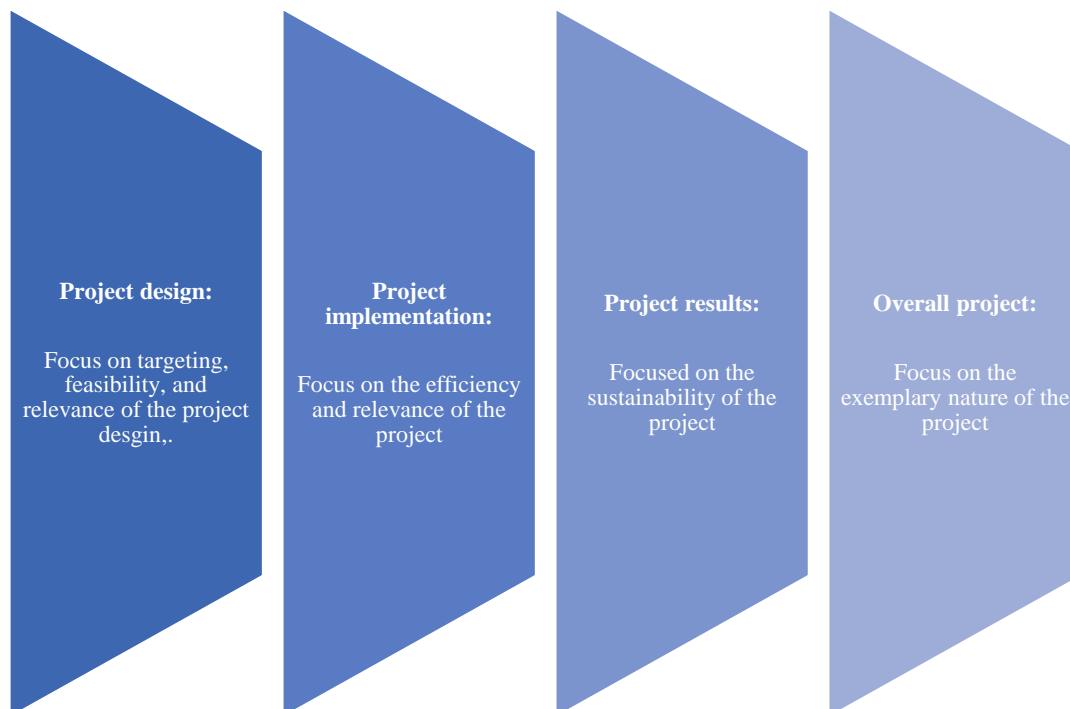
Project overall management:	
Recommendation 1	In terms of the budget funds provided by the local government, it is recommended to sign a special funding agreement with the local government specifically for budget funds.

Recommendation 2	To ascertain effective coordination of the project, it is strongly recommended to fully consider the project office and its members.
Recommendation 3	External resources such as experts, NGOs, and enterprises should be fully utilized to promote local sustainable capacity building.
Project day-to-day management:	
Recommendation 4	In terms of the project publicity, it is necessary to further create highlights and utilize the "United Nations" branding. It is also necessary to further increase publicity and relevant budget for publicity.
Recommendation 5	Efforts should be made to further localize and standardize excellent projects and root the concept of sustainable development and excellent activity plans in Neixiang County through the project, to leverage greater development with less resources.
Recommendation 6	Regarding gender equality and women's empowerment, it is recommended to further empower women and summarize experiences.
Recommendation 7	As of community governance, it is recommended to further enhance the results of community governance activities.
Recommendation 8	With regards to social governance, it is recommended to further empower and strengthen the local social management system in the later stage.
Recommendation 9	In terms of project progress, it is recommended to actively respond to emergencies and promote the project as quickly as possible in the later stage.

II. INTRODUCTION TO EVALUATION

2.1 Evaluation Purpose

This mid-term evaluation aims to comprehensively evaluate the project's implementation and to offer an unbiased and equitable evaluation of the project as a whole. The evaluation will assess the progress and effectiveness of each participating unit, identify innovative experiences and practices, analyze key issues and their underlying causes, and provide recommendations for further improvement. By examining these areas, the objectives of project evaluation can be mainly divided into the following four areas.



2.1.1 Project design

The evaluation team focused on targeting, feasibility, and relevance of the project design, evaluated whether it has captured the key issues facing the Neixiang County in poverty alleviation and sustainable development, whether the activities designed are the right medicine to "the diseases", and whether the conditions for implementation in the local area are ready.

2.1.2 Project implementation

The evaluation team focused on the efficiency and relevance of the project, evaluating 1) if key projects have been completed within the framework of project planning, 2) if project targets are met and how well the project has produced short-term and long-term effects in the four project outcomes, including promoting the mainstreaming of sustainable development goals, building model inclusive communities, promoting industrial development and rural rejuvenation of Neixiang County in a sustainable and environmentally friendly approach, and popularizing the

SDGs. In this perspective, this evaluation also focuses on the involvement of all types of stakeholders and the efficiency of resources utilization during project implementation.

2.1.3 Project results

The evaluation team focused on the sustainability of the project, and evaluated what sustainable development mechanism the project has brought to Neixiang County based on actual project outcomes, what problems Neixiang County faced in its sustainable development has been solved by the project, what short and long-term benefits have been produced during the implementation process, and what risks exist that endanger sustainable development.

2.1.4 Overall project impact

The evaluation team focused on the exemplary nature of the project, and comprehensively evaluated the replicable and scalable experiences related to implementing the UN SDGs and promoting China's national priorities from a systemic perspective from project design to its fruition. There are twofold of benefits in reviewing project implementation from the above four evaluation objectives: first, to sort out the process of project implementation for stakeholders, to summarize the actual project effect on the sustainable development in Neixiang County, and to facilitate the review on the entirety of project. Second, summarizing local sustainable development experiences will not only support continued local development in Neixiang County, but also provide references for future cooperation between the UNDP and Chinese county governments.

2.2 Evaluation Scope

This mid-term evaluation mainly focuses on project design and implementation process from January 2019 to November 2022, involving people who implemented, participated in and benefit from the project. The evaluation is based on the project contract and evaluates the completed project activities.

The objective of this project is to establish an exemplary model of sustainable development at the county level in Neixiang County. Initially, the project made significant strides and progressed smoothly. However, it is regrettable that since the onset of 2020, the challenges posed by the COVID-19 pandemic have severely strained the local finances.

Consequently, the work priorities of the Neixiang County government underwent a significant shift, with a substantial emphasis on pandemic prevention and control. As a result, adequate manpower and material resources could not be allocated to the project's activities, including the capacity building of government officials in sustainable development, community governance, and regional tourism. The majority of offline activities could not be carried out as scheduled. Under the guidance of the Project Steering Committee (PSC), all slides jointly agreed to extend the project for an additional year to ensure the fulfillment and efficacy of the project's activities. In accordance with the project proposal, **the mid-term evaluation primarily focuses on the 12 outputs and 4 corresponding outcomes.**

Table 3 Evaluation Scope

Outcomes	Outputs
Outcome 1. Enhance the sustainable development capacity in Neixiang County by mainstreaming the sustainable development goals in its socio-economic development policies and planning	Output 1: Formulate policy recommendations for incorporating the SDGs into the 14th Five-Year Plan of Neixiang County
	Output 2: Compile a roadmap for the socio-economic development plans of Neixiang County based on the SDGs framework
	Output 3: Conduct capacity building activities to improve the capacity of Neixiang county government officials to implement the SDGs framework
Outcome 2. Strengthen community governance capacity in Neixiang County by demonstrating inclusive communities	Output 4: Support the preparation and implementation of community development and community governance demonstration plans
	Output 5: Support the preparation and implementation of the educational equalization demonstration plans
	Output 6: Promote the establishment of Women's Development Fund
Outcome 3. Promote industrial development and rural revitalization through sustainable and environmentally friendly approaches	Output 7: Support the preparation and implementation of the "Rural Complex" demonstration plan for the Zhaqu Taishan Temple
	Output 8: Support the preparation and implementation of Deng Kiln Cultural Heritage and Wuya Stone Village Cultural Tourism demonstration plans
	Output 9: Support the establishment of professional cooperative organizations and the convening of vocational skill training sessions to improve the professional skills and increase the income of local residents, especially women and the youth
Outcome 4. Popularize the SDGs, share and disseminate project outcomes	Output 10: Develop a case for sustainable development in Neixiang County
	Output 11: Effectively improve the publicity capacity to promote sustainable development in Neixiang County
	Output 12: Disseminate, share and promote project outcomes

2.3 Evaluation Criteria

Drawing upon the project documents, this report will assess the degree to which the project objectives, outcomes, and primary activities have been achieved in comparison to those outlined in the project documents. There are five project evaluation criteria, namely relevance, effectiveness, efficiency, sustainability, gender and cross-cutting issues. . The elements of each evaluation criterion are elucidated in the following table:

Table 4 Project Evaluation Criteria and Evaluation Questions

Evaluation Criteria	Evaluation Questions
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Relevance	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The extent to which the project conforms to the UN SDGs framework, the United Nations Development Programme strategic plan, China's national development priorities, etc.; • The Relevance between the overall project design and the actual needs of Neixiang County; • Overall consistency and coordination among activities in the project design process
Effectiveness	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Based on the four outcomes of project design, the evaluation will focus on: • The extent to which the project objectives and outputs are clear, realistic and feasible within the framework; • The extent to which the project contributes to the implementation of the UN SDGs framework, the outcomes and outputs of the Sustainable Development Country Programme; • The extent to which the project objectives are effectively achieved, both quantitatively and qualitatively, and the factors contributing to the achievement of expected outputs and outcomes; • The extent to which stakeholders were involved in project implementation; • The extent to which the project contributes to poverty reduction and sustainable development;
Efficiency	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The efficiency of utilizing project financial, human and other resources; • The rationality in allocating project resources (funds, human resources, time, expertise, etc.); • The extent to which project funds and activities were delivered in a timely manner. • The extent to which the project has been affected by the COVID-19 pandemic and the measures taken to address it.
Sustainability	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The likelihood that project outcomes will be sustained after project completion; • The likelihood of financial risks jeopardizing the sustainability of project outputs; • Availability of financial and social resources to sustain project benefits; • The potential for social or political risks that could jeopardize the sustainability of project outcomes; • The possibility of Neixiang County government to develop a plan to sustain the project outcomes; • Existing institution, policy and cooperation mechanisms that allow key stakeholders to advance the possibility of gaining results in poverty alleviation and sustainable development.
Gender and cross-cutting issues	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The extent to which gender equality and women's empowerment are realized in the design, implementation and monitoring of the project; • The extent to which the project contributed to positive changes such as gender equality and women's empowerment; • The project promotes the participation and empowerment of young people and disadvantaged groups.

2.4 Evaluation Methodologies

2.4.1 Desk Review

The evaluation team collected a comprehensive review of all documents related to this project, including:

- Project documents
- Funding agreement
- Theory of Change and Results framework
- Annual work plan (AWP)
- Project Progress Report (PPR)
- Activity documents
- Financial statements

2.4.2 Interview

The evaluation team organized 19 online and offline key informant interviews (KII) as well as focus group discussions (FGD) at different levels from November 2022 to March 2023 (refer to Annex IV). These included internal deliberations within the project evaluation team, as well as multi-party symposiums or individual interviews with stakeholders and beneficiaries, involving 6 online interview sessions and 13 offline interview sessions. The departments and individuals involved include:

- 1) Neixiang County government and relevant government departments: the People's Government of Neixiang County, County Finance Office, County Education and Sports Bureau, County Agriculture and Rural Affairs Bureau (Agricultural Committee), County Culture, Radio and Tourism Bureau, Neixiang County Poverty Alleviation Office, Neixiang County Education Bureau, Zhaqu Town
- 2) Private sector: Neixiang China-Israel Agricultural Park, Haihui Poverty Alleviation Center, Neixiang County Rural Commercial Bank, photovoltaic enterprises, etc.
- 3) Representative communities, schools and bases: Wangjing Village, Pengying Village, No. 6 Primary School, Nanyang Comprehensive Experimental Demonstration Base, Israel Agricultural Park
- 4) Non-governmental organizations: Neixiang County Women and Children's Federation, Youth League Committee, etc.
- 5) Representative stakeholders and beneficiaries: women, teachers, villagers, trainers, etc.

The semi-structured interview approach has also been employed to evaluate the various dimensions of sustainable development, including economic, social, and environmental outcomes. The interview questions (refer to Annex V), which are designed to assess the project's lifecycle, have been meticulously tailored by groups and are open-ended in nature to enable a comprehensive and nuanced reflection on the project's outcomes and impact. Furthermore, the interview panel has posed questions that specifically target the sustainability of the project, gauging the extent to which it has engendered local capacity building, social capital generation, and community ownership and participation.

2.4.3 Field visits

To ascertain the project's results, the evaluation team conducted site visits to project locations, including Wangjing Village, Pengying Village, No.6 Primary School, Nanyang Comprehensive Experimental Demonstration Base, and Israel Agricultural Park. Employing direct observation, semi-structured personal interviews, and communications with stakeholders, such as grassroots cadres, women, and teachers, we garnered information and data pertaining to the project.



2.5 Data Analysis Methodologies

This mid-term evaluation relied on thoughtful data collection and analysis. Two key approaches are qualitative and quantitative data analysis.

The evaluation team collected **qualitative data** through in-depth interviews including KIIs and FGDs. This provided insights into all stakeholders and beneficiaries' experiences, perceptions of the project, and suggestions for improvement. This also allowed the team to gain a nuanced understanding of how and why the program impacted participants. **Quantitative data** was gathered through examining all the data gained throughout the project life thus far, including the financial report, the project report, statistical report as developed by the PMO, etc. This quantitative data complemented the interviews by demonstrating measurable changes in specific areas.

Together, the qualitative and quantitative data provided a comprehensive picture of the project's results. The qualitative data added depth, understanding, and participant perspectives. The quantitative data provided evidence of measurable impacts in key areas. This mixed methods approach leveraged multiple techniques to conduct a thorough evaluation. By integrating qualitative and quantitative data, the evaluation delivered robust findings to objectively assess program outcomes.

2.6 Gender equality perspective

During the planning phase of the evaluation, as guided by the evaluation TOR (refer to Annex I, as separately attached), the evaluator integrated gender equality considerations and incorporated

gender equality into the data collection and analysis process. This encompassed ensuring parity in opportunities for men and women to partake in interviews and safeguarding their personal information. The evaluators accorded particular attention to the roles, needs, interests, and experiences of men and women in the project to ensure that the evaluation results could comprehensively reflect the gender equality perspective.

During the data collection stage, the evaluator communicated and engaged with stakeholders, both male and female, to ensure that the evaluation process and results reflect the needs and interests of all individuals. The focus will be on understanding their experiences, perceptions, and insights about the project's effects on gender roles, equality, and cross-cutting issues.

Furthermore, the evaluation report encompasses considerations and attention to gender equality. This entails a gender analysis and gender impact evaluation of the evaluation results, to ensure that the evaluation results guide the implementation of policies and measures for men and women in the project.

To sum up, a gender equality perspective is intended to be integrated into every step of the evaluation process, ensuring equal opportunities for men and women. All stakeholders are treated with integrity throughout the evaluation process.

2.7 Evaluation Matrix

Evaluation Criteria	Key Questions	Data Collection Methods/Tools	Methods for data analysis
Relevance	<p>To what extent is the initiative in line with the UNDP mandate, national priorities and the requirements of targeted women and men?</p> <p>To what extent is UNDP support relevant to the achievement of the SDG in Neixiang County?</p> <p>To what extent did UNDP adopt gender-sensitive, human rights-based and conflict-sensitive approaches?</p> <p>To what extent is UNDP engagement a reflection of strategic considerations, including the role of UNDP in a particular development context and its comparative advantage?</p> <p>To what extent was the theory of change presented in the outcome model a relevant and appropriate vision on which to base the initiatives?</p>	<p>Comprehensive review of project related documents:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Project documents • Funding agreement • Theory of Change and Results framework • Annual work plan (AWP) • Project Progress Report (PPR) • Activity documents • Financial statements 	<p>The evaluation team collected qualitative data through in-depth interviews including KIIs and FGDs. This provided insights into all stakeholders and beneficiaries' experiences, perceptions of the project, and suggestions for improvement. This also allowed the team to gain a nuanced understanding of how and why the program impacted participants.</p>
Effectiveness	<p>To what extent has progress been made towards outcome achievement? What has been the UNDP contribution to the observed change?</p> <p>Have there been any unexpected outcome-level results achieved beyond the planned outcome?</p> <p>To what extent has UNDP improved the capacities of county implementing partners to advocate on sustainability issues, including gender equality, climate change, etc.?</p> <p>To what extent has UNDP partnered with civil society and local communities to promote poverty alleviation and sustainable development in Neixiang?</p> <p>To what extent have marginalized groups benefited?</p> <p>Which programme areas are the most relevant and strategic for UNDP to scale up or consider going forward?</p>	<p>Semi-structured & online interviews with key personnel from the project management office, partner organizations, and donors who were responsible for project implementation.</p>	<p>Quantitative data was gathered through examining all the data gained throughout the project life thus far, including the financial report, the project report, statistical report as developed by the PMO, etc. This quantitative data complemented the interviews by demonstrating measurable changes in specific areas.</p>
Efficiency	<p>To what extent have the project outputs resulted from economic use of resources?</p>		

	To what extent were quality outputs delivered on time?		Together, the qualitative and quantitative data provided a comprehensive picture of the project's results. The qualitative data added depth, understanding, and participant perspectives. The quantitative data provided evidence of measurable impacts in key areas. This mixed methods approach leveraged multiple techniques to conduct a thorough evaluation. By integrating qualitative and quantitative data, the evaluation delivered robust findings to objectively assess program outcomes.
	To what extent were partnership modalities conducive to the delivery of outputs?		
	To what extent did monitoring systems provide management with a stream of data that allowed it to learn and adjust implementation accordingly?		
	To what extent did UNDP promote gender equality, the empowerment of women, human rights and human development in the delivery of outputs?		
Sustainability	To what extent did UNDP establish mechanisms to ensure the sustainability of the outcomes?		
	To what extent do national partners have the institutional capacities, including sustainability strategies, in place to sustain the outcome-level results?		
	To what extent are policy and regulatory frameworks in place that will support the continuation of benefits?		
	To what extent do mechanisms, procedures and policies exist to carry forward the results attained on gender equality, empowerment of women, human rights and human development by primary stakeholders?		
Gender Equality and Cross-cutting issues	To what extent have poor and physically challenged, women and other disadvantaged and marginalized groups benefited from the work of UNDP in Neixiang County?		
	To what extent have gender equality and the empowerment of women been addressed in the design, implementation and monitoring of Neixiang project?		
	Is the gender marker data assigned to Neixiang project representative of reality?		
	To what extent has Neixiang project promoted positive changes in gender equality and the empowerment of women? Were there any unintended effects?		

