



UNDP China

UNDP SDGs Innovation Pilot Project

Mid-term Evaluation Report

August 2023

PROJECT AND EVALUATION INFORMATION

Project Information

Project Information		
Project Name	UNDP SDGs Innovation Pilot Project	
Atlas Number	Award ID: 113629; Output ID: 111702	
Overall Outcomes and Outputs	<p>CPD (2021-2025) Outcome 1: Reducing relative and multidimensional poverty with an emphasis on coordinated development; narrowing the urban-rural and regional gaps, so that more Chinese people, including left-behind groups, can benefit from high-quality economic development that is sustainable, innovation-driven and shared; increasing access to economic opportunities through innovation, entrepreneurship and rural revitalization to enjoy the right to decent work, sustainable livelihoods and the realization of the right to development of women and men on an equal footing.</p> <p>SP Output 1.1 The 2030 Agenda, Paris Agreement and other intergovernmentally-agreed frameworks integrated in national and local development plans, measures to accelerate progress put in place, and budgets and progress assessed using data-driven solutions.</p>	
Country	The People's Republic of China	
Region	Asia Pacific	
Signing Date of the ProDoc	15 December 2019	
Duration	Start Date	Planned End Date
	25 December 2019	24 December 2024
Budget	USD 5,010,000	
Overall Expenditure by the Evaluation	USD 2,051,424	
Source of the Funds	Chengdu Hi-Tech Industrial Development Zone, UNDP TRAC	
Implementation Partner	CICETE	

Evaluation Information

Evaluation Information		
Evaluation Type (Project/Outcome/Theme/Country Programme Document)	Project Evaluation	
Final Review/Midterm Evaluation/Other	Midterm Evaluation	
Period Evaluated	Start Date	End Date
	25 December 2019	31 December 2022
Person in Charge	Yang Bao	
Email of the Person in Charge	yangbaoruc@163.com	
Evaluation Date	Start Date	End Date
	29 May 2023	31 July 2023

Table of Contents

PROJECT AND EVALUATION INFORMATION	2
Project Information.....	2
Evaluation Information.....	3
LIST OF ACRONYMS.....	6
EXECUTIVE SUMMARY	7
I. EVALUATION OVERVIEW.....	14
1.1 Evaluation Purpose.....	14
1.2 Structure of the Evaluation Report	15
II. PROJECT OVERVIEW.....	17
2.1 Background	17
2.2 Project Theory of Change & Results Framework	18
2.3 Project Strategies.....	21
2.4 Objectives and Intended Beneficiaries	22
2.5 Organizational Structure.....	22
2.6 Comparative Advantages and Opportunities	24
III. PROJECT INTERVENTIONS AND MANAGEMNET	27
3.1 Project Workplan and Interventions.....	27
3.2 Project Monitoring and Oversight.....	29
3.3 Project Changes and Revisions	30
IV. EVALUATION OBJECTIVES, METHODOLOGIES, AND METHODS.....	32
4.1 Evaluation Scope.....	32
4.2 Evaluation Objectives.....	32
4.3 Evaluation Criteria and Key Evaluation Questions.....	33
4.4 Evaluation Framework	34
4.5 Data Collection Methods.....	35
4.6 Data Analysis Methods.....	36
4.7 Evaluation Matrix.....	38
4.8 Evaluation Schedule	42
4.9 Evaluation Challenges and Countermeasure	45
V. FINDINGS.....	46
5.1 Overarching Issues: Project TOC, Monitoring and Oversight, and Risk Management	46
5.2 Relevance	52
5.3. Effectiveness	54

5.4 Efficiency	68
5.5 Sustainability	74
5.6 Social Inclusion: Gender and cross-cutting issues	76
VI. CONCLUSIONS	79
6.1 Conclusion on Overarching Issues: Project TOC, Monitoring and Oversight, and Risk Management	79
6.2 Conclusion on Relevance	79
6.3 Conclusion on Effectiveness	79
6.4 Conclusion on Efficiency	81
6.5 Conclusion on Sustainability	82
6.6 Conclusion on Social Inclusion	82
VII. LESSONS LEARNED AND CHALLENGES	83
7.1 Lessons learned	83
7.2 Challenges	88
VIII. RECOMMENDATIONS.....	92
8.1 Recommendations on project planning (AWPs)	92
8.2 Recommendations on the project implementation	93
8.3 Recommendations on project management capacity.....	96
8.4 Recommendations on project overall strategy.....	97
Annex I. Evaluation TOR	99
Annex II. Evaluation Matrix	100
Annex III. List of Interviewees.....	104
Annex IV. List of Documents Reviewed	105
Annex V. Projects Results Framework.....	106
Annex VI. Interview Outline	107