2.8 Evaluation Ethics

The evaluation report applies the core evaluation principles of the UN Evaluation Group and UNDP to ensure that the evaluation methods and processes respond to the basic values of the United Nations such as human rights, gender equality, and social inclusion. The evaluation report strictly adheres to the Ethical Guidelines for Evaluation issued by the United Nations Evaluation Group in 2020, and abides by the following ethical principles during the evaluation process:

- **Independent, objective and impartial:** To achieve independence, objectivity, and impartiality, the evaluators remain free from any conflicts of interest and are not influenced by any organization or individual. The evaluators adhere to ethical evaluation guidelines to avoid conflicts of interest and improper influence, thus ensuring the credibility and reliability of the evaluation results.
- **Scientific, comprehensive, evidence-based:** To ensure the scientific and comprehensive nature of the evaluation results, the evaluators employ various data collection methods and tools to collect and analyze sufficient, reliable, and authentic data. The evaluators follow scientific principles and use objective standards to evaluate the effects and impacts of the project.
- **Open, transparent, multi-party communication, in-depth communication:** To foster openness, transparency, and diversity, the evaluators engage in extensive communication and exchanges with various stakeholders, including government agencies, private sectors, grassroots cadres, women, teachers, etc. The evaluators respect the opinions and experiences of all parties, ensuring that the evaluation results reflect the needs and interests of all parties.
- **Aiming at project improvement, trying to evaluate the results as effective, useful and beneficial as possible, producing valuable knowledge:** With a view to project improvement and the production of valuable knowledge, the evaluators provide specific improvement suggestions, ensuring that the evaluation results are actionable and provide useful guidance and recommendations for the project's improvement and development.
- **Respect, anonymity and privacy protection:** ensure the privacy and personal information protection of interviewees, ensuring anonymity and privacy protection for interviewees. The evaluators comply with relevant privacy and confidentiality laws and regulations, ensuring the legality and compliance of the evaluation process and results. The evaluators also ensure the accuracy and reliability of the evaluation results and the confidentiality of the evaluation results.

III. PROJECT BACKGROUND AND INTRODUCTION

3.1 Context

China released the China's National Plan on Implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development in 2016, which reviewed China's achievements and experiences in implementing the MDGs, analyzed the opportunities and challenges faced in promoting the implementation of the sustainable development agenda, clarified the guiding ideology, general principles and implementation paths for China, and elaborated on China's specific plans for implementing 17 sustainable development goals and 169 specific targets in the future. At that time, China faced many problems and challenges on its path to sustainable development. (1) China's economy has entered in a phase of "new normal" and was facing multiple challenges such as gear shifting, structural adjustment, and the conversion of old and new growth engines. There is still considerable pressure to maintain sustained, stable, and healthy economic growth, and a lot of work needs to be done in poverty alleviation, addressing the imbalance between urban and rural areas, unbalanced regional development, and making up for the shortcomings of ecological environment; (2) How to eliminate poverty, improve people's livelihood, resolve social conflicts, achieve common prosperity, improve the national governance system, improve governance capability, and realize coordinated development among all regions, levels and fields remain the biggest challenges for China to achieve for its sustainable development agenda.

With the rapid development of China's economy, the role of county economy in sustainable development has become increasingly important. However, in the process of urbanization, the county economy is faced with numerous new problems. Compared with other regional economy, county economy has different characteristics. First, it is an administration-oriented regional economy centered around the county, including towns as the links and rural areas as the hinterland of regional economy. Second, it is an open regional economy. Although county economy is developed step by step on a long-term steady basis of administrative-county areas, it is not the closed "fragmented economy", but an economy of openness instead. Third, it is specialized, comprehensive and systemic regional economy with regional characteristics. In general, county economy is a comprehensive economic system with full functions, and involves full sectors like production, logistics, consumption and distribution, and first, second and tertiary industry. Counties and county economies are the base and main battlefield for implementing the concept of coordinated urban and rural development. The core of urban-rural integration is to change the urban-rural dual structure and establish an equal and harmonious urban-rural relationship. To achieve urban and rural coordinated development, we must focus on the most close-knit urban-rural level - county economy. Many policy measures for urban and rural integration can be realized timely, and specifically only at the county level. In a certain sense, the process of county economic development is the practical process of gradually achieving overall planning and coordinating

County wise, Neixiang situated in the southwestern region of Henan Province and under the governance of Nanyang City, is distinguished by its vast expanse of mountainous terrain, which comprises approximately 70% of the county's total area. The remaining 30% is divided between water and farmland, with the latter occupying 20% of the county's total area. The county's landmass encompasses 2,465 square kilometers and boasts an arable land area of 730,000 mu. Neixiang County presides over 16 towns, 288 administrative villages, and a population of 730,000, rendering it one of the national poverty-stricken counties in China.

3.2 Project Background

The United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) is an international organization that witnessed and participated in China's reform and opening up, and Neixiang County pioneered for project cooperation with the UNDP at the county level. The UNDP Poverty Alleviation and Sustainable Development Demonstration Project in Neixiang County ("Neixiang Project") is the first county-level demonstration project that explored and practiced the UN SDGs in China. The project is a tripartite cooperation between the UNDP, the China International Center for Economic and Technical Exchanges (CICETE), and the People's Government of Neixiang County. The goal is to create a county-level demonstration zone for implementing the SDGs in China, and to gradually incorporate the SDGs into the development of Neixiang County through the project. The project aims to create and share knowledge and experiences, strengthen public-private partnerships, integrate relevant technical and financial resources, advance innovative working mechanisms to engage stakeholders in addressing environmental challenges, rural revitalization, improving public services and education, addressing climate change, protecting biodiversity and promoting sustainable development. The project obtained talents, technologies, resources and other support through the UNDP and CICETE, which is of great significance to enhance the "soft power" of Neixiang County, realizing its "leapfrog" development, so as to achieve an "overtaking" in county development.

The strategic thinking and foresight of the Neixiang County government leadership team led to the establishment and launch of the Neixiang Project. From the perspective of project design, the UNDP Neixiang project is aligned with the sustainable development in China and the world. This project combines the spirit of the 19th National Congress of the Communist Party of China and the UN SDGs framework. By strengthening the mainstreaming of the SDGs in the development strategies of Neixiang County, the project improves local government's ability to apply the SDGs framework to guide resource planning, support the sustainable socio-economic development and protect people's livelihood in Neixiang County, promote "rural rejuvenation" and the construction of a "moderately prosperous society".

3.3 Project Theory of Change (TOC)

Taking into the full consideration of development context and historic opportunity, the project adopts a robust approach to design and implementation by applying the Theory of Change, which systematically identifies the underlying assumptions, logic, and causality that interconnect project inputs, activities, outputs, outcomes, and impact.

To introduce the UN SDGs framework and its associated development concepts, by strengthening the mainstreaming of the SDGs in the development strategies of Neixiang County, **at the outcome level**, the project aims to enhance the local government's ability to apply the SDGs framework to guide resource planning, support sustainable socioeconomic development, and improve the capacity of leading cadres and civil servants. The project also aims to mobilize private sector, social forces, and other stakeholders to actively participate in local sustainable development, develop community governance, ecotourism, and inclusive finance, and improve public services, with particular attention to the well-being of women, youth, and children.

At the greater impact level, the project endeavors to foster international cooperation in the realm of sustainable development, facilitate the generation and dissemination of knowledge and experiences, reinforce public-private partnerships, integrate pertinent technical and financial resources, promote inventive working mechanisms, and engage additional key stakeholders in the process of confronting environmental obstacles, rural revitalization, enhancing public services and education, mitigating inequalities, tackling climate change, safeguarding biodiversity, and advancing sustainable development.

From a practical level, to ensure project's success, there were four main factors considered since design:

- 1) Project design and implementation arrangements were closely integrated with existing institutional arrangements and relevant policy priorities to maximize its efficiency and lay the foundation for institutional arrangements for the promotion and sustainability of future project outcomes
- 2) When selecting pilot sites, the project selects industries and communities with relatively good foundations and technical capabilities at the initial stage, adopted the approach of "step-by-step implementation" to gradually roll out the project;
- 3) Due to the limited resources available to the project, the project supports long-term strategies to raise the awareness of decision makers (government and enterprises) and the public on environmental sustainability and sustainable development;
- 4) The project cooperates with the institutions that have the most influence on sustainable development policies and planning in Neixiang County, and involves them in the project design and implementation process.

3.4 Project Objectives, Outcomes, Outputs and Main Activities

As mentioned above, the overarching aim of the project is to bolster the sustainable socioeconomic development and the well-being of Neixiang County's inhabitants by advancing the integration of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) into the county's development strategies and enhancing the government's capacity to utilize the SDGs framework to guide resource planning and development. Additionally, the project also seeks to promote rural renaissance and foster the attainment of a moderately prosperous society, as well as disseminate Neixiang County's sustainable development models and experiences at both the national and international levels.

The four major outcomes of this project are:

- Outcome 1: Enhance the sustainable development capacity in Neixiang County by mainstreaming the sustainable development goals in its socio-economic development policies and planning
- Outcome 2: Strengthen community governance capacity in Neixiang County by demonstrating inclusive communities.
- Outcome 3: Promote industrial development and rural revitalization through sustainable and environmentally friendly approaches.
- Outcome 4: Popularize the SDGs, share and disseminate project outcomes.

Outcome 1	Outcome 2	Outcome 3	Outcome 4
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Enhance the sustainable development capacity in Neixiang County by mainstreaming the sustainable development goals in its socio-economic development policies and planning 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Strengthen community governance capacity in Neixiang County by demonstrating inclusive communities. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Promote industrial development and rural revitalization through sustainable and environmentally friendly approaches 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Popularize the SDGs, share and disseminate project outcomes.

To achieve the intended outcomes as above, corresponding outputs are designed as follows:

Table 5 Project Result Framework

Outcome	Output	Main Activities
<p>Outcome 1. Enhance the sustainable development capacity in Neixiang County by mainstreaming the sustainable development goals in its socio-economic development policies and planning</p>	<p>Output 1: Formulate policy recommendations for incorporating the SDGs into the 14th Five-Year Plan of Neixiang County</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Evaluate Neixiang County’s 13th Five-Year Plan applying the SDGs framework, and make recommendations and policy suggestions for incorporating the SDGs into the 14th Five-Year Plan of Neixiang County; • Conduct social, economic and environmental baseline surveys in Neixiang County, as well as surveys on the development of the secondary industry and future development trends; • Develop Neixiang County SDGs monitoring methodology and conduct annual monitoring; • Capacity building training for government officials in Neixiang County, covering sustainable development goals, development planning, public services, social governance, inclusive finance, etc. • In combination with the SDGs framework, conduct social, economic and environmental baseline surveys in Neixiang County, investigate and understand the current regulation status and data level of key local industries; • Prepare reports on inclusive development and inclusive financial development in Neixiang County, study and formulate encouraging policies and measures; • Carry out capacity building needs assessment, and adopt systematic methods to assess the status quo and improvement needs in planning for sustainable development for departments with planning functions in Neixiang County government; • Conduct case studies on best practices for sustainable development in Chinese counties; • Develop trainings for capacity building in planning for sustainable development, and conduct trainings for local sustainable development experts.
	<p>Output 2: Compile a roadmap for the socio-economic development plans of Neixiang County based on the SDGs framework</p>	
	<p>Output 3: Conduct capacity building activities to improve the capacity of Neixiang County government officials to implement the SDGs framework</p>	

Outcome 2. Strengthen community governance capacity in Neixiang County by demonstrating inclusive communities	Output 4: Support the preparation and implementation of community development and community governance demonstration plans	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Baseline survey, implement baseline survey in the demonstration area, mainly including upgraded villager survey; survey on community service; community service demand survey; • Support the formulation and implementation of village collective economic development demonstration plans, through the rational use of village resources especially homesteads, to increase collective assets and income gained through such assets; • Improve community service functions, realize the organic combination of rural pension and subsistence allowance and community public services, village demonstration services for the elderly; • Plan model primary schools in rural areas based on local geographical conditions and population distribution; • Improve the quality of teachers in rural schools and enhance the incentives for rural teachers. Comprehensively adopt distance education, teacher rotation and other methods to provide training and greatly improve rural education; • Establish a Women's Development Fund to provide women with micro-loans to support their entrepreneurial initiatives; • Establish women's centers and women's support groups in model villages to promote women's empowerment.
	Output 5: Support the preparation and implementation of the educational equalization demonstration plans	
	Output 6: Promote the establishment of Women's Development Fund	
Outcome 3. Promote industrial development and rural revitalization through sustainable and environmentally friendly approaches	Output 7: Support the preparation and implementation of the "Rural Complex" demonstration plan for the Zhaqu Taishan Temple	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • With reference to townships, administrative villages, and watershed boundaries, carry out village environmental planning, industrial planning, and tourism planning in the demonstration area on a village-by-village basis. According to the division of regional functions, form the overall plan of "Rural Complex";

	<p>Output 8: Support the preparation and implementation of Deng Kiln Cultural Heritage and Wuya Stone Village Cultural Tourism demonstration plans</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Research and determine the organization and operation model in the demonstration area, such as the "company + village + family farm" model; • Establish a complete benefit distribution mechanism, so that village collectives, tourism companies, family farmers and villagers can all gain fair shares of benefits. • Research to identify market operators, focusing on the management, marketing and publicity in the demonstration area. • Support the preparation and implementation of Deng Kiln Cultural Heritage Cultural Tourism Demonstration Plan and Wuyia Stone Village Cultural Tourism Demonstration Plan. • Carry out financial literacy campaigns and design financial education campaigns tailored to the needs of women, young entrepreneurs and grassroots leaders; • Conduct vocational skills training, including training courses in tourism services, giving priority to women and youth; • Support professional cooperative organizations, extend relevant industrial chains in pilot villages, and increase employment opportunities for farmers.
	<p>Output 9: Support the establishment of professional cooperative organizations and the convening of vocational skill training sessions to improve the professional skills and increase the income of local residents, especially women and the youth</p>	
<p>Outcome 4. Popularize the SDGs, share and disseminate project outcomes</p>	<p>Output 10: Develop a case for sustainable development in Neixiang County</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Extract and summarize the experiences of the Neixiang County government in improving public goods, poverty alleviation, and strengthening sustainable livelihoods, and develop cases respectively; • Carry out development policy impact assessment, complete the "Implementation of Sustainable Development Goals: China's Experience - Neixiang Project", resulting in transferable knowledge; • Develop videos and other case materials and disseminate project results through the UNDP's international network; • Support the preparation and implementation of a comprehensive 3-year SDGs advocacy and education plan for Neixiang County; • Develop training and outreach materials for different audiences; • Support demonstration sites and communities such as the "Taishan Temple Rural Complex" which functions as a mission center, improve mission plans
	<p>Output 11: Effectively improve the publicity capacity to promote sustainable development in Neixiang County</p>	
	<p>Output 12: Disseminate, share and promote project outcomes</p>	

		<p>and arrangements around advocacy and awareness enhancement activities on the SDGs;</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Incorporate the core messages of the SDGs framework into cultural and sports activities in Neixiang County, such as corporate staff training and cultural and sports activities, mass sporting events, knowledge competitions and technical competitions;• Create and regularly organize an experience exchange and sharing mechanism on county economic sustainable development based on the UN SDGs framework;• Share the experience of localizing the SDGs framework in Neixiang County at the national and international level.
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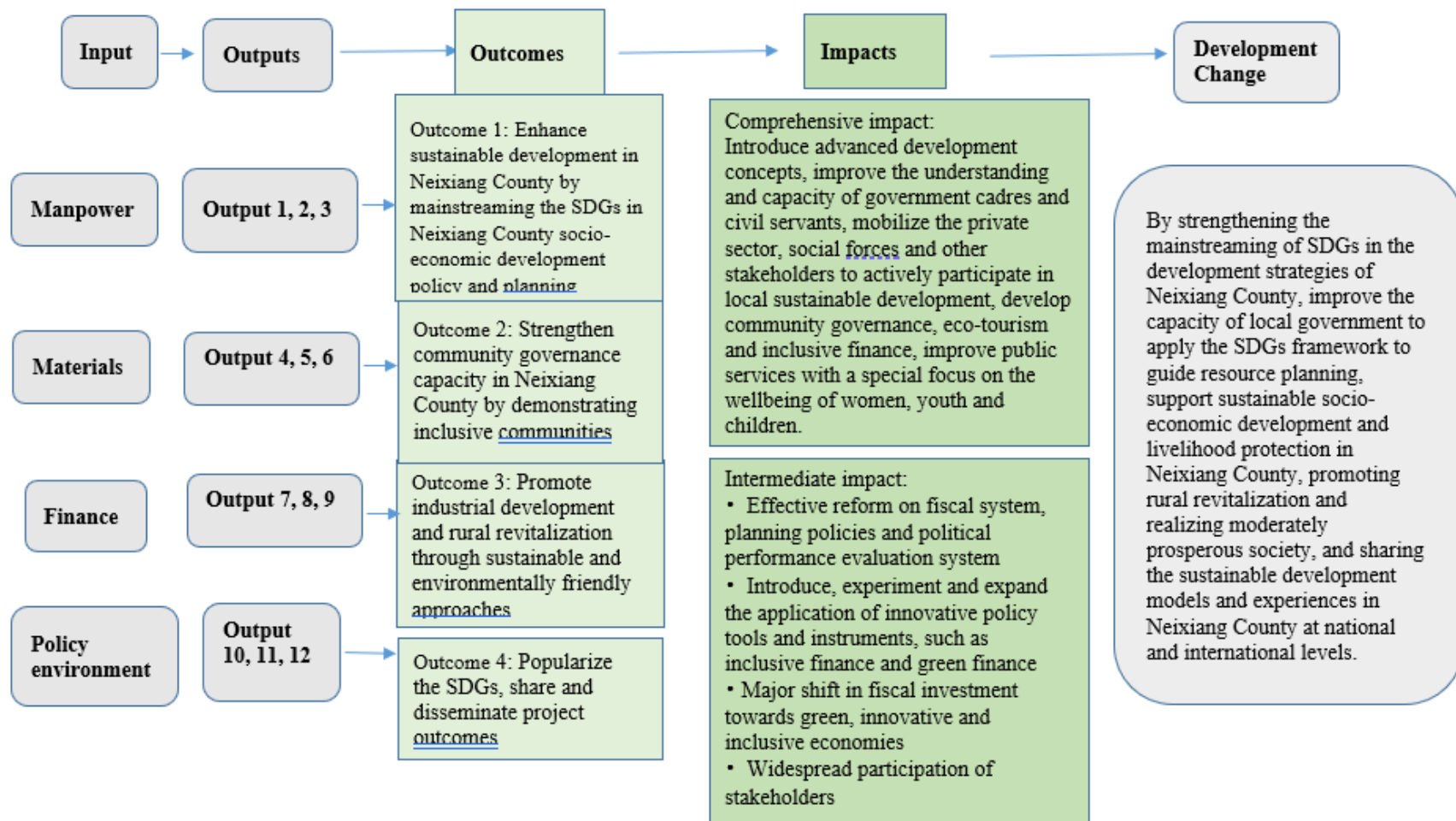


Figure 1 Project TOC framework

3.5 Project Funding

The total project design funding is US\$4,839,602.54, of which the People's Government of Neixiang County will provide a total of US\$2,866,602.54 in the form of government apportionment for a period of three years (2019-2021) and matching funds of US\$1,951,000 to support the implementation of projects in policy and planning category. In the initial phase of the project, the UNDP arranged US\$22,000 from its core budget for supporting project implementation and management.

3.6 Project Management and Governance

To ensure project compliance and effective management, the project has established a management, supervision, and coordination organizational structure, as shown in the diagram below:

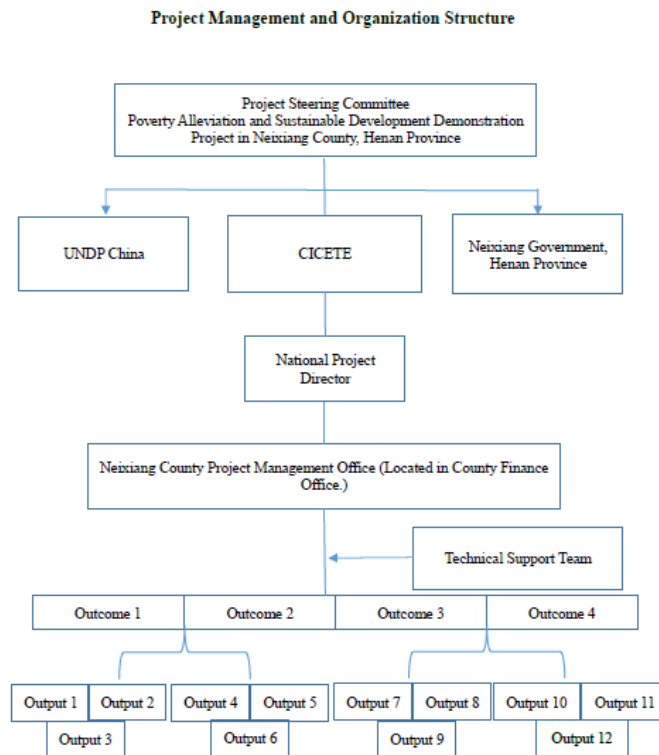


Figure 2 Project Management and Organization Chart

Project Steering Committee (PSC)

In order to provide policy and strategic guidance for the project's implementation, "Project Steering Committee" was established, consisting of representatives from the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), the China International Center for Economic and Technical Exchanges (CICETE), the Neixiang Government, and its leading and coordination departments.

The Project Steering Committee convened on an annual basis and was entrusted with a diverse array of responsibilities, including but not limited to: 1) endorsing the Annual Work Plan; 2) scrutinizing and endorsing the Annual Progress Report; 3) providing technical assistance and recommendations; 4) mobilizing policies, human resources, and financial support to advance the implementation process; 5) ensuring that diverse opinions from member units were harmoniously integrated; and 6) conducting a comprehensive evaluation of the project's ultimate outcomes.

Project Management Office (PMO)

In line with the policy guidance and oversight of the Project Steering Committee, the Project Management Office is responsible for the meticulous execution of project activities, in accordance with the management procedures of CICETE and UNDP. The office's specific duties encompass compiling the work plan, managing and implementing daily activities, monitoring progress and delivery, facilitating experience sharing, and preparing periodic reports, among other responsibilities. Furthermore, the office is accountable for all administrative and financial accounting aspects during the project's implementation.

UNDP

The UNDP China Office is playing a pivotal role in ensuring that the project meets the quality standards set by UNDP's programmatic quality criteria. This involves providing quality oversight throughout the project lifecycle, from planning and implementation to monitoring and evaluation. UNDP China will also leverage its international networks and resources to bring in international expertise and technologies. This could include accessing global best practices, leveraging lessons learned from similar projects in other countries, or tapping into the expertise of UNDP's global network of technical experts.

CICETE

CICETE as the Implementing Partner of this project is responsible for coordinating and managing the project, signing project documents on behalf of the Chinese government, overseeing the day to day project implementation, co-supervising the project with the UNDP to ensure the overall project quality, ensuring the project activities are carried out in accordance with the project document and sign workplan, and providing any other necessary support to the project.

Neixiang Government

The Neixiang Government is entrusted with furnishing guidance, policy direction, and organizational coordination for the implementation process, while lending support to the coordination efforts among diverse organizations.

3.7 Key Stakeholders

The project engaged a wide range of stakeholders throughout its entire lifecycle, with a specific emphasis on integrating sustainable development goals into Neixiang's socio-economic development policies and planning. To ensure national ownership and sustainability of the project's developmental impact, several local government offices and bureaus were involved. Concurrently,

the project recognized the importance of engaging local community residents. The key stakeholders and their corresponding responsibilities are enumerated below:

Table 6 Key Stakeholders with Roles

Key Stakeholders	Roles and Responsibilities
Neixiang County Finance Office	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide the project with relevant lessons learned from other international and domestic projects (completed and ongoing); • Introduce project experiences and lessons to other international and domestic projects; • Support the implementation of recommendations and strategies proposed in this project for government-funded projects; • Draft and promote policies and plans related to project objectives
Neixiang County Development and Reform Commission	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide the project with relevant lessons learned from other domestic projects (completed and ongoing); • Introduce project experiences and lessons to other international and domestic projects; • Support the implementation of recommendations and strategies proposed in this project for government-funded projects; • Draft and promote policies and plans related to project objectives.
Neixiang County Industry and Information Commission	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mainstream the project outcomes into land utilization planning; • Introduce project experiences and lessons to other international and domestic projects; • Support the implementation of recommendations and strategies proposed in this project in government-funded projects.
People's Bank of China Neixiang County Central Branch	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mainstream the project outcomes into credit policy; • Introduce project experiences and lessons to other international and domestic projects; • Provide policy and technical support for the implementation of policy projects related to green finance and carbon finance.
Neixiang County Rural Commercial Bank	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide policy and technical support for the project; • Introduce project experiences and lessons to other international and domestic projects; • Support the implementation of recommendations and strategies proposed in this project for government-funded projects;
Neixiang County Poverty Alleviation Office	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide policy and technical support for the project; • Introduce project experiences and lessons to other international and domestic projects; • Support the implementation of recommendations and strategies proposed in this project for government-funded projects;
Neixiang County Natural Resources Administration	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Be responsible for land utilization planning; • Mainstream the project outcomes into land utilization planning; • Be responsible for policy advice and implementation of unified planning

Key Stakeholders	Roles and Responsibilities
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Introduce project experiences and lessons to other international and domestic projects; • Support the implementation of recommendations and strategies proposed in this project for government-funded projects.
Neixiang Ecology and Environmental Protection Bureau	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Incorporate project results into county biodiversity conservation strategies and action plans; • Draft and promote policies and plans related to project objectives. • Provides lessons gained from the projects implemented by the department and from day-to-day work. • Introduce project experiences and lessons to other international and domestic projects; • Support the implementation of recommendations and strategies proposed in this project for government-funded projects.
Neixiang County Forestry and Grassland Administration (National Park Administration, Wetland Administration)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Coordinate with relevant departments to implement the project promotion strategy; • Introduce project experiences and lessons to other international and domestic projects; • Support the implementation of recommendations and strategies proposed in this project for government-funded projects.
Neixiang County Tourism Development Committee	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cooperate in the formulation of eco-tourism pilot plans; • Draft and promote policies and plans related to project objectives.
Neixiang County Agriculture and Rural Affairs Bureau (Committee)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide policy and technical support for the project; • Introduce project experiences and lessons to other international and domestic projects; • Support the implementation of recommendations and strategies proposed in this project for government-funded projects;
Neixiang County Water Conservancy Bureau	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide policy and technical support for the project; • Introduce project experiences and lessons to other international and domestic projects; • Support the implementation of recommendations and strategies proposed in this project for government-funded projects;
Neixiang County Education Bureau	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide policy and technical support for the project; • Introduce project experiences and lessons to other international and domestic projects; • Support the implementation of recommendations and strategies proposed in this project for government-funded projects;
Neixiang County Health Bureau	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide policy and technical support for the project; • Introduce project experiences and lessons to other international and domestic projects; • Support the implementation of recommendations and strategies proposed in this project for government-funded projects;

Key Stakeholders	Roles and Responsibilities
Neixiang County Women and Children's Federation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide policy and technical support for the project; • Provide support for the establishment and operation of Women's Development Fund; • Introduce project experiences and lessons to other international and domestic projects; • Support the implementation of recommendations and strategies proposed in this project for government-funded projects;
Neixiang County Youth League Committee	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide policy and technical support for the project; • Provide support for the establishment and operation of Women's Development Fund; • Promote project-related activities and achievements through online and offline channels; • Support the implementation of recommendations and strategies proposed in this project for government-funded projects
Project Demonstration Villages and Towns	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Participate in the implementation of project activities
Natural Reserve Management Agency	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Senior management and technical staff from natural reserves will be involved in relevant planning and capacity building activities
Community and Local Residents	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Participate in the implementation of project activities
Academic and Scientific Institutions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide technical support; • May become a service contractor.
Media	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Partners for disseminating project outcomes; • Promote public awareness on the environment and sustainable development.

IV. KEY FINDINGS

This evaluation report organized principal findings based on the five evaluation criteria of relevance, effectiveness, efficiency, sustainability, gender and cross-cutting issues, which enables an assessment of the extent to which the project's objectives have been achieved and the identification of key factors that have influenced their completion, utilizing the logic model of evaluation driven by the Theory of Change. The ensuing section outlines the principal findings from the evaluation, categorized by each evaluation criterion.

4.1 Relevance

Finding 1: The project design and activity content are closely aligned with the United Nations' Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and are congruent with the United Nations Development Programme's (UNDP) overarching initiatives and priorities illustrated in the CPD.

The design of the project encompasses a comprehensive range of development issues that need urgent attention. Its purpose is not solely to enhance the local government's ability to plan for development in the areas of welfare security and rural revitalization, but also to promote the realization of a moderately prosperous society by actively engaging private sector, social forces, and other stakeholders in the development of community governance, ecotourism, and inclusive finance. Furthermore, the project places particular emphasis on the well-being of women, youth, and children in the enhancement of public services.

Upon a thorough examination of project-related documents, and taking into careful consideration the output activities and outcome framework of the Neixiang project, it is evident that this initiative makes a noteworthy contribution towards the realization of the following United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs):

- Goal 1: End poverty in all its forms everywhere;
- Goal 3: Good Health and Well-Being for People. Ensure healthy lives; and promote well-being for all at all ages;
- Goal 4: Ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all;
- Goal 5: Achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls;
- Goal 6: Ensure availability and sustainable management of water and sanitation for all;
- Goal 8: Promote sustained, inclusive and sustainable economic growth, full and productive employment and decent work for all;
- Goal 9: Industry, Innovation, and Infrastructure - Build resilient infrastructure, promote inclusive and sustainable industrialization, and foster innovation;
- Goal 10: Reduce income inequality within and among countries;
- Goal 11: Make cities and human settlements inclusive, safe, resilient, and sustainable;
- Goal 13: Climate Action--Take urgent action to combat climate change and its impacts by regulating emissions and promoting developments in renewable energy;
- Goal 15: Life on Land-- Protect, restore and promote sustainable use of terrestrial ecosystems, sustainably manage forests, combat desertification, and halt and reverse land degradation and halt biodiversity loss;

- Goal 16: Promote peaceful and inclusive societies for sustainable development, provide access to justice for all and build effective, accountable and inclusive institutions at all levels;
- Goal 17: Strengthen the means of implementation and revitalize the global partnership for sustainable development.

Simultaneously, the project endeavors to foster knowledge and experience sharing through both domestic and international collaborations. With reference to the UNDP Country Programme Document for China 2016-2020, the project serves as a catalyst towards achieving the following country outcomes:

- Outcome 1: More people, particularly the vulnerable and disadvantaged, enjoy improved living conditions and increased opportunities for economic, social and cultural development.
- Outcome 2: More people enjoy a cleaner, healthier environment as a result of improved environmental protection and sustainable green growth;
- Outcome 3: The effectiveness of China's engagement in international cooperation is enhanced for the mutual benefit of China and the world.

Finding 2: The project has carried out activities in multiple directions related to sustainable development and responded to the local demands. The relevance of activities have been further improved by aligning policy, planning with actual implementation.

The project carried out many activities around the mainstreaming of sustainable development goals in Neixiang County's social and economic development policies and planning, enhancing Neixiang County's community governance capacity, and promoting sustainable and environmentally-friendly industrial development. Training activities for officials and teachers had a relatively wider coverage, gradually forming a country-wide trend of sustainable development activities.

The project conducted comprehensive reviews of the development policy process and best practices in Neixiang County, while also introducing advanced cases of sustainable county development and enhancing policy and plan capacity building. In addition to supporting the development of pertinent plans and policies, the project also facilitated a range of capacity-enhancing activities at the industry and enterprise levels to improve industry and business capabilities in the areas of industry planning and engineering planning. This included a specific focus on enhancing the coordination of industry policies and planning, and narrowing the gap between policy and planning goals and actual implementation.

Moreover, building on the existing environmental education efforts in Neixiang County, the project enhanced the scope and depth of environmental awareness promotion, amplify social public and policy makers' comprehension of the significance of environmental sustainability and landscape in Neixiang County, and bolster women's participation in environmental sustainability and development.

4.2 Effectiveness

Finding 3: The majority of the deliverables associated with **Outcome 1**, which aims to bolster the sustainable development capacity of Neixiang County by incorporating the sustainable development goals into its socio-economic development policies and planning, have been successfully accomplished. The initiative has effectively strengthened the competence of Neixiang County officials in executing the SDGs framework and has played an integral role in embedding the SDGs into the county's socioeconomic development policies and planning, thereby facilitating the attainment of SDGs.