LIST OF ACRONYMS

AWP	Annual Work Plan
CICETE	China International Center for International Economic Exchanges
CDHT	Chengdu Hi-Tech Industrial Development Zone
CDHTMC	Chengdu Hi-Tech Industrial Development Zone Management Committee
NPD	National Project Director
SDG/SDGs	Sustainable Development Goals
SMEs	Small and Medium-sized Enterprises
STI	Science, Technology and Innovation
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
PMO	Project Management Office
PSC	Project Steering Committee

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Project Overview

This report is the midterm evaluation report of the UNDP SDGs Innovation Pilot Project (hereinafter referred to as “the project”). The project aims to unleash the innovation-based development momentum of Chengdu Hi-Tech Industrial Development Zone (CDHT), promote the transformation of its development path from productivity-driven to innovation-driven, and actively explore international cooperation of high-tech zones with CDHT as the pilot.

The project is designed to achieve its objectives through a multi-faceted approach, it focuses on fostering collaboration among the government, civil society, UN, academia, and businesses to support capacity building efforts for both the government and innovators. Additionally, the project leverages the network of UNDP Innovation Labs to empower local high-tech enterprises by mobilizing global experts and resources, enabling them to provide technical support and facilitate knowledge-sharing. These efforts collectively would contribute to the advancement of sustainable development goals.

As a selected pilot, this project also intends to help CDHT improve its ability to innovate and develop. It sets an example for other Hi-Tech Zones in China by exploring a path towards internationalization that can be easily duplicated. Moreover, the project aims to increase CDHT's impact on a global scale through various activities carried out locally and internationally. It also brings in international resources and sustainable development ideas, effectively adapting them to the specific needs of the local area.

The project is jointly developed by the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), China International Centre for Economic & Technical Exchanges (CICETE) and Chengdu Hi-Tech Industrial Development Zone Management Committee (CDHTMC). The implementation period of the project spans 5 years, from December 25, 2019 to December 24, 2024.

Evaluation Purpose and Scope

This report follows a theory-driven evaluation approach to assess a project's process and draw lessons from it. The evaluation considers various aspects, including needs, theory, process, and effect, both individually and collectively. To align with the project's overall goals outlined in the theory of change, the evaluation team has identified key evaluation criteria such as relevance, effectiveness, efficiency, sustainability, and social inclusiveness. Through interviews and textual analysis, the evaluation gathered facts and data to address the evaluation questions. The report presents significant findings, lessons learned, and challenges encountered during the evaluation process, which form the basis for recommendations to enhance future project development.

This evaluation covers project activities conducted between 25 December 2019 and 31 December 2022. It primarily focuses on evaluating relevance, effectiveness, efficiency, and sustainability. Furthermore, special attention is given to actions taken to promote gender equality and the participation of vulnerable groups in sustainable innovation.

Evaluation Methodology

In pursuit of the evaluation objectives, the evaluation team employed the theory of change (ToC) and undertook a comprehensive evaluation from both specific perspectives (needs, theory, process, and effect) and an overarching viewpoint. To facilitate this process, the team established a foundational database containing the outcomes of content analysis conducted on project design, implementation documents, and interview materials. Utilizing this database, the team systematically analyzed the purposes, activities, outputs, short-term effects, long-term effects, impacts, and logic models associated with the realization of change.

Main Findings

This report evaluates the project by relevance, effectiveness, efficiency, sustainability, and social inclusiveness. This evaluation also assessed the project ToC design, monitoring and oversight, and risk management. By considering these criteria, the report provides a comprehensive assessment of the project's core strategies, approaches, expected outcomes, and outputs. The following is a summary of the 29 main findings.