Table 7 Activities Log of Outcome 1

Year	Activities
2019	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Completed the framework of sustainable development goals, evaluated Neixiang County's "13th Five-Year Plan", developed Neixiang SDGs monitoring methodology and preliminary preparations for annual monitoring reports • Formed expert teams for the baseline survey on social, economic and environmental conditions in Neixiang County, as well as surveys on the development of the secondary industry and future development trends • Organized 3 study trips, 4 people went on the first trip to Yunnan Province for UNDP project inspection, and 13 people went on the second trip to Shandong Province to study modernized rural governance, and 10 people went on the third trip to Jiangxi Province for a study tour on cultural and creative tourism development • Experts conducted field research and developed the "Neixiang County Sustainable Development Baseline Survey and Sustainable Development Framework and Roadmap Work Plan". The "Work Plan" was further investigated and formed the "Sustainable Development Baseline Survey Report for Neixiang County, Henan Province" so as to guide Neixiang County to integrate sustainable development into all related work
2020	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 11 experts conducted baseline research and submitted two 13th and 14th Five-Year planning reports, completed feedback collection • Completed the first draft of "Neixiang County Sustainable Development Baseline Survey and Evaluation Report" • Organized one event with 180 people participated in capacity building trainings on rural revitalization, green development and public health • Completed capacity-building needs assessment
2021	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The 14th Five-Year Plan activity report was revised, final payment completed, and shared with the Development and Reform Commission • The "Neixiang County Sustainable Development Baseline Survey and Evaluation Report" was completed and shared with the Development and Reform Commission • Organized two activities, completed "Xinyang Going Out" government official capacity building training activity, 151 government officials and industry representatives conducted research and exchanges on key issues such as rural construction, industrial revitalization, culture and organizational development, and living environment improvement. The feedback from participants was very

	<p>positive, and they considered that the activities have effectively enhanced their awareness.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Completed capacity building training for leading enterprises, with 83 reps from 50 industrial and agricultural enterprises in Neixiang County, to enhance the capacity of key enterprises in Neixiang County on the comprehensive work of private sector, enterprise management, sustainable development, safety in production and emergency management etc., to build a cooperation platform for enterprises, exchange and discuss the bottlenecks and key points in enterprise development, effectively respond to local concerns and expand the horizons of local officials.
2022	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> In light of the actual situation of Neixiang County, organized field trips for officials and entrepreneurs to exchange on development priorities, and built cooperation platforms on topics such as park planning, industrial transformation, high-end manufacturing and industrial green development.

Table 8 Completion Status of Outcome 1

Outcome 1	Output	Completion Status	Progress
Enhance the sustainable development capacity in Neixiang County by mainstreaming the sustainable development goals in its socio-economic development policies and planning	Output 1: Formulate policy recommendations for incorporating the SDGs into the 14th Five-Year Plan of Neixiang County	Completed	100%
	Output 2: Compile a roadmap for the socio-economic development plans of Neixiang County based on the SDGs framework	Completed	100%
	Output 3: Conduct capacity building activities to improve the capacity of Neixiang county government officials to implement the SDGs framework	Partially completed, partially not carried out	90%

Based on the findings presented in Tables 6 and 7, it is evident that the project has undertaken a wide range of activities planned under Outcome 1 and Outputs 1, 2, and 3. These interventions have collectively contributed to raising awareness about sustainable development and augmenting the capacity of government officials in Neixiang County to effectively implement the SDGs framework. For example, one of the beneficiaries¹ expressed at the FGD the changes in ideas brought about by the project:

“At first, I thought that UNDP came with funds and projects. When China was underdeveloped, UNDP did come with projects and funds, but now it no longer like that. The so-called project is about governance. In terms of social governance and community governance, as well as human sustainability, it provides intellectual support and changes

¹ Per UNDP Evaluation Guidelines, all interviews with men and women shall be undertaken in full confidence and anonymity. Thus no interviewee’s identity will be revealed throughout this report.

on awareness. If we talk about real outcomes, this project is subtle and silent, which is not as obvious as building houses, roads, and bridges. It is to build houses of ideas, build bridges of ideas, and build roads of ideas. Through the implementation of UNDP project in six major areas in Neixiang County, subtle changes have taken place in people's mind, changes in the perception of sustainability, these six aspects were carried out in a simultaneous manner, social governance, education parity, capacity enhancement of officials, health, Women's Development Fund, rural credit cooperatives and gender inequality. If there is mental gap and a lack of synchronization in awareness in these areas, it will not be possible to resonate at the same frequency. At the official level, the UNDP has opened up our hearts and minds, broadened our horizons, and enhanced our cognition and management capabilities. It has enabled officials in the education sector to be aware of laws addressing education parity, and Women's Development Fund leads to improved economic management capabilities.”

Another beneficiary shared his/her thought as inspired after the visit to Chengdu:

“Later, I also went to Chengdu to participate in training with the UNDP project. Since then, I have opened my mind and seen that others (Chengdu) are developing very well, I have learned from Chengdu's relevant experiences. I plan to follow the example of setting up the model of "pomegranate picking garden" and promote it with the help of Douyin platform. With the advantage of Stone Village tourism development, I plan to set up my soft seed pomegranate picking garden as a sightseeing spot for internet KOLs.”



Finding 4: The great majority of the deliverables associated with **Outcome 2**, which aims to fortify the community governance capacity of Neixiang County by showcasing inclusive communities, have been satisfactorily implemented. The project has implemented a well-coordinated sequence of activities that have effectively fostered community governance in a methodical manner. The

objective of providing commensurate education opportunities has been successfully achieved, and endeavors to empower women are being adapted and refined to align with local circumstances.

The project's original aim was to achieve the seamless integration of rural pension and subsistence allowance systems with community public services, by bolstering the village collective economy and enhancing community service capabilities. With Zhaqu Town's support, the project conducted a comprehensive community development survey and devised relevant work plans and implementation proposals, which were gradually executed in accordance with the established plan.

Equal Education

In relation to the equalization of education, the project collaborated with the Education and Sports Bureau to empower local teachers and students by enhancing their skill sets through initiatives such as strengthening the abilities of teachers and principals, fostering sustainable development capabilities among teachers, promoting sustainable development practices, and engaging young people in sustainable development competitions. This was complemented by the UNDP Movers project to establish a comprehensive system and yield favorable outcomes. Young teachers who took part in the training regularly shared their acquired knowledge with untrained teachers and integrated sustainable development concepts and elements into their teaching materials. This enriched the curriculum, enhanced students' international perspectives, and fostered a deeper understanding of sustainable development, thereby garnering robust support from the education department and schools for the project's activities.

Women Empowerment

In terms of women's empowerment, although Neixiang County has a good environment for women's development, such as women's participation/leading role in managing household finances. Women's ability to be truly economically independent still needs to be strengthened. The project established some women's organizations, and carried out related activities such as trainings, water protection, dancing, and caring for the left-behind elderly and children. Regrettably, the COVID-19 pandemic had an adverse impact on the number of cultural activities originally planned by all stakeholders in terms of the program, personnel, and funding. Despite this setback, activities that were implemented still managed to inspire left-behind women to participate in grassroots organizations and community governance to a certain extent, thereby laying a firm foundation for ensuing community governance efforts.

In terms of key financial support, despite the project's successful establishment of a Women's Development Fund in partnership with the Neixiang County Rural Commercial Bank, the county's inclusive financial system has since evolved, resulting in the emergence of commercial banks and online banking institutions offering women a wider selection of low-interest and convenient financial products. In adjustment to this change, as per the County Government's revised plan, the Women's Development Fund was then repurposed to support other financial endeavors.

Table 9 Activities Log of Outcome 2

2019	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Adjusted and tentatively designated the demonstration village as Wangjing Village and completed basic information collection, visits and questionnaires
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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Experts conducted field research and developed "Women's Development Fund Management Measures". The development fund budget has been allocated to the project office account • Liaised with experts, the Project Management Office, Women's Federation and village officials, a women's meeting was held in Wangjing Village and a female square dance team was formed with 18 members, and a WeChat group was set up
2020	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Experts conducted a community development baseline survey and completed the first version of work plan and implementation recommendations on community development and governance • Adjusted to the preparation of education parity work plan, a team of experts was commissioned to conduct research on education in Zhaqu and other towns. Completed a preliminary research report and collected feedback • Planned to cooperate with online commercial banks /local banks, adjusted the plan and cooperated with Rural Commercial Bank, Women's Federation and Youth League Committee, jointly launched Women's Development Fund "Entrepreneurship Loan" • Purchased basic equipment and musical instruments for square dancing
2021	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Through research on community development and governance in Neixiang County, Completed the "Community Governance Research Report" and the "Community Comprehensive Governance Improvement Program" • Conducted four trainings on rural cooperatives and collective economy in Zhaqu Town. Utilized domestic expert resources to organize two community comprehensive service trainings, a total of 167 people participated in the trainings, and provided a series of services to related domestic violence cases • Organized 6 trainings and provided support to women's organizations in Wangjing Village and Pengying Village • Carried out "going out" activities outside the province, organized women's representatives, young people returning home to work, members of the cooperatives went to Chengdu, Sichuan for study and exchange, A total of 19 people from the town committee of Zhaqu Town and backbone cadres of Wangjing Village in Neixiang County participated in the training on community governance • Carried out preschool education teacher training, invited well-known domestic preschool education experts to conduct training for 300 Neixiang County public preschool teachers to upgrade their skills and improve their teaching quality • Conducted trainings for primary and secondary teachers. Invited well-known preschool education experts to train 130 primary and secondary school teachers in Neixiang County to improve their teaching quality and enhance their skills • Introduced and implemented the start-up loan based on the sub-project of Women's Development Fund, to support women and young entrepreneurs who have the ability and willingness to work to generate income increase and promote regional women's empowerment
2022	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provided experience sharing, training or exchange sessions for collective economy participants or potential entrepreneurs such as cooperatives, youth

	<p>entrepreneurs through participatory governance based on baseline survey and programmes</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Improved the integration of community elderly care and community public services, and carried out pilot projects for community elderly care, such as supporting the planning and construction of day care centers, providing a series of training activities on elderly home care for officials and social workers • Carried out "going out" activity in the province, organized study tours for women's representatives, young people returning to hometowns for employment, and members of cooperatives to go to regions with a higher level of women's organization, community governance, collective economy etc. • Prepared and carried out community governance seminars. Compiled Neixiang Experiences on Community Governance and Development, shared the experience of community development and governance in Neixiang County within the framework of the UN SDGs at the national level • Trained local executives, implemented research and demonstration activities (1) According to the compiled research plan, utilizing UN resources, trained relevant teachers and executives; (2) Implemented related activities • Based on the research base and research plan in Neixiang County, combined with the UN SDGs, through discussions with local stakeholders, adopted student-centered participatory approach to integrate and form a systematic global research plan and syllabus • Carried out the sustainable development action competition, gave urban and rural students guidance and support for respective sustainable development goals, awarded certificates and provided support to outstanding student groups and projects • Publicized and promoted Women's Development Fund to women and young entrepreneurs (1) Carried out women's development fund training, leadership support and promotion; (2) Issued small loans to qualified women and young entrepreneur applicants • Conducted training and event support on women's organization according to baseline survey and protocol, conducted learning exchange and capacity training for women's organizations, women comrades in model villages through participatory governance. • Conducted training and provided event support in the comprehensive management of community services and habitats • Provided a series of themed activities for the elderly, women and left-behind children in the demonstration village
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Table 10 Completion Status of Outcome 2

Outcome 2	Output	Completion Status	Progress
Strengthen Community Governance Capacity in	Output 4: Support the preparation and implementation of community development and community governance demonstration plans	Partially completed, partially in progress	90%

Neixiang County by Demonstrating Inclusive Communities	Output 5: Support the preparation and implementation of the educational equalization demonstration plans	Completed	100%
	Output 6: Promote the establishment of Women's Development Fund	Completed	100%

Finding 5: The majority of the objectives outlined in **Outcome 3**, which seeks to encourage industrial development and rural revitalization through sustainable and eco-friendly measures, are well on track thus far. However, the tangible impact of these initiatives may require a longer manifestation period before becoming evident.

The project initially planned to support the preparation and implementation of the "Rural Complex" demonstration plan at Zhaqu Taishan Temple, but later adjusted the content to compile the "Overall Plan for the Tourism Development in Zhaqu Town", which was completed and well received by relevant departments of Neixiang County and Zhaqu Town. The cultural tourism industry in Wujia Stone Village is underway, but due to the adverse impact of COVID-19 on construction and cultural tourism industry, as well as the restrictions on construction after it was listed as a provincial cultural relic, the cultural tourism industry in Stone Village has not yet been officially put into operation. Follow-up work also requires a large amount of investment. The project was involved in the improvement plan and also effectively guided the planning and development of the cultural tourism industry in Stone Village. In terms of skills training for women and youth, the project mainly relies on the cooperation with Haihui Poverty Alleviation Center, County Women's Federation and County Youth League Committee to carry out the promotion and training related to Women's Development Fund loan, which has generated positive social publicity and influence for women entrepreneurship.

Table 11 Activities Log of Outcome 3

2019	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Hired experts to conduct field research in Neixiang County, completed "Sustainable Development Work Plan for the Cultural Tourism Industry in Zhaqu Town" and began to compile the "Overall Plan for Tourism Development in Zhaqu Town" The expert team conducted on-site visits to Neixiang County and held discussions with key departments to carry out preliminary work on the preparation and implementation of the cultural tourism demonstration plan for Deng Kiln Cultural Heritage and demonstration plan for Wujia Stone Village
2020	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The expert group submitted the overall tourism plan for Zhaqu Town and passed the review
2021	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Zhaqu town-wise tourism project activity action plan was approved. At present, the overall planning and construction work related to Stone Village has been implemented and deployed and is now under construction
2022	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Publicized and promoted Women's Development Fund to women and young entrepreneurs (a) Carried out related training, leadership support and promotion; (b) Issued small loans to qualified women and young entrepreneur applicants

Table 12 Completion Status of Outcome 3

Outcome 3	Output	Completion Status	Progress
Promote industrial development and rural revitalization through sustainable and environmentally friendly approaches	Output 7: Support the preparation and implementation of the "Rural Complex" demonstration plan for the Zhaqu Taishan Temple	Completed	100%
	Output 8: Support the preparation and implementation of Deng Kiln Cultural Heritage and Wuya Stone Village Cultural Tourism demonstration plans	Completed	100%
	Output 9: Support the establishment of professional cooperative organizations and the convening of vocational skill training sessions to improve the professional skills and increase the income of local residents, especially women and the youth	Partially completed, partially in progress	80%

Finding 6: Most planned deliverables under Outcome 4, which seeks to popularize the SDGs, share project outcomes, and disseminate information, have been successfully accomplished. Following an initial phase of refinement, the project has made remarkable progress in terms of communication and publicity, resulting in positive outcomes.

As shown in the Table 13 and Table 14, the project has achieved certain results in disseminating, sharing and promoting the project outcomes, especially in creating and promoting the highlights of the Women’s Water Protection Team, which becomes one of the highlights of the project, and gradually expanded from county level media to the UNDP media, influential domestic media platforms, demonstrating the comparative advantages of international project very well.

Table 13 Activities Log of Outcome 4

2019	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> During the project implementation, 6 project newsletters were published on new media platforms and traditional media channels such as the United Nations and Neixiang local media
2020	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> During the project implementation, a total of 3 project newsletters were published on new media platforms and traditional media channels such as the United Nations and Neixiang local media
2021	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Prepared for the National Symposium on Community Governance and Service. Launched preparations for an international forum on poverty alleviation and sustainable development in Neixiang County During the project implementation, a total of 16 project newsletters were published, covering new media platforms and traditional media channels such as the United Nations, ifeng.com and local media platforms, featuring topics

	such as capacity building activities for “going out” events and community governance.
2022	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Developed China's experience – Neixiang County project to develop knowledge products • Developed sustainable development experience from Neixiang County projects, developed knowledge products (videos and other case materials), and disseminated project outcomes through the UNDP’s international network • Incorporated core messages of the SDGs framework into cultural and sports activities in Neixiang County

Table 14 Completion Status of Outcome 4

Outcome 4	Output	Completion Status	Progress
Popularize the SDGs, share and disseminate Neixiang project outcomes	Output 10: Develop a case for sustainable development in Neixiang County	Partially completed, partially in progress	80%
	Output 11: Effectively improve the publicity capacity to promote sustainable development in Neixiang County	Partially completed, partially in progress	90%
	Output 12: Disseminate, share and promote project outcomes	Partially completed, partially in progress	80%

4.3 Efficiency

Finding 7: The overall progress of the project was delayed, mainly due to the factors such as COVID-19, insufficient professional personnel, etc.

The project was originally planned to commence in January 2019, but it was postponed until July of the same year. The project's conclusion was initially slated for December 2021 but was subsequently delayed twice owing to several factors, including the COVID-19 pandemic outbreak. The first extension of the project deadline was for a year, with a new completion date of December 31, 2022. The second extension was granted for an additional year, with the new end date set for December 2023.

As of December 31, 2022, the overall progress of the project has fallen behind schedule. The COVID-19 pandemic has been the primary factor responsible for the delay, as it has disrupted project activities and hindered the mobility of project personnel. In addition, the relative shortage of project professionals has also contributed to the delay in project progress.

Despite the challenges faced, the project team remained committed to achieving the project's goals and objectives by continuously exploring ways to mitigate the impact of the pandemic and other factors on the project's progress. The team worked to adjust the agenda, enhance the efficiency of project implementation, streamline project activities, and optimize the allocation of project resources to ensure that the project is completed successfully within the revised timeline.

Finding 8: The actual project funding in place differed significantly from the original plan, the implementation rate of funds needs to be improved.

The total project capital as planned is approximately US\$ 4.84 million, of which the People's Government of Neixiang County will provide financial support for a total of approximately US\$ 2.87 million over a period of three years (2019-2021) in the form of government cost-sharing. In actual implementation, the total budget funding for the project is only \$1.91 million. Due to the impact of COVID-19 on the revenue of Neixiang County, the actual funds in place for the project are lower than the total budget, and the project funds arrived late, which also affected the project timeline to a certain extent. The delivery rates of project funds in 2019, 2020, 2021, and 2022 were 75%, 42%, 42%, and 84%, respectively, with an overall delivery rate of approximately 55% over the years. By the end of 2022, the remaining funds of the project totals 317,000 US dollars, equivalent to about 2.2 million yuan, and the implementation rate of project funds needs to be improved.