Categories		Main Findings
Overarching Issues	Project ToC	Finding 1: The ToC of the project is delicately planned and logically sound, with top-level designs that are ambitious and micro implementation activities that are detailed and feasible considering the capacity of the stakeholders. Nonetheless, the project design doesn't contain a Logframe that contains specific indicators and their means of verification. This may introduce potential operational risks.
	Monitoring and Oversight	Finding 2: The project values the design and review of activities. It sets AWP's based on the annual review each year and is subject to an annual audit. However, more rigorous M&E practices such as statistical tracking, case follow-up, and outcome verification are needed to strengthen the project's monitoring framework and assess the overall achievement of objectives.
	Risk Management	Finding 3: The project team adopts a proactive stance towards risk management, maintaining a regular monitoring and review process of the risk register. This approach is proved to serve as a crucial basis for informed management decisions, enabling adaptive management and necessary adjustments.
Relevance		<p>Finding 4: The project's activities and interventions are designed and implemented in line with the 2030 Global Agenda of SDGs, UNSDCF China, and UNDP CPD China. They also have largely met and adapted to the needs of all participating parties.</p> <p>Finding 5: Based on the SDGs, UNDP CPD China, as well as the local development demands from CDHT, the project has identified the three core areas, namely 1) dual carbon, 2) digital trade and 3) sustainable development. A cooperation network for</p>

		<p>project implementation has been built by connecting the government, private sector and academia.</p> <p>Finding 6: The project successfully built the UNDP SDG Innovation Lab (SPARK Lab). As one of the innovation laboratories of the UNDP in the Asia-Pacific region, SPARK Lab helps the project connect with global innovation resources, networks and international experience, and promotes the CDHT to join the innovation networks for the globe.</p>
Effectiveness	Output 1	<p>Finding 7: Two research reports about carbon neutrality were generated, namely CDHT's Pathway toward Carbon Neutrality and Developing a Next Gen Carbon Service Hub: Strategy research for CDHT. They were published at the Re:Think event, attracting over 8,000,000 views. These two reports categorize the carbon service industry for the first time, provide a toolkit for building carbon neutrality and position CDHT strategically as an experimental pilot. They have produced extensive social impact. However, the research reports lack the capability to promote policy making and therefore high-quality recommendations on decision-making are still in need.Finding 8: On the theme of "digital trade", the project released the Digital Trade Development Report for Chengdu Hi-tech Industrial Development Zone, which provides policy recommendations to CDHTMC on digital trade development, with a focus on evaluating the digital trade ecosystem in CDHT.</p> <p>Finding 9: The project has undertaken baseline research on SDG practices of enterprises in China and sustainable development for three consecutive years, and released three serial reports at the Re:Think Conference, which helped these enterprises better achieve the coordinated development of business practices and SDGs.</p>
	Output 2	<p>Finding 10: The project focuses on cultivating innovative talents. Through building an innovator network, it brings together academia, private sector, and civil society so that ideas on innovation-based sustainable development can be learned and exchanged, which is conducive to innovation collaboration.</p> <p>Finding 11: The project makes active use of the global networks to attract the participation of the youth and therefore the continuous expansion of innovator network. The INSPIRO Network launched by the project gathered 107 SDG-mindful and innovative young entrepreneurs from around the world, featuring those from Chengdu and Europe, to explore how to promote advanced technologies in the realization of SDGs-advanced technologies in the realization of SDGs.</p> <p>Finding 12: The INSPIRO Network's activities have proven to be highly beneficial for its members, providing them with an</p>

		<p>enriched understanding of the SDGs, enabling them to integrate these goals into their business strategies, fostering connections with potential partners and investors, and promoting CDHT as a viable business hub.</p> <p>Finding 13: So far as the INSPIRO Network has been in operation, a group of core members have stood out for their great activeness and community building capabilities and they work to promote the self-organizing operation of the network. However, it would be more beneficial if the network could work in a more decentralized and thus self-organizing manner.</p> <p>Finding 14: The digital trade training workshop has played a significant role to help the policymakers to further clarify the factors which may enhance or impede digital trade development and design enabling policies in CDHT. It also helped enterprises form an understanding of the development trend of digital trade and get access to the market trends, development strategies, business planning and pioneering experience.</p>
	Output 3	<p>Finding 15: The project has provided a platform for dialogue through the initiation of forums. For the third consecutive year, the Re:Think Conference is launched as a flagship event for Chengdu's sustainable development, which facilitates multi-stakeholder discussions and innovative collaborative mechanisms in this regard.</p> <p>Finding 16: The project exchanges innovative ideas by organizing a series of thematic conferences. Gradually deepening conference topics spark perspectives from all parties and foster partnerships for a sustainable future.</p>
	Output 4	<p>Finding 17: The project developed cultural and creative products and experiential activities featured in panda which embodies the characteristic of Chengdu. These efforts showcase UNDP's key innovation projects of sustainable development around the world and displays the local customs and traditions at the same time, which combines UNDP's global innovation efforts with local cultural symbols.</p> <p>Finding 18: The project designed and launched the SPARK Innovation Center for Zero-Carbon Future which showcases the vision and practice of UNDP and the CDHT in promoting sustainable development. This Innovation Center helped to raise public awareness of SDGs and the net-zero. Nonetheless, the overall design of its setting and visiting routes still needs to be improved. Meanwhile, it is not yet open on a regular basis.</p> <p>Finding 19: The project creatively utilizes multiple forms of events such as conferences, forums, workshops, and exhibitions to facilitate the implementation of the project. Besides, the</p>