Table 15 Project Budget and Actual Expenditure

Year	Budget (USD)	Funding in place (USD)	Actual Expenditure (USD)	Note
2019	370,000		279,800	200,000 US dollars was transferred from the Women's Development Fund to the project office account. The implementation time of this section is 2021
2020	614,608	614,608	264,000	100,000 was earmarked for pandemic response which is a separate expenditure and should not be included in the actual expenditure.
2021	685,120	350,000	294,500	Funds arrived late which affected the project implementation
2022	240,000		202,700	

Table 16 Project Expenditures

Achievement	Output	2019	2020	2021	2022
1. Enhance the sustainable development capacity of Neixiang County by mainstreaming the sustainable development goals in its	Output 1: Formulate policy recommendations for incorporating the SDGs into the 14th Five-Year Plan of Neixiang County	3,920.34	47,401.99	18,437.30	
	Output 2: Compile a roadmap for the socio-economic	24,140			

socio-economic development policies and planning	development plans of Neixiang County based on the SDGs framework				
	Output 3: Conduct capacity building activities to improve the capacity of Neixiang county government officials to implement the SDGs framework	8,390.7	10,379.55	5,665.52	
2. Strengthen community governance capacity in Neixiang County by demonstrating inclusive communities	Output 4: Support the preparation and implementation of community development and community governance demonstration plans		2,809.64	89,268.30	
	Output 5: Support the preparation and implementation of the educational equalization demonstration plans		95,575.46	82,315.62	103,775.78
	Output 6: Promote the establishment of Women's Development Fund	199,174.85	0	1,422.39	
3. Promote industrial development and rural revitalization through sustainable and environmentally friendly approaches	Output 7: Support the preparation and implementation of the "Rural Complex" demonstration plan for the Zhaqu Taishan Temple		47,908.07		
	Output 8: Support the preparation and implementation of Deng Kiln Cultural Heritage and Wujia Stone Village Cultural Tourism demonstration plans	254.23			

	Output 9: Support the establishment of professional cooperative organizations and the convening of vocational skill training sessions to improve the professional skills and increase the income of local residents, especially women and the youth				
4. Popularize the SDGs, share and disseminate project outcomes	Output 10: Develop a case for sustainable development in Neixiang County				
	Output 11: Effectively improve the publicity capacity to promote sustainable development in Neixiang County				
	Output 12: Disseminate, share and promote project outcomes				
Other expenses	UN volunteer fees, administrative fees, professional service fees, etc.	43,881.52	60,069.23	97370.48	98,901.74
Total expenditure		279,761.64	264,143.94	294,479.61	202,677.52

Finding 9: The staffing of project management office is somewhat inadequate, which affected project progress. Additionally, significant turnover within the leadership group resulted in delays in project familiarity and underutilization of progress potential.

First of all, in consideration with the planned project activities, the number of project office staff is relatively low. The project office consists of 4 to 5 staff members, including Office Director, Deputy Director, section staff and UN volunteers. Among them, Office Director and Deputy Director are held by the Head of Finance Office of Neixiang County government, and the staff members also serve as part-time staff of the Finance Office. Only the United Nations volunteers work on a full-time basis. There was one UN Volunteer for the 2019 and 2020 projects assigned, while from 2021 onwards, two UN Volunteers have been recruited, which has considerably alleviated the shortage of manpower and promoted the effective implementation of project.

In addition, the government's main tasks from 2019 to 2021 were arduous, encompassing poverty alleviation, pandemic prevention and control. Consequently, there was a limited availability of human, material, and financial resources that could be allocated to projects. In addition, there has been a significant change in the members of the project leadership group, and the composition of leadership groups established in 2019 has undergone substantial modifications to date. It takes some time for new leadership group members to become more familiar with the project, and the level of awareness of the project varies among unit leaders. Regrettably, the full potential of the leadership group's role has yet to be fully realized.

Finding 10: The project adjusted the content and organization of activities in a timely manner to actively respond to the impact of COVID-19 pandemic.

Due to the negative impact of COVID-19 pandemic, all construction activities of the project must follow the national and local pandemic prevention and control policies. As a result, some of the planned activities of the approved projects were not carried out. In 2020, due to the pandemic, the project was effectively suspended for half a year, and about 90% of the project's offline activities were affected, including the "Going Out" capacity building activities for government officials, community governance and development, exchange and training activities, and community governance seminars.

The project then adjusted the content and organization of activities in a timely manner to actively respond to the impact of COVID-19. For example, for education equalization, when the pandemic came in 2020, UNDP and CICETE mobilized 530,000 RMB in total, and gave priority to Neixiang County to provide relevant capacity building support to mitigate the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on vulnerable areas and groups. UNDP and CICETE, after discussions with the relevant departments of 8 county governments and investigating 502 households in 3 rural and 3 urban communities, established the education project that comprised five activities², covering 1,300 persons from education section in Neixiang county.

In light of the above, the project demonstrated adaptability and responsiveness to the COVID-19 pandemic by adjusting the content and organization of activities in a timely manner.

4.4 Sustainability

Finding 11: The project has achieved remarkable outcomes in promoting sustainable development in rural communities, and more exchange visits and learning activities inside and outside the province can be carried out to learn about advanced cases, industrial development, and left-behind groups. Going forward, it is expected that these efforts will continue to improve the living standards and wellbeing of rural communities in a sustainable manner, contributing to Neixiang's broader efforts in achieving sustainable development

With a strong emphasis on sustainability, the development of rural construction and community governance as part of rural revitalization has become a key focus area. As part of this effort, the

² These activities included training programs for improving the working ability of primary and secondary school head teachers, for key primary and secondary school teachers, for preschool education teachers; language education projects; and investigation and learning of advanced experience in education and teaching.

implementation of community development and governance demonstration plans has been identified as a key output of the project. Through a series of training programs focused on collective economy and farmer cooperatives, women's organization cultivation, community service capacity building, comprehensive service management, and services provided for vulnerable groups such as the elderly, women, and children, the project has helped to model communities to open up market channels, improve business concepts and ideas, and enhance the sustainability of women's participation in community governance. Furthermore, the project has helped to enhance the comprehensive governance capabilities of model communities, improve their initiative, and build their comprehensive capacity to participate in community governance in a sustainable manner.

It is therefore observed that the project has stated to lay the foundations for lasting impact in Neixiang County through its emphasis on building self-reliance and governance capabilities within model communities. By providing comprehensive training on cooperatives, business concepts, women's participation, and social services, the project has equipped these communities with the skills and initiative needed for sustainable development. These model communities are now empowered to continue strengthening collective economy, enhancing women-led governance, and improving sustainable development of Neixiang.

Finding 12: Neixiang County is rich in cultural and tourism resources, but the supporting support for the cultural and tourism industry in villages and towns has not been formed, and there is still much room for improvement in the development of cultural and tourism industry in the follow-up of the project.

On one hand, Zhaqu Town is endowed with a plethora of cultural and tourism resources, including cultural relics, ancient buildings, and ruins. However, their development and utilization have been hampered by several challenges, including slow introduction of commercial capital, sluggish planning and construction of scenic areas, weak drainage processes, and unfavorable expansion of the tourism industry chain. In recent years, despite the entry of cultural and tourism development companies such as Henan Muyao Cultural Tourism and Henan Zhongtou, the sustainable development of the tourism industry in the town has been difficult to achieve.

On the other hand, although the provincial-level cultural heritage unit Wuya Shitou Village has been seeking project funding in recent years and has built infrastructure such as Tongjing Road, parking lot, and tourist service center, the water supply and drainage, cultural relics security, and other links have not been completed yet. There is still a "dead end" in the entire infrastructure construction line. There is still a huge demand for improvement in the quality that industrial development should have.

In conclusion, to ensure the sustainable development of cultural and tourism resources in the town, it is essential to address these challenges and implement sustainable practices that promote responsible tourism, preserve cultural heritage, and support local communities. With careful planning and execution, Zhaqu Town has the potential to become a sustainable tourism destination that promotes economic growth, preserves cultural heritage, and protects the environment for future generations.

Finding 13: Project's sustainable development efforts in Neixiang County has shown positive impact on government policy, capacity building, equal education, and citizen engagement, but future challenges remain.

The project's impact on Neixiang County is not just short-term but sustainable, owing to several reasons.

Firstly, the project has successfully integrated sustainable development-related concepts and activities into government planning and policies by offering suggestions for the 14th Five Year Plan. This approach is likely to have a lasting effect on government policies in the medium to long-term and help promote the mainstreaming of sustainable development concepts.

Secondly, the "going out" activity on the capacity building of government officials has been instrumental in broadening the horizons of Neixiang County's government officials and improving their understanding of sustainable development. This activity has helped officials to become more knowledgeable and better equipped to promote the construction of sustainable development in the county in the future.

Thirdly, the project's efforts to provide equal education have been particularly effective in promoting long-term sustainability. Sustainable development ability training activities for teachers and students will have a stable and long-term positive effect, even after the project has ended. This is because the training will help to build the capacity of local educators and students to incorporate sustainable development concepts into their daily lives and work.

Finally, the project's promotion of Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) has improved residents' awareness of sustainable development and stimulated local residents, especially women involved in the project, to take a more active role in economic and social activities. This has enhanced the subjectivity of local residents and contributed to the long-term sustainability of the project.

However, there are several factors that may constrain the sustainable development of the project in the future. These include limited project funds, relatively insufficient project personnel, and unreasonable allocation. Additionally, significant changes, coupled with the overall low level of labor quality within the county, may also pose challenges to the long-term sustainability of the project. To address these challenges, the project may need to explore innovative financing mechanisms, engage more local stakeholders, and develop sustainable partnerships to ensure continued progress towards sustainable development in Neixiang County.

Finding 14: The project provides an important reference for other localities to coordinate and promote the sustainable development of counties.

The Neixiang project exemplifies an integrated approach to sustainable development that can serve as a model for other localities. By aligning UNDP, national and local priorities, its research-based, context-specific and participatory process provides an important reference for coordinating and promoting sustainable development at the county level. Neixiang Project demonstrates how multisector collaboration and community empowerment can transform sustainable goals into realities.

Firstly, the project in Neixiang County has been designed with a strong focus on sustainability to address the key challenges faced by the county in promoting sustainable development. Based on the solid local research in the early stage, the project designed the objectives and service content on the basis of grasping the local basic conditions and actual needs, ensuring the targeting, effectiveness and feasibility of the project.

- The project targets the main challenges faced by Neixiang County in promoting the sustainable development of the county economy, namely institutional and policy constraints, conceptual and talent shortage, and the unfavorable economic environment. The county government has little room for economic regulation control with insufficient means and limited capacity; the overall quality of the labor force in districts and counties is low, unable to meet the demand for talents for the county's accelerated economic development; the county has a single economic structure, low industrial level, lagging development of characteristic economy, a lack of established pillar industries, leading enterprises and competitive products. The degree of its economic openness is insufficient, and the momentum for accelerated development is not strong.
- In response to the above key issues, the project designed service content in a targeted manner, especially emphasizing the project objectives of poverty alleviation and sustainable development.
- The design of the project service content is based on the conditions of Neixiang County, which ensures the feasibility of the project. For example, choosing global tourism as a characteristic industry is due to that fact that Neixiang County is rich in natural and cultural resources with basic conditions for developing regional tourism.

Secondly, the process of project implementation focuses on diversified participation. During the project implementation process, the team actively built connections to establish a cooperation network allowing multiple participants. Take education parity and community governance as an example:

- Through collaboration with universities, the project provided capacity building trainings for thousands of teachers and principals across the county; with the joint support of the Bureau of Education and Sports and the Corporate Social Responsibility Department of Muyuan Group, the project carried out publicity and education activities on the SDGs, and further empowered enterprise personnel, school teachers and students, and government officials through activities.
- The project implementation team chose to work with the non-governmental organization (NGO) Haihui Poverty Alleviation Center, and through a series of capacity building training, service support activities, exchanges and study trips, have achieved considerable outcomes in the capacity enhancement of collective economy and farmers' cooperatives, the cultivation of women's organizations, and community integrated service management and serving left-behind groups.
- With the joint support of the Education and Sports Bureau and UNDP "Movers Project", the project office carried out science popularization activities on Sustainable Development Goals for more than 400 county teachers and rural teachers from 16 villages and towns through online and offline activities. Through Movers, the project office carried out science popularization activities on Sustainable Development Goals for primary and secondary school students, which improved teenagers' understanding and understanding of Sustainable Development Goals.

Thirdly, the project outcomes reflect sustainable development. The benefits brought by the project to Neixiang County are sustainable

- The "going out" activities on the capacity building of government officials has enabled Neixiang County government cadres to gain insights and broaden their horizons, which will help them continue to promote the sustainable urban development in the future.
- The education parity supported by the project can continue to serve local social development after the project concludes.
- In the process of promoting the mainstreaming of sustainable development goals, the project has improved residents' awareness on sustainable development and motivated local residents to participate in economic and social activities.

Fourthly, the project as a whole integrates the interests of multiple parties. From a holistic point of view, the project integrates the interests of the UNDP, the Chinese government, and Neixiang County:

- The project organically integrates the sustainable development goals proposed by the United Nations, such as poverty eradication and gender equality.
- The project helps realize the effective linkage between poverty alleviation and rural revitalization proposed by the Chinese government.
- The project has built a diversified cooperation network in Neixiang County, which has not only improved the governance capacity of local government, but also increased the economic income of local residents.

4.5 Gender and cross-cutting issues

Finding 15: The project has promoted women's empowerment and gender equality in Neixiang County through the establishment of women's organizations and Women's Development Fund.

In general, the project aimed to address gender-cutting and social inclusion issues in a rural community in China by empowering women through the establishment of Women's Organization, technical trainings, and a Women's Development Fund. The Women's Development Fund provided small loans to poor women who had the initiative to start their own businesses, promoting gender-inclusive finance. However, the project faced challenges such as low demand for loans due to traditional gender roles and weak awareness of credit among rural women. Despite these challenges, the project successfully supported the entrepreneurial projects of six women and young entrepreneurs, contributing to women's economic empowerment in the community.

Women's Organization

In the initial stage of project implementation, the Project Management Office organized leading cadres and villagers to attend training in Sichuan Province. Inspired by the training in Sichuan, the project office in collaboration with a third-party service agency, helped three villages in Zhaqu Town to establish a women's support group and women water protection team, carrying out a range of training and event support. Specific activities include:

- Firstly, the project aimed to enhance the management capacity, perceptions, and practical abilities of the main leaders and members of local women's organizations by purchasing relevant equipment and providing small financial support based on their notions and needs.

Under the coordination of the Project Management Office, the women's organization appeared on mainstream publicity platforms such as the United Nations Development Programme, CCTV, and Henan TV multiple times, generating high media coverage.

- Secondly, the project aimed to innovate approaches in community governance by setting up four groups and one team, which consisted of the policy propaganda group, family tradition group, rights protection group, women's support group, and volunteer team. These groups and teams attracted rural women to participate in women's organizations and help with daily community governance. Additionally, each village had a women's center that carried out activities for women and children.
- Thirdly, the project established a women's water protection team to enhance voluntary services. Initially, the team was tasked with protecting water and rivers and received recognition from the Ministry of Water Resources. Over time, it expanded its scope to include community and legal services, and took on the responsibility of preventing young people from drowning. The team continued to grow in both size and range of work, with more volunteer activities being added.
- Fourthly, the project conducted technical trainings to create multi-level benefits. Experts were hired to provide training on sachet making, allowing women to improve their knowledge of intangible cultural heritage and to inherit and develop this heritage. Additionally, the sachet making skills could be used as a source of income for women in the future. The project aimed to develop this industry further by exploring innovative materials and designs for sachets that highlight local county characteristics.
- At present, the project has established three women's organizations, and has also trained some leaders of women's organizations, which has laid a good foundation for the independent operation of women's organizations in the future. However, it should be noted that activities organized by such groups largely rely on the promotion of project office staff and the financial support by the project. If the follow-up project suspends, the sustainable development of these women's organizations may be greatly limited.

Women's Development Foundation

The project set up a sub-project of "Women's Development Foundation" to improve the availability of funds for local women's entrepreneurship. The Women's Development Foundation aims to provide small loans to poor women who have the will and initiative to start their own businesses, promote online and offline inclusive finance, promote diverse form of women's employment, support them to carry out income-generating activities, and improve their livelihood and life quality.