		project also considerably promotes the concept of sustainable development and exports the CDHT's experience through various media outlets such as official websites, WeChat, Weibo, Instagram, LinkedIn and Chinese and international mainstream media.
Efficiency	Strategic Allocation of Project Resources	Finding 20: The project was adequately funded and was able to maintain a high implementation rate despite the influence of extremely unfavorable factors such as COVID-19.
	Human Resource Allocation	<p>Finding 21: All the staff of the PMO have broad international perspectives and rich project experience. There is complementarity of duties within the team, which guarantees the effective operation of the project. However, needs for strengthening the capacity of community operation and enhancing communication with government still exist.</p> <p>Finding 22: There is a clear division of responsibilities in project management. The establishment of the Project Advisory Board (PAB) enriches the management structure. The group is a core strength that enables the project to run smoothly.</p>
	Partnership structure	<p>Finding 23: As the three actors of the project, UNDP, CDHTMC, and CICETE, are in close contact and actively support the project in funds, professional skills and expert connection, which laid a solid foundation for the follow-up implementation of the project.</p> <p>Finding 24: The project successfully identified and maximized the convergence between the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and the economic and social development needs of the local government. Utilizing a participatory approach, the project design and implementation were tailored to reflect the demands and priorities of all involved parties.</p> <p>Finding 25: Due to the innovative and exploratory nature of the project's objectives, extensive coordination is required during implementation. Therefore, the project designates two joint NPDs to ensure the smooth implementation of the project, which turned out to be effective. Moreover, in order to effectively connect and utilize UNDP's global and regional resources, some of the activities of the project are directly implemented by UNDP SDGs Innovation Lab instead of simply being handed over to the PMO.</p> <p>Finding 26: The project partners with well-known enterprises and social organizations to promote networking, researching and activities. The establishment of partnerships with other entities in the private sector and social organizations has connected experts, platforms and other resources to support the project,</p>

		which is conducive to the achievement of project objectives. The project has established a stable external cooperation mechanism through “external purchase” and “joint release”.
Sustainability		Finding 27: The project has demonstrated clear efforts towards achieving long-term sustainability across various dimensions that will be critical to safeguarding its impacts over time. However, in order to support the sustainable development of the project, it is necessary to establish a decentralized and self-organizing operation system, which requires CDHTMC’s engagement, support and guidance.
Social Inclusiveness	Gender Equality	Finding 28: The project incorporates gender considerations into the mainstreaming strategy and values female participation in all aspects of the project to ensure that gender-related issues are a key component of project formulation, implementation and evaluation.
	Cross-cutting issues: Youth, Disabilities, PLHIV, and other minority groups	Finding 29: The project pays special attention to youth. It integrates advantageous resources to empower youth, supports and nurtures young innovators and entrepreneurs in a bid to fully tap into their potential and mobilize their strengths. Nonetheless, the project could have more systematically addressed cross-cutting issues to maximize inclusiveness.

Lessons learned & Challenges

There are four key lessons learned, which could be shared with similar projects. First, since the project was a demonstration pilot, it faced challenges due to unclear objectives and an unpredictable implementation path. To overcome these challenges, the project set up a system to break down primary goals and respond effectively, successfully navigating the implementation process and achieving objectives.

Second, the project adopted a unique way of operating, which involved using different platforms to support various activities and a systematic management system. These platforms included websites, forums, research, review processes, funding mechanisms, and channels for publicity. Along with these platforms, there was a well-defined systematic management mechanism and institutional framework, which the evaluation team identifies as the “platform-based innovation operation model”.

Third, during the initial stages, the project implemented a standardized internal process for accepting activities within the Project Management Office (PMO). This process served as a guide and provided support for activity implementation.

Lastly, the project established a dynamic system for building consensus, using flagship events as platforms. Notably, the participation in Re:Think allowed various stakeholders to further collaborate and reach agreement on project-related matters.