In terms of operating the Women's Development Fund, considering the long-term cooperation between the Rural Commercial Bank and the government, and the large number of inclusive financial outlets in rural areas, the project chose to cooperate with the Rural Commercial Bank. The Women's Development Fund was originally affiliated with the Agricultural and Rural Affairs Department of the Rural Commercial Bank, and later merged into the Rural Revitalization Department. Initially Women's Federation was responsible for publicity, data collection and liaison with banks. Later, it joined forces with the Youth League Committee to expand the scope of loans and add start-up loans. The initial goal of the project was to empower women and support women's entrepreneurship. In actual situations, if the business license was held by women or more than 80% of employees are female workers, they can apply for the "Clever Daughter-in-law" demonstration base for entrepreneurship and employment. Later on, combined with the actual operations, the sub-

project "Entrepreneurship Loan" based on the Women's Development Fund was launched and implemented. The "Entrepreneurship Loan" was jointly launched by Neixiang Rural Commercial Bank, Poverty Alleviation and Sustainable Development Demonstration Project Office in Neixiang County, Henan Province (hereinafter referred to as the "Project Office"), the County Women's Federation, and the County Youth League Committee, aiming to support women and youth in entrepreneurship in Neixiang County, empower women in the region, promote income generation of women and young people who have the ability and willingness to work, improve their livelihood and quality of life, achieve prosperity and ultimately achieve sustainable development. "Entrepreneurship Loan" is a small loan business for applicants who have entrepreneurial drives and capabilities and meet the loan conditions. Applications are subject to review and the recommendation of Neixiang County Women's Federation and the Youth League Committee. Applying for loans through this product can enjoy discounted interest according to the project office policy. With the support of Youth League Committee and Women's Federation, a range of publicity activities about the Women's Development Fund were carried out. Among them, the online publicity campaign on sustainable development and Women's Development Fund supported by the Youth League Committee reached to approximately 70,000 people. There were also online and offline advocacy campaigns on gender equality and Women's Development Fund with the support of Women's Federation, reaching out to more than 700 people. At present, small and micro enterprises (such as stores selling tobacco, alcohol and non-staple food, beauty salons, forestry and fruit industries) represent a demand of 13 million yuan. However, due to the strict review of rural commercial banks, unmaturing rural credit system, most of rural residents applied for loans not for entrepreneurship but to cope with the impact of pandemic, therefore the actual loan ending amount remains small. The Women's Development Fund has supported the entrepreneurial projects of 16 women and young entrepreneurs from different villages and towns. The total loan amount has reached 2.21 million, covering industries such as logistics, planting, non-staple food wholesale and auto repair.

The following problems were identified from operating the Women's Development Fund: (1) Information asymmetry, unable to successfully match the loan needs of rural residents, and those with loan needs did not meet the loan requirements, such as history of litigation cases, guarantees and online loans; (2) Constrained by traditional concepts, there are many trustworthy customers, but few customers would like to borrow loans, resulting in a low demand for loans. Affected by the government's policy of collecting non-performing loans, it has increased the perceived pressure of the general public on loans, and rural residents are worried about paying back their loans. (3) Some people have weak awareness for credit, pay poor attention to their own credit in daily life, and don't want to find a guarantor; (4) Rural commercial banks set high bars for loan lending, and the borrowers recommended by the Women's Federation and the Youth League Committee in the county failed to pass the loan review requirements.

Finding 16: The project highly considered the participation of vulnerable groups and focused on protecting their rights and interests through various kinds of activities and initiatives.

The project's efforts to support vulnerable groups were far-reaching and impactful. In Pengying Village, Chenjiaying Village, and Wangjing Village, where women's organizations were composed of left-behind women and poverty-stricken households, The project actively carried out a number of themed activities for left-behind groups. . The project provided trainings on service and support

skills for left-behind groups, helping women organizations to understand the characteristics and needs of left-behind groups and completed activities and services for them.

In addition to this, the project also focused on the issue of insufficient supervision for left-behind children in Neixiang County, where drowning accidents were a frequent occurrence. Inspired by the Women's Water Conservation Team in Sichuan province during the study trips on community governance, women in Pengying Village and Chenjiaying Village organized themselves to carry out publicity and education activities on drowning prevention for left-behind children in the villages; Ying Village and Chenjiaying Village carried out activities such as life care and wellbeing sessions for left-behind elderly in the village.

With the joint support of the Bureau of Education and Sports and the UNDP "Movers Project", the project office carried out SDGs science campaigns for more than 400 county and village teachers from 16 towns through online and offline format. Movers conducted SDGs science activities for primary and secondary school students, which improved young people's awareness on the SDGs.

Furthermore, the project also focuses on the participation of vulnerable groups such as small farmers in skills training and industrial development, which was another significant achievement. By doing so, the project helped to safeguard the rights and interests of vulnerable groups and empower them to become agents of change in their communities.

Overall, the project's efforts to support vulnerable groups had a far-reaching impact, not only in improving the lives of left-behind women and children but also in increasing awareness of the SDGs and promoting sustainable development in the region.

V. Conclusion

5.1 Overall Conclusion

Overall, the project aligns with the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals and China's national priorities, effectively addressing the key issues of sustainable development in Neixiang County. However, the sudden outbreak of COVID-19 in early 2020 disrupted project implementation, compounded by subsequent changes in government leadership and inadequate coordination with authorities, resulting in slow progress. Nonetheless, the project offers valuable insights into project management and county-level sustainable development models, representing a significant exploration, summary, and demonstration of UNDP's sustainable development collaboration projects in China, with substantial implications for Neixiang County's sustainable development.

Regarding project objectives, most expected goals have been achieved, and the remaining objectives are anticipated to be completed within the remaining project period. A handful of unattainable goals are mainly attributed to factors such as the COVID-19 pandemic and departmental coordination challenges. Notably, the project has executed 21 activities across seven major sectors over four years, directly impacting over 80,000 individuals and connecting government officials, local leading enterprises, township leaders, and residents with international resources, promoting a comprehensive understanding of sustainable development concepts. Additionally, the project's publicity has yielded positive results, with over 40 news reports published, covering diverse topics such as rural revitalization, community development and governance, quality education, sustainable development, and women's empowerment.

5.2 Conclusion on Relevance

The project's design and activities demonstrate a strong alignment with the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals, consistent with both UNDP's initiatives and China's national priorities, as well as those of the Neixiang County Government. However, it is crucial to explore the potential of unfinished activities to identify possibilities for their implementation, providing valuable insights and inspiration for advancing the county's sustainable development.

5.3 Conclusion on Effectiveness

Based on the completion of the four designed outcomes, the project has significantly strengthened the capacity of government officials in Neixiang County to implement sustainable development goals, particularly in terms of mainstreaming SDGs into socio-economic development policies and planning (Outcome 1). Outcome 2 “strengthen community governance capacity in Neixiang County by demonstrating inclusive communities” is progressing orderly through a series of activities. The target of educational equalization has been successfully achieved, while activities related to women's empowerment are being adjusted and improved to better align with local realities. Most of the targets under Outcome 3, which focuses on promoting industrial development and rural revitalization through sustainable and environmentally friendly approaches, can be realized, although the effects of related activities may take longer to manifest. The project has also achieved some outcomes in terms of dissemination and sharing, but there remains significant room for improvement in this area.

5.4 Conclusion on Efficiency

Regarding overall project progress, the project has experienced significant delays, primarily attributable to the COVID-19 pandemic and poor coordination and cooperation among various government departments. Financially, there exists a discrepancy between the actual funding received and the original plan, necessitating improvements in fund utilization rates. Moreover, insufficient staffing of the project office has constrained project implementation and progress. Thus, there is a pressing need to enhance the organization and coordination of project activities.

Despite the challenges posed by the COVID-19 pandemic, the project has responded effectively by adjusting the content and organization of activities in a timely manner, thereby mitigating the impact of the pandemic on project implementation to a certain extent.

5.5 Conclusion on Sustainability

To ensure the sustainable development of the project, efforts are being made to enhance community governance and promote the sustainable development capabilities of Neixiang County's community. However, the weak foundation of the cultural tourism industry in the county has hindered the development of supporting facilities for township cultural tourism, posing challenges for the future development of this sector. Moreover, due to limitations in project funds, personnel, content, and the county's economy, there is a need to improve the overall sustainability of the project.

Overall, the project serves as an important reference for other localities seeking to coordinate and promote sustainable development at the county-level in a comprehensive manner.

5.6 Conclusion on Gender and Cross-Cutting Issues

The project has demonstrated the commitment to advancing gender equality in Neixiang County, with a particular emphasis on empowering women through the establishment of women's organizations and the Women's Development Fund. These initiatives have played a critical role in promoting women's participation in decision-making processes and enhancing their economic opportunities, thereby contributing to the broader goal of achieving gender equality and reducing gender-based inequalities.

In addition to promoting gender equality, the project has also prioritized the participation of vulnerable groups, including those who are marginalized or facing social, economic, or cultural barriers. Through targeted interventions, the project has sought to ensure that the rights and interests of these groups are protected and that they are able to actively participate in project activities and decision-making processes.

Overall, the project's efforts towards promoting gender equality and supporting vulnerable groups serve as a model for other sustainable development initiatives seeking to address issues of inequality and exclusion. By prioritizing the needs and perspectives of these groups, the project has demonstrated its commitment to promoting a more inclusive and equitable vision of sustainable development.

VI. Recommendations

6.1 Project overall management

Recommendation 1. In terms of the budget funds provided by the local government, it is recommended to sign a special funding agreement with the local government specifically for budget funds. This agreement should include detailed provisions on the allocation, use, and breach of funds, to better promote the implementation of projects by the local government in accordance with the project proposal.

Recommendation 2. To ascertain effective coordination of the project, it is strongly recommended to fully consider the project office and its members. It's advised to establish project office within a strong local department, with sufficient staffing for the office and support to ensure smooth operation of the project. The project staff should prioritize project work, and the project's performance should be included in the department's appraisal system.. In addition, it is also necessary to build consensus at the maximum, promote friendly exchanges and foster positive relationships with all relevant departments. It's also recommended to carry out activities in various forms such as training, visits, and exchanges, to establish a cross-departmental collaborative working mechanism, and to create a sound supporting system to improve overall coordination among various departments involved in the project.

Recommendation 3. Furthermore, external resources such as experts, NGOs, and enterprises should be fully utilized to promote local sustainable capacity building. Drawing on cooperation models such as Haihui in Sichuan, external resources should be fully utilized to assist in the design, implementation, and summary of project content. In the implementation of the project, various channels should be fully utilized. For example, in the rural finance section, the good loan customer situation can be publicized through the village committee to stimulate consumption loans in rural areas. At the same time, the depth and strength of the cooperation with Haihui should be deepened, and specific measures should be taken to address existing challenges, such as increasing the frequency of training, enhancing the public's understanding of the theme, and improving the depth of cognition. The frequency and number of trainings should be arranged reasonably according to the needs and time schedule of all parties; the training methods should be improved to attract more personnel to participate; and visits to excellent cooperative societies and collective economic development cases inside and outside the province should be organized to enable cooperative society members to see the actual results and enhance their sense of identity and execution. Efforts should be made to promote the output of research planning and capacity education for sustainable development, to strengthen the effective connections between county-level support for consolidating poverty alleviation and rural revitalization, and to empower the dynamic development of townships.

6.2 Project day-to-day management

Recommendation 4. In terms of the project publicity, it is necessary to further create highlights and utilize the "United Nations" branding. It is also necessary to further increase publicity and relevant budget for publicity. This can be achieved by creating highlights and models for content such as education parity, women's empowerment, and global tourism to achieve demonstration effect, communicating with relevant stakeholders without violating the principle of UNDP,

endorsing projects and activities, and making good use of the "United Nations" branding to reflect the "international" advantages of the project. It's important to pay full attention to social awareness and adopt various ways to promote the project.

Recommendation 5. In the field of education parity, although Neixiang County has made many achievements in the field of education, there is still room for improvement in sustainable development. The development of project-related activities, on one hand, has improved teachers' understanding on the concept of sustainable development, which is conducive to promoting the integration of county-level education concepts with international standards and broadening teachers' horizons; on the other hand, by enhancing students' international perspectives and their understanding and awareness of sustainable development goals, it is beneficial to promote the mainstreaming of sustainable development goals locally. Meanwhile, education and training and the establishment of research bases are conducive to narrowing the gap between urban and rural areas and achieving the goal of education parity. Efforts should be made to further localize and standardize excellent projects and root the concept of sustainable development and excellent activity plans in Neixiang County through the project, to leverage greater development with less resources.

Recommendation 6. Regarding gender equality and women's empowerment, it is recommended to further empower women and summarize experiences. On the one hand, it is important to enhance women's own abilities and promote their self-development through industry development and other means. Targeted training and education should be provided to meet their specific needs. It is also recommended to invite experts in family education protection, psychological counseling, and legal social work to enrich their knowledge and support women in safeguarding their legitimate rights and interests, promoting gender equality in various fields. In addition, experiences of women's self-organized groups should be summarized and refined into models for later promotion and dissemination in the local community.

Recommendation 7. As of community governance, it is recommended to further enhance the results of community governance activities. The community governance section of the project can further clarify the objects and plans of the research process and pay more attention to the social situation and needs of Neixiang County. In addition, active guidance should be provided to help the training participants fully understand the concepts and improve the effectiveness of the training.

Recommendation 8. With regards to social governance, it is recommended to further empower and strengthen the local social management system in the later stage. In terms of serving left-behind children, due to the absence of parents, family changes, adolescence, family poverty, and other issues, left-behind children may suffer from psychological problems. Therefore, the project proposes to establish three teams: an expert team, a mentor team, and an implementation team, forming a tripartite alliance and a three-level linkage to serve left-behind children. The mentor team consists of school psychological education teachers and counselors, the implementation team consists of class teachers and guardians, and the expert team consists of the psychological health education department of Neixiang County Education and Sports Bureau, the Health Commission, and the hospital psychological activity department. In addition, the project found in the early-stage research and execution process that there is a lack of social service organizations in the local community and low awareness of development and service projects. It is recommended to further

discuss with the local government civil affairs department to include social work, social organization cultivation and development into the social governance work plan.

Recommendation 9. In terms of project progress, it is recommended to actively respond to emergencies and promote the project as quickly as possible in the later stage. Due to the unpredictable situation of the COVID-19 pandemic in China during the project execution period from 2020 to 2022, some activities, such as "Going Out" exchange visits, were affected. It is suggested that prompt communication with relevant stakeholders be initiated to facilitate the timely development of a comprehensive plan for the project's conclusion.

VIII. LESSONS LEARNED: HIGHLIGHTS AND CHALLENGES

7.1 Project Highlights

The project has achieved many highlights in four aspects, as shown in the table below:

Table 17 Summary of Project Highlights

Highlights	Details
Highlight 1: A series of activities for capacity building of government officials	The successful implementation of high-quality sustainable development practices is contingent on the support and engagement of local government officials and business representatives. In this regard, the UNDP Neixiang project has integrated relevant platforms and resources from the UN and the Ministry of Commerce to provide a platform for local government officials (at the county, township, and village levels) and entrepreneur representatives. The project has offered capacity-building training and support to promote the high-quality development of local economies and industries.
Highlight 2: Create a series of education-focused activities	The UN platform has been utilized to integrate resources from preliminary research to education parity plans. Capacity-building trainings were provided to education supervisors and teachers, with a focus on the implementation of sustainable development goals. Technical planning and capacity-building activities were conducted to enhance the coordination and implementation capacity of local government officials, supporting Neixiang County in fostering education quality, bridging the gap among counties, and improving the overall abilities of educators and students.
Highlight 3: Gender equality and women's empowerment Activities	The project has also prioritized gender equality, integrating it into various activities, including nurturing women's organizations in demonstration areas and providing a range of capacity-building training and venture capital support for women. Activities have incorporated a gender perspective into social media to enhance the awareness of relevant government officials and the community, improving their leadership skills and access to resources and platform support. Additionally, the project has provided services and training for domestic violence cases, advocated gender equality and women's empowerment through online and offline models, and promoted the establishment of women's development funds to further encourage women entrepreneurship.
Highlight 4: Activities related to social governance	Through a series of capacity-building trainings, service support activities, exchange and learning trips, and more, the project has achieved positive outcomes in improving collective economies and farmers' cooperatives, cultivating women's organizations, community comprehensive service management, and serving left-behind groups. The project has also explored and practiced sustainable development goals such as poverty eradication, good health and well-being, gender equality, clean drinking water and sanitation, decent work and economic growth, reducing inequality, and sustainable cities and communities.

7.2 Challenges and Risks

The project faces six primary challenges and risks, as shown in the table below:

Table 18 Summary of Project Challenges

Category	Challenges
Changes in priorities of local government	From 2019 to 2021, government work was diverse and complex, including poverty alleviation and pandemic prevention and control;
Changes in leadership team personnel	The leadership team formed in 2019 has undergone significant challenges during this period, with varying levels of project awareness among heads of each department
Difficulties in coordinating execution departments	The executing unit faced high coordination difficulties, with a certain lack of execution ability. Furthermore, the coordination personnel of the executing unit were not fixed, leading to delays in familiarizing oneself with the work after changes.
COVID-19	The pandemic impacted the project greatly, affecting the development and implementation of the project;
Project funding	Late availability of project funds affected the project timeline to a certain extent
Personnel	Insufficient manpower in the project office and personnel changes constrained the project and affected its progress;
Others	Since many projects are located in Zhaqu Township which is relatively poor, activities were constrained with limited outreach. The publicity of the project and its connection with its superior department is also not strong, which further impacted its effectiveness.

7.3 Lessons Learned

7.3.1 The Impact of Local Leadership Changes on Project Implementation Should be Fully Considered in Project Design

In China, local leaders hold significant decision-making authority, making their attitude and support towards a project of utmost significance. In the course of the project implementation process, the transition period for the new leader in the Neixiang County, following the change in government positions, led to a prolonged phase of adjustment. Furthermore, from 2019 to 2021, government work was diverse and complex, including poverty alleviation and pandemic prevention and control. These factors affected the project implementation to a certain extent.

7.3.2 Project Should Actively Respond to Emergencies Such as COVID-19

The sudden and widespread outbreak of COVID-19 has had an important impact on society, economy, and people's livelihoods. The pandemic's influence, coupled with the local economic downturn, has created an unfavorable economic environment that has, to a certain extent, had some impact on the progress of the project implementation. The pandemic impacted the project greatly, affecting the development and implementation of the project;

7.3.3 Project Should Pay Attention to Marketing and Publicity

The project has achieved commendable results in creating and publicizing the notable accomplishments of Women's Water Protection Team and in contributing to the publicity and education of Sustainable Development Goals. To further capitalize on these achievements the project may continue to focus on initiatives such as quality education, women's empowerment, and community governance demonstration campaign, expanding and diversifying publicity channels, so as to effectively demonstrate the comparative advantages on an international level.

Annex I. Evaluation Term of Reference (TOR)

As separately attached and uploaded in ERC.

Annex II. Evaluation Matrix

Evaluation Criteria	Key Questions	Data Collection Methods/Tools	Methods for data analysis
Relevance	<p>To what extent is the initiative in line with the UNDP mandate, national priorities and the requirements of targeted women and men?</p> <p>To what extent is UNDP support relevant to the achievement of the SDG in Neixiang County?</p> <p>To what extent did UNDP adopt gender-sensitive, human rights-based and conflict-sensitive approaches?</p> <p>To what extent is UNDP engagement a reflection of strategic considerations, including the role of UNDP in a particular development context and its comparative advantage?</p> <p>To what extent was the theory of change presented in the outcome model a relevant and appropriate vision on which to base the initiatives?</p>	<p>Comprehensive review of project related documents:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Project documents • Funding agreement • Theory of Change and Results framework • Annual work plan (AWP) • Project Progress Report (PPR) • Activity documents • Financial statements 	<p>The evaluation team collected qualitative data through in-depth interviews including KIIs and FGDs. This provided insights into all stakeholders and beneficiaries' experiences, perceptions of the project, and suggestions for improvement. This also allowed the team to gain a nuanced understanding of how and why the program impacted participants.</p>
Effectiveness	<p>To what extent has progress been made towards outcome achievement? What has been the UNDP contribution to the observed change?</p> <p>Have there been any unexpected outcome-level results achieved beyond the planned outcome?</p> <p>To what extent has UNDP improved the capacities of county implementing partners to advocate on sustainability issues, including gender equality, climate change, etc.?</p> <p>To what extent has UNDP partnered with civil society and local communities to promote poverty alleviation and sustainable development in Neixiang?</p> <p>To what extent have marginalized groups benefited?</p> <p>Which programme areas are the most relevant and strategic for UNDP to scale up or consider going forward?</p>	<p>Semi-structured & online interviews with key personnel from the project management office, partner organizations, and donors who were responsible for project implementation.</p>	<p>Quantitative data was gathered through examining all the data gained throughout the project life thus far, including the financial report, the project report, statistical report as developed by the PMO, etc. This quantitative data complemented the interviews by demonstrating measurable changes in specific areas.</p>
Efficiency	<p>To what extent have the project outputs resulted from economic use of resources?</p>		

	To what extent were quality outputs delivered on time?		Together, the qualitative and quantitative data provided a comprehensive picture of the project's results. The qualitative data added depth, understanding, and participant perspectives. The quantitative data provided evidence of measurable impacts in key areas. This mixed methods approach leveraged multiple techniques to conduct a thorough evaluation. By integrating qualitative and quantitative data, the evaluation delivered robust findings to objectively assess program outcomes.
	To what extent were partnership modalities conducive to the delivery of outputs?		
	To what extent did monitoring systems provide management with a stream of data that allowed it to learn and adjust implementation accordingly?		
	To what extent did UNDP promote gender equality, the empowerment of women, human rights and human development in the delivery of outputs?		
Sustainability	To what extent did UNDP establish mechanisms to ensure the sustainability of the outcomes?		
	To what extent do national partners have the institutional capacities, including sustainability strategies, in place to sustain the outcome-level results?		
	To what extent are policy and regulatory frameworks in place that will support the continuation of benefits?		
	To what extent do mechanisms, procedures and policies exist to carry forward the results attained on gender equality, empowerment of women, human rights and human development by primary stakeholders?		
Gender Equality and Cross-cutting issues	To what extent have poor and physically challenged, women and other disadvantaged and marginalized groups benefited from the work of UNDP in Neixiang County?		
	To what extent have gender equality and the empowerment of women been addressed in the design, implementation and monitoring of Neixiang project?		
	Is the gender marker data assigned to Neixiang project representative of reality?		
	To what extent has Neixiang project promoted positive changes in gender equality and the empowerment of women? Were there any unintended effects?		

Annex III. Document Review Checklist

Programme documents:

- UNDP Strategic Plan 2018-2021
- UNDP Strategic Plan 2021-2025
- UNDP China CPD 2016-2020
- UNDP China CPD 2021-2025

Project documents:

- Project documents
- Funding agreement
- Theory of Change and Results framework
- Annual work plan (AWP)
- Project Progress Report (PPR)
- Activity documents
- Financial statements

Annex IV: Schedule of KIIs and FGDs

#	Date	Period	Conference content	Participating units	Venue	Interviewees
1	November 1 2022	9: 00- 11: 00	Mid-term evaluation communication meeting to understand the overall situation of the project and related background	Project Office	on-line	Yan Yangdi, Liu Xiong Chuwen
2	November 2 2022	9: 00- 11: 00	Mid-term evaluation communication meeting to understand the overall situation of the project and related background	CICETE	on-line	Liu Ying
3	November 4 2022	15:00-17:00	Mid-term evaluation kick-off meeting to understand the project and the participation of various stakeholders in the project, as well as expectations for the mid-term evaluation	UNDP, CICETE, Neixiang County People's Government, Rural Commercial Bank, Muyuan	on-line	Wang Shen, Yan Yangdi, Liu Xiong Chuwen, Liu Ying, Wei Tong, He Min, et al.
4	November 22 2022	15:00-16:00	Understand the development of activities related to equalized education	Education and Sports Bureau	on-line	Guo Jianbo
5	November 25 2022	15:00-16:00	Learn about the project participation of Zhaqu Town and the development of cultural tourism industry	Chaqu Town	on-line	Fu Jianjun
6	March 20 2023	9:00-11:00	Understand the overall situation of the project and related statistics	Bureau of Statistics	government building	He Min
7		11:00-12:00	Learn about the Women's Development Fund	County Women's Federation		Di Lingjie

			(Entrepreneurship Loan) and women's empowerment			
8		14:20-15:00	Learn about the cultural tourism industry, community governance, and women's empowerment	Chaqu Town		Fu Jianjun
9		15:00-15:30	Understand the development status of cultural tourism industry	Cultural Tourism		Zhang Haifeng
10		15:30-16:00	Learn about the Women's Development Fund (Entrepreneurship Loan)	County Youth League Committee		Hou Zhe
11		16:00-19:00	Fully understand the background, significance, progress and impact of the project as a whole	Leaders in charge, project offices, agricultural and rural bureaus , etc.		Wei Tong, Zhou Shaobin, Zhang Caili, Zhang Yang and representatives from Muyuan Finance Department and "Photovoltaic Power Plant"
12	March 21 2023	9:00-9:40	Learn about the Women's Development Fund (Entrepreneurship Loan)	Rural Commercial Bank	government building	Liu Ke
13		10:00-11:20	Learn about community governance activities	Haihui	on-line	Zhang Yong, Huang Cong, Fan Xueting
14		14:00-15:30	Learn about equalized education	Bureau of Education and Sports, Neixiang County Sixth Primary School	Neixiang County No.6 Primary School	Guo Jianbo, Principal of No.6 Primary School Guo Xuezhi, teacher representative of No.6 Primary School Pei Yu, etc.
15		16:00-17:30	Learn about the construction of research base	Nanyang Demonstration Comprehensive Experimental Base	Comprehensive Experimental Base	Base management personnel, representatives of principals participating in the activities

16	March 22 2023	9:00-12:00	Understand the development status of cultural tourism industry and women's support group	Wangjing Village, Zhaqu Town	Wangjing Village	Ren Zhengtai, Wang Baona, Fan Qiuzi and other members of the support group
17		14:00-17:00	Learn about the women's water protection team	Visiting Pengying Village, Women's Water Protection Team	Pengying Village	Peng Hongfan, Sun Xiaoying and other members of the water protection team
18	March 23 2023	9:30-10:00	Learn about the construction of research base	Visit the Israel Agricultural Park of Muyuan	Israel Agricultural Park	Head of Israel Agricultural Park
19		10:00-11:30	Further supplement and sort out the materials needed for the mid-term evaluation	Communicate with the coordinator of project office and sort out project-related materials	project office	Yan Yangdi, Liu Xiong Chuwen

Annex V. Interview Outline

Interview questions with the Education Bureau

- 1) Please briefly introduce the basic situation of education in Neixiang County, including (1) the popularization of preschool education and high school education in Neixiang County; (2) the investment in education and the balanced development of compulsory education in Neixiang County; (3) the development of vocational education and education for special groups (disabled, left-behind children, etc.); (4) the conditions of school operation and the integration of education and information technology. If there are any major changes or outstanding highlights in the above areas in recent years, please explain in details.
- 2) Please briefly introduce the content on education in the 14th Five-Year Plan of Neixiang County, and the main content formulated by the Education Bureau for the 14th Five-Year Plan. In particular, please describe how the planning reflects the SDGs (including gender equality).
- 3) What expectations does the Education Bureau have for poverty reduction and sustainable development projects in Neixiang County? How is it involved in the project? What are the main activities? What are the outcomes of such activities? What are the shortcomings? Any suggestions for improvement?
- 4) From the perspective of Education Bureau, what educational indicators do you think should be focused on for this mid-term evaluation?
- 5) This mid-term evaluation plans to use an online survey on awareness and feedback from project participants and beneficiary groups. From the perspective of Education Bureau, what do you think should be the focus of attention?
- 6) If the second phase of Poverty Alleviation and Sustainable Development Project in Neixiang County is to be carried out, what suggestions does the Education Bureau have?

Interview questions with the Project Management Office and County Finance Office

- 1) The background, origin and purpose of Poverty Alleviation and Sustainable Development Demonstration Project in Neixiang County.
- 2) The personnel and funding of the project office, especially the staff changes.
- 3) How was the project management organizational structure designed? Can it meet the needs of the project? Is there any room for improvement?
- 4) What is the overall progress of the current project? Has it met the designed outcomes? If not, what are the reasons?
- 5) The project text was designed with 4 outcomes and 12 outputs. Have the main activities met the designed outcomes and outputs so far? Where are the main gaps? Please explain in details.
- 6) Please provide detailed project financial budget, implementation and summary materials for 2019-22, and describe the use of project funds, existing problems and solutions.
- 7) Which departments are involved in the project? How does the project office coordinate various departments? Do they meet very year? What needs to be improved in coordination?
- 8) What stakeholders are involved in the project? How did the project integrate stakeholders into the project design?
- 9) What are the highlights or good practices of the project? If possible, please prepare graphic materials.

- 10) In general, what are the main challenges in the design, implementation and other areas of the project? How did the project office respond?
- 11) In the context of project delay, what are the main activities in 2023 ? How do the activities contribute to achieving the project goals?
- 12) What are the experiences and lessons learned from the project that should be taken by subsequent or other similar projects?
- 13) What does the project office envision after the project ends? Is it necessary to carry out the second phase of the Poverty Alleviation and Sustainable Development Demonstration Project in Neixiang County?
- 14) Suggestions for mid-term evaluation (including content, standards, methods, etc.).

Interview questions with the Bureau of Statistics

- 1) The progress on poverty reduction and sustainable development indicators in Neixiang County for 2019-2022. Please provide a statistical summary of the County for 2018-2022.
- 2) What is the role of the Bureau of Statistics in the project? Who were involved in the project? Please indicate the ages and job titles of participants.
- 3) How did the Bureau of Statistics get involved in the project? What were the main activities? What outcomes did such activities achieve?
- 4) Has the Bureau of Statistics conducted relevant monitoring specifically for the project? If yes, what indicators were used?
- 5) From the perspective of Bureau of Statistics, what visions, expectations or requirements does the Bureau of Statistics have for the project? Do you think the project has met the visions, expectations or requirements of the Bureau of Statistics?
- 6) From the perspective of the Bureau of Statistics, what shortcomings does the project have? Any suggestions for improvement?
- 7) Is it necessary to carry out the second phase of the Poverty Alleviation and Sustainable Development Demonstration Project in Neixiang County and why? If necessary, what are the recommendations and expectations for the Bureau of Statistics?
- 8) Suggestions for mid-term evaluation (including content, standards, methods, etc.).

Interview questions with the School Principal

- 1) Please briefly introduce the basic situation of the school.
- 2) How did the school get involved in the project? What were the main activities? Who were involved in the activity? Where did the funding come from? What are the outcomes achieved by such activities?
- 3) From the school's perspective, do you think the project has met the school's vision, expectations or requirements for participating in the project?
- 4) From the school's perspective, what shortcomings does the project have? Any suggestions for improvement?
- 5) Is it necessary to carry out similar projects and why? If necessary, what recommendations and expectations does the school have?
- 6) Suggestions for mid-term evaluation (including content, standards, methods, etc.).

Interview questions with County Rural Commercial Bank

- 1) The basic situation of County Rural Commercial Bank.
- 2) What is the initial reason for the County Rural Commercial Bank to participate in the establishment of the Women's Development Fund? What were the driving factors? Was it necessary to set up a separate women's development fund?
- 3) How is the Women's Development Fund operating at present? What outcomes have been achieved? Please provide financial data related to the Women's Development Fund.
- 4) The costs and benefits of the County Rural Commercial Bank on the Women's Development Fund.
- 5) What are the obstacles and challenges facing the operation of Women's Development Fund? How did the County Rural Commercial Bank respond?
- 6) What considerations or plans does the County Rural Commercial Bank have for the subsequent operation of the Women's Development Fund?
- 7) In addition to the loan from the Women's Development Fund, what other project activities did the County Rural Commercial Bank participate in? What results have been achieved?
- 8) If the second phase of Poverty Alleviation and Sustainable Development Demonstration Project in Neixiang County is to be carried out, what suggestions does the County Rural Commercial Bank have?
- 9) Suggestions for mid-term evaluation (including content, standards, methods, etc.).

Interview questions with Haihui

- 1) Basic information of Haihui. Please describe the characteristics and advantages of Haihui.
- 2) How did Haihui get involved in the Neixiang project? Why Haihui participated in this project, and with what business goals?
- 3) How did Haihui organize and carry out the training in Neixiang County? How did you cooperate with the Project Office? Where did the training funding come from? How much does it cost? Is it profitable?
- 4) What is the training target, content, time, location, format and teachers, etc.? Please provide data and information in this regard.
- 5) How effective is the training? Have the training outcomes been monitored or surveyed? What are some good experiences in achieving these effects?
- 6) What could be improved about the training?
- 7) In addition to training, what other projects and activities does Haihui participate in? What effects did the activities achieve?
- 8) If there will be training in Neixiang County at a later stage, what are the plans of Haihui?
- 9) Suggestions for mid-term evaluation (including content, standards, methods, etc.).

Interview questions with county-level departments: Women's Federation, Youth League Committee, Agriculture and Rural Bureau, Culture, Radio, Film and Television Administration, Rural Revitalization Bureau, Science and Industry Bureau, Park Management Office

- 1) What is the role of the department in this project? Who were involved in the project? Please indicate the ages and job titles of participants.
- 2) How did the department participate in the project? What were the main activities? What effects did the activities achieve?

- 3) From the perspective of the department, what visions, expectations or requirements does the department have for the project? Do you think the project has met the visions, expectations or requirements of the department?
- 4) From the perspective of the department, what are the shortcomings of the project? Any suggestions for improvement?
- 5) Is it necessary to carry out the second phase of the Poverty Alleviation and Sustainable Development Demonstration Project in Neixiang County? Why? If necessary, what recommendations and expectations does the department have?
- 6) Suggestions for mid-term evaluation (including content, standards, methods, etc.).

Interview questions in Zhaqu Town

- 1) How was the project placed in Zhaqu Town in the first place? What are the characteristics of Zhaqu Town? How do the leaders of Zhaqu Town understand the goal and content of the project? How does Zhaqu Town coordinate with the Project Office and relevant departments? Were there any communication problems? Did all parties focus on the same matters?
- 2) Please introduce the basic situation of Zhaqu Town in women's organization, regional tourism and community governance, focusing on the origin of activities, achievements, shortcomings and suggestions for improvement.
- 3) How are project activities funded? Who are the people involved in the activities in Zhaqu Town?
- 4) What are some good practices of women's organization, regional tourism and community governance in Zhaqu Town? Please provide materials, pictures and texts.
- 5) After the combination of projects, can the activities such as women's organizations, regional tourism, and community governance continue to be carried out? Is there still a need to continue with these activities?
- 6) What experiences or lessons in Zhaqu Town can be extended to other places in women's organizations, regional tourism and community governance?
- 7) Is it necessary to carry out the second phase of Poverty Alleviation and Sustainable Development Demonstration Project in Neixiang County and why? If necessary, what suggestions and expectations does Zhaqu Town have?
- 8) Suggestions for mid-term evaluation (including content, standards, methods, etc.).

Interview questions in villages where women's organizations are located

- 1) Please briefly introduce the basic situation of the village.
- 2) Did the two village committees participate in the establishment of Women's Support Group or the Women's Water Protection Team? What is the original intention of setting up Women's Support Group or Water Protection Team in the village? How did you come up with the idea of starting a Women's Support Group or Water Protection Team? Please tell us more about the process.
- 3) What activities do Women's Support Group or Water Protection Team carry out? Who are involved and what are the outcomes?
- 4) What kind of support did the two village committees provide for Women's Support Group or Water Protection Team?

- 5) What suggestions do you have Women's Support Group or Water Protection Team to carry out activities?

Interview questions with leaders of women's organizations (Women's Support Group, Women's Water Protection Team, etc.)

- 1) Please briefly introduce the original intention of setting up the Women's Support Group or Women's Water Protection Team at that time? How did you come up with the idea of establishing a w Women's Support Group or Water Protection Team? How did the counties, townships and villages get involved?
- 2) The basic situation of the Women's Support Group or Women's Water Protection Team including: (1) the number of participants and organizational structure; (2) How are the leaders of Women's Support Group or Women's Water Protection Team selected? (3) How do you usually carry out activities? (4) What effects have the activities achieved? (5) How was the funding issue solved?
- 3) What difficulties did the Women's Support Group or Women's Water Protection Team encounter during their operation? How was it resolved?
- 4) Please introduce, how did you personally understand and want to participate in Women's Support Group or Women's Water Protection Team? What have you learned from your time here?
- 5) What do you think about the role of Women's Support Group or Women's Water Protection Team will have on individual women, families and villages?
- 6) What are your plans for the future development of Women's Support Group or Women's Water Protection Team? What suggestions do you have for the government?

Interview questions in Stone Village and Pengjing Village (by comrades in the township and village)

- 1) The basic situation of the villages.
- 2) How is the village culture and tourism industry planned? Who did the planning? What is the general idea of planning? How did the village and villagers participate in the planning? Please provide texts of such planning.
- 3) What does the village's culture and tourism industry look like now? What are their features and highlights?
- 4) How does the village culture and tourism industry help develop villages and villagers?
- 5) What are the difficulties in developing the culture and tourism industry in the village? How did towns and villages respond?
- 6) Please provide some data, summary materials and other materials related to culture and tourism industry.

Interview questions with relevant county leaders

- 1) The change of county leadership of the project and its possible impact on project implementation; the possible impact of changes in the county's key leadership on the project.
- 2) What are the County's expectations and demands for the project? How to integrate them with that of UNDP and CICETE? What are the discrepancies between the County, UNDP and CICETE in the process of project design and implementation?

- 3) The overall progress and effectiveness evaluation of the project, and the highlights of the project.
- 4) The County's consideration and feedback on the arrangements for raising and using project funds.
- 5) Has the project been included in the assessment of county leaders in charge? How does the county assess the work of the Project Office? The evaluation of project organization and management approach, as well as work evaluation of Project Office and participating units.
- 6) At the county level, what are the main challenges in the design and implementation of the project? How did the County respond to these challenges?
- 7) Has the project met the vision of the County, UNDP and CICETE? Where are the main gaps?
- 8) What are the experiences and lessons learnt from the project that are transferrable to subsequent or other similar projects?
- 9) What visions does the County have after the project ends? Do you plan to launch the second phase of Poverty Alleviation and Sustainable Development Demonstration Project in Neixiang County? If so, what arrangements including content, organizational structure, personnel, funds will the County have?
- 10) Suggestions for mid-term evaluation (including content, standards, methods, etc.).

Annex VI. Result Framework

Output 1. Develop policy recommendations for integrating the SDGs into the 14th Five-Year Plan of Neixiang County.

Output 2. Prepare a roadmap for the social and economic development plans in Neixiang County based on the SDGs framework.

Output 3. Carry out capacity building activities to help Neixiang government officials improve their abilities to implement the SDGs framework.

Implementation of community development and community governance demonstration plans.

Output 5. Support the preparation and implementation of the educational equalization demonstration plans.

Output 6. Promote the establishment of the Women's Development Fund.

Output 7. Support the preparation and implementation of the "Rural Complex" demonstration plan for the Zhaqu Taishan Temple.

Output 8. Support the preparation and implementation of Deng Kiln Cultural Heritage and Wujia Stone Village Cultural Tourism demonstration plans.

Output 9. Support the establishment of the professional cooperative organizations and the convening of vocational skill training sessions to improve the professional skills and increase the income of local residents, especially women and the youth.

Output 10. Develop a case of sustainable development in Neixiang County.

Output 11. Effectively improve the publicity capacity of Neixiang County's sustainable development.

Output 12. Disseminate, share and promote the project outcomes.

Assumptions:

- Commitment and support from government policy makers;

- Availability of the information;
- Support from the enterprises.

Driving forces:

- Effective coordination with stakeholders;
- Linked to the government's political performance appraisal system.

Assumptions:

- Commitments from governments, communities, eco-parks, enterprises, professional associations and industry associations;

- Availability of the information;
- Participation of external experts.

Driving forces:

- Action-oriented and interdisciplinary research, engagement of multi-stakeholders and effective cross-sectoral coordination mechanisms;
- Practical solutions for the private sector;
- Professional knowledge;
- Targeted analysis of policy process;
- Identify leaders in the financial and planning sectors who advocate for reform and innovation.

Assumptions:

- Commitment and support from the government policy makers;

- Diversified related materials, including case studies;
- Support from government and stakeholders;

- Recognition of training and publicity materials by key stakeholders.

Driving forces:

- Effective capacity building approaches;
- Identify leaders in the financial and planning sectors who advocate for reform and innovation;
- Prioritize national, provincial and municipal policies and receive support from relevant policies.

Assumptions:

- Commitments of all relevant stakeholders, including competent authorities, participating agencies, trainers and entrepreneurs;

- Diversified related materials, including case studies;
- The support from the government and stakeholders;

- Recognition of training and publicity materials by key stakeholders.

Driving forces:

- Effective capacity building approach;
- Identify leaders in the financial and planning sectors who advocate for reform and innovation;
- Prioritize national, provincial and municipal policies and receive support from relevant policies.

Outcome 1: By mainstreaming the SDGs in line with the social and economic development policies and planning of the Neixiang County, it will enhance the sustainable development capacity of Neixiang County.

Outcome 2: By demonstrating inclusive communities, strengthen community governance capacity of Neixiang County.

Outcome 3: Through sustainable and environmentally friendly approaches, promote industrial development and rural revitalization in Neixiang County.

Outcome 4: Popularize SDGs, share and disseminate project achievements of Neixiang County.

Comprehensive results:

Introduce advanced development concepts, enhance the understanding and capacity of leading cadres and civil servants, encourage the private sector, social forces and other stakeholders to actively participate in local sustainable development, develop community governance, ecotourism and inclusive finance, and improve public services, especially focusing on the well-being of women, the youth and children.

Assumptions:

- Stakeholders agree on prioritizing the SDGs;

- Investment and payment transfer inclines to mainstreaming;

- Implement the incentive policies stably;

- Obtain technical support provided by well-known think tanks.

Driving forces:

- Government authorities are still actively involved in fundraising, planning and social development decisions;

- Government authorities accept evidence-based management policy recommendations such as fiscal, industrial/industry and labor policies that are conducive to economic structure green and inclusive fiscal and industrial policy, incorporating SDGs into Neixiang County development roadmap, the 14th Five-Year Plan blueprints, monitoring ecological civilization and realizing the rural revitalization strategies in line with SDGs.

Assumptions:

- Long-term political commitment to priority SDGs;

- Mainstream the principles of SDGs into financial and development planning;

- Multiple sectors and stakeholders (including the private sector) contribute to mainstreaming, and a comprehensive mainstreaming approach can be sustained;

- Financial sustainability-improve financial systems and self-financing mechanisms to promote the mainstreaming approach;

- Mainstream the investment or payments transfer.

- Implement the incentive policies stably;

- Obtain technical support provided by well-known think tanks.

Intermediate results:

- Strong fiscal system and policy reforms, as well as a political appraisal system;

- Introduce, test and expand the application of innovative policy tools, such as inclusive finance and green financing;

- Major shift from fiscal investment policies towards green, innovative and inclusive economies;

- Participation of a wide range of stakeholders.

Driving forces:

- Continuous cooperation between international organizations and the Neixiang Principle Government ;
- Participatory mechanism for multi-stakeholders;

- Knowledge and skills of policy implementation;
- Improvement of development and fundraising policies, stressing on fairness, equality and share the development results;

- Strengthened role of enterprises in achieving SDGs

Trough mainstreaming of the SDGs in the development strategy of the Neixiang County, it improves the local government's capacity of applying the SDGs Framework to guide resource planning, support the social and economic sustainable development and welfare security in Neixiang County, promote "rural revitalization", advance the realization of a moderately prosperous society, and share the sustainable development modalities and experience of Neixiang County at domestic and international levels.

Annex VII: Leading Team for the Poverty Alleviation and Sustainable Development Demonstration project in Neixiang County, Henan Province

List of the first project leadership team in 2019

Team Leader: Yang Shuguang County Mayor

Executive Deputy Team Leader:

- Li Xia Member of the Standing Committee of County Party Committee, Executive Deputy County Mayor of County Government
- Vice Team Leader: Cao Zhinian Executive Deputy General Manager of Muyuan Co., Ltd.

Members:

- Song Heli Deputy Director of Organization Department of County Party Committee
- Wang Jianping Director of the County Government Office
- Chang Songyu Director of County Finance Bureau
- Li Bingzhou Director of County Development and Reform Commission
- Ma Qingwei Party Secretary of the County Bureau of Science and Industry
- Meng Haibo Director of County Education and Sports Bureau
- Yang Yuqin Chairwoman of County Women's Federation
- Wang Xiujian Director of County Bureau of Statistics
- Yue Wenhong Director of County Bureau of Commerce
- Lu Shenhu Director of County Bureau of Human Resources and Social Security
- Xue Xinyan Director of County Forestry Bureau
- Xue Rongzhi Party Secretary of the County Agriculture and Rural Bureau
- Li Ming Director of County Water Conservancy Bureau
- Zhang Shujie Director of County Natural Resources Bureau
- Lu Zhiwu Director of County Environmental Protection Bureau
- Luo Xiong Director of County Poverty Alleviation Office
- He Min Deputy Director of the County Government Office, Director of the Finance Bureau
- Xu Xiangsheng Party Secretary of the County Bureau of Culture, Radio, Television and Tourism
- Ma Shuchao Mayor of Zhaxiu Town
- Xing Yonghai Mayor of Yuguan Town
- Fan Hongtao Mayor of Mashankou Town

There is an office established under the leading group, which is located in the County Finance Bureau, and Comrade He Min is the office director; the office is responsible for the routine work and coordination of the project.

List of the second project leadership team in 2023

In order to ensure the effective implementation of poverty alleviation and sustainable development in Neixiang County, Henan Province, a leadership team for Poverty Alleviation and Sustainable Development Demonstration Project in Neixiang County was specially established. The leading team set up an office which is located in the county's financial service center, Comrade Zhou Shaobin is the office director, and Comrade Zhang Caili is the deputy office director. The office is

responsible for the specific implementation and daily management of project activities. The list of members is as follows:

Team Leader: Sun Hongxin Deputy Secretary of the County Party Committee, County Mayor
Executive Deputy Team Leader:

- Cao Zhinian Vice Chairman and Executive Vice President of Muyuan Co., Ltd.
- Yang Mingxue Standing Committee Member of the County Party Committee, Executive Deputy County Mayor

Vice Team Leader: Wei Tong Deputy County Mayor

Members:

- Xue Xinyan Director of County Government Office
- Wang Cunfeng Director of County Finance Bureau
- Nie Xinwei Director of County Development and Reform Commission
- Meng Haibo Director of County Education and Sports Bureau
- He Min Director of County Bureau of Statistics
- Zhang Yu Director of County Agriculture and Rural Affairs Bureau
- He Jian Director of County Rural Revitalization Bureau
- Wan Shuping Executive Deputy Director of the County Development Zone Management Committee
- Zhao Guohao Director of County Culture, Radio and Tourism Bureau
- Li Mingxiao Chairwoman of the County Women's Federation
- Yue Chaowei Secretary of the Party Committee of Tuan County
- Xing Yonghai Secretary of the Party Committee of Zhaqu Town
- Zhou Shaobin Director of County Financial Services Center

Annex VIII. Typical Cases: Women's Water Protection Team and Women's Support Group

The Women's Water Protection Team established in Neixiang County is a highlight of grass-root development of local residents, and it is also a manifestation of local women's pursuit for development and progress. Zhaqu Town was faced with a serious loss of young and middle-aged labor force, prominent problems of women, children and the elderly left behind, and there were certain difficulties in social governance. This problem is particularly prominent in Pengying Village. From September 26 to September 29, 2021, Sichuan Haihui Poverty Alleviation Service Center combined with the UN SDGs framework on the themes of collective economy, farmer cooperation, women's self-organized cultivation, community development and governance, and community public services, and organized a "going out" exchange visit to Sichuan Province. This community governance and service exchange training trip to Chengdu City inspired the thinking of local government officials and women's organization representatives. With the support of the Project Office and relevant government departments, Pengying Village established the first Women's Water Protection Team in the township. Water protection teams were then successively established in Chenjiaying Village and Wangjing Village.

Pengying Village Women's Water Protection Team

Pengying Village belongs to Zhaqu Town and is adjacent to Xichuan County. It is a small mountain village in southwest Henan. There are more than 1,800 people in the village, of which 200-300 are permanent residents, mostly are elderly, women and children. In 2020, the village set up a women's water protection team, with villager Sun Xiaoying as the team lead, responsible for the environmental protection of Ziqi River, a tributary of the Danjiang River. There are 10-20 members in the water protection team. After the handmade sachet making activity which occurred some time ago, villagers from neighboring villages and Xichuan County also joined the water protection team. At the beginning of the water protection team, its main job was to protect water. After participating in a series of training organized by UNDP, the scope of work of the water protection team has gradually expanded from water protection to the improvement of human settlements, services for left-behind groups, nucleic acid testing services, summer safety reminders, etc., playing an important role in the comprehensive management of rural areas. Caring for left-behind groups mainly includes caring for left-behind children and left-behind elderly. Members of the water protection team would teach left-behind children how to take care of themselves, and help left-behind elderly wash hair, cut hair, and change sheets and clothes; summer safety reminders are mainly publicity and reminders to prevent children's drowning. Members of the water protection team would communicate with parents and teachers before the summer vacation, tell students the importance of preventing drowning, and try to avoid students playing in rivers. After the summer holiday, members of the water protection team will regularly patrol the river to avoid accidents of students; During the pandemic, members of the water protection team actively participated in the prevention and control of the pandemic and maintained the order of nucleic acid testing. In addition to charity activities, the water protection team also tried to start a business. There was an initiative with 5,000 yuan venture capital given by the project team to try to grow sweet potatoes and process sweet potato vermicelli, but because the harvest was not particularly good, the project was halted. This year, planting medicinal materials were also tried such as forsythia and dandelion, in combination with the characteristics of Neixiang County. Because they often participate in activities together and communicate more with each other, the members of the women's water protection team of Pengying Village have forged a profound friendship.



Wangjing Village Women's Mutual Support Group

Wangjing Village is an administrative village of Zhaqu Town, covering an area of 11.4 square kilometers. The village has a total of 640 households. In addition to the population of village enterprises, there are currently more than 500 permanent residents. They mainly live along the national highway. The per capita income exceeds 15,000 yuan. During the fight against poverty, the poverty alleviation unit was the Human Resources and Social Security Bureau of Neixiang County, and poor households could obtain an annual dividend of more than 6,200 yuan per year by becoming a shareholder of the cooperative. The main industry of Wangjing Village is agricultural planting, mainly agricultural produce and fruits (persimmon, apricot, pomegranate with soft seeds). The agricultural planting area of the whole village is 2400 mu, with an average 1.2-1.3 mu per person. In addition to agricultural production, some enterprises settled in Wangjing Village, which not only developed themselves, but also created jobs for the villagers. Wangjing Village has good conditions for industrial development. On one hand, it has a good foundation for industrial raw materials, and there are a large number of stones suitable for industrial materials; on the other hand, the business environment is good, and enterprises can obtain preferential land and materials here. The land is collected for collective use through mass circulation. The collective income of Wangjing Village is more than 1 million, mainly from government projects and participation in cooperatives for dividends. Haihui once trained the cooperatives in Wangjing Village, but the late incubation of cooperatives still needs capital injection and high-end technology support.

Hai Hui is responsible for community governance planning and training in Wangjing Village. The Women's Mutual Support Group was established in 2020, abandoning the original format of three women's organizations, with 10-20 stable members, dedicated to women's empowerment. There are three main aspects of the activities: first, to carry out cultural and entertainment activities, use project funding to purchase stereos, drums, clothing, etc., dance regularly to enrich women's lives, and also went to township to participate in art performances, and won the second prize of Zhaqu Township; the second is to care for the left-behind groups. Members will be organized to offer regular comfort to the lonely elderly and care for left-behind children, such as purchasing daily necessities, rice, flour, grain and oil for the elderly, teaching children to cook, wash clothes, and clean homes; the third is to improve living environment. On Monday, members would go to both sides of the national highway to pick up garbage and protect the environment. The 5,000 yuan fund previously distributed by Haihui was also used for the purchase of materials.

In the development process of Women's Support Group, there have been many attempts. First of all, learn handicraft technology to sew sweaters, but due to COVID-19 and the concerns about investment in machinery and equipment, it was failed to introduce machines to implement this plan. The second is to make sachets, but the current problem is that the quantity is small and whether the finished products can meet the market requirements. Later, the project office will contact teachers to design new styles.



Annex IX. Selected Photos from Interviews and Field Trips



The evaluation team had a discussion with Deputy County Major in charge



The evaluation team communicated with the students of No.6 Primary School



The evaluation team took a group photo with the leaders of County Education and Sports Bureau, the Principal and teacher representatives of the No.6 Primary School



The evaluation team observed the sustainable development course for teachers in Nanyang Demonstration Comprehensive Experimental Base



The evaluation team had a discussion with the cadres of Shitou village



The evaluation team visited the cultural tourism construction site in Stone Village



The evaluation team had a discussion with the members of Women's Water Protection Team in Pengying Village



Group photo of the evaluation team and the members of Women's Water Protection Team in Pengying Village



The evaluation team visited the research base "Israel Agricultural Park"