On the other hand, challenges are also identified by the evaluation teams in purpose of improving project's future implementation, which include: (1) the participation rate of CDHTMC needs to be improved; (2) a decentralized and self-organizing operation system for the SPARK Lab needs to be established; (3) the project team's capability of community collaboration and government communication needs to be strengthened; (4) the flagship events still lack of innovative iteration and participants' stickiness; (5) engagement of the PAB needs to be improved; (6) the project's capability of connecting global innovation network needs to be improved; (7) the continuous influence of the project's results need to be strengthened.

Recommendations

Therefore, based on a comprehensive analysis of the findings, lessons learned and challenges, the evaluation team has formulated a set of recommendations for the project. These recommendations are designed to tackle the challenges encountered and optimize the project's capacity for achieving success.

Recommendations on project planning (AWPs) AWP is an important tool to control the project's development, clarify its goals and advance its implementation. It is important to 1) improve the logic of the goals breakdown system, 2) enhance the coherence and integrity of the AWP and 3) strengthen the connection between the AWP and the demands of the local government.

Recommendations on the project implementation: The implementation approach and process determine whether the project can play a pilot role in achieving the SDGs. Regarding adjustments on the project implementation, 1) the project needs to roll out more sub-events to improve the iteration capacity and participants' stickiness of the flagship events. 2) the project is recommended to generate wrap-up briefs for the government to strengthen its role in policy advocacy, 3) the project should free the PMO staff from detailed implementation but support them in playing a steering role and let the communities to operate in a self-organizing manner, 4) the project needs to improve the exhibition design and give a full play of social actors strengths in operation. 5) the project should enhance its communication with all parties and accelerate the innovation-based development of the CDHT.

Recommendations on project management capacity: Team building is the foundation of the project. Regarding the upgrade of project's team, the evaluation team recommends 1) to strengthen the project team's understanding on the governance logic of the local government, 2) to strengthen the project team's capability of community operation, 3) to strengthen the project team's capability of research and reflection.

Recommendations on project overall strategy: The overall strategy is an important guide on the project management. Regarding the improvement of the overall strategy, the evaluation team recommends 1) to improve the research and refinement on the platform-based innovation model for operation, 2) to give full play to the role of the PAB and 3) to improve the CDHTMC's participation in the project.

I. EVALUATION OVERVIEW

1.1 Evaluation Purpose

The midterm evaluation is a periodic summary of the implementation of the project. The core purpose of the midterm evaluation is to **evaluate the consistency of the project's expected outcomes** and the actual outputs as set from the past project document as well as annual workplans, so as to measure the overall effect of project implementation, and to reflect on interventions, progress, challenges, experience and lessons learned. In this way, feedback and recommendations for the future implementation of the project will be presented.

In addition, the midterm evaluation also helps ensure that the expected outcomes and implementation of the project are **aligned with the UNSDCF, UNDP CPD and the UNDP Strategic Plan, while supporting the UN 2030 Agenda and the SDGs**, as well as other global, national and corporate priorities. The midterm evaluation can help UNDP and its cooperative agencies to provide objective feedback on the progress and effectiveness of the project, support the improvement of the project plan, and provide experience for other projects of the similar kind.

Moreover, it is worth noting that the project's expected goals are broad in scope and somewhat ambiguous, while the methods of achieving these goals and the cause-and-effect relationship between them are not entirely clear. This midterm systematic analysis and evaluation of the project will **help the project to make timely corrections**, ensure that the project measures do not deviate from the expected goals and guarantee that the vague goals can be truly realized in the end.

In the face of the vague goals, ambiguous means of implementation and causal relationships between goals and means, theory-based evaluations need to focus not only on the outcomes of interventions, but also to identify and consider the sequence of actions that triggered those outcomes, i.e., the process of achieving the goals. Therefore, this report introduces a process-oriented theory of change (ToC) to systematically analyze the causal relationships between program goals, means to achieve them and to retrospectively explore which implementation means and processes were effective in achieving program goals. The core steps of the theory of change are to 1) define the project goals, 2) describe the means and steps of implementation, 3) establish a causal relationship between process and purpose based on a logical framework and 4) measure whether the project is moving towards the final goal regularly.

Based on the theory of change, this report analyzes the expected outputs of the project and accordingly proposes realization paths (see Table 1). The evaluation team would evaluate the implementation effect of the project by collecting results in accordance with the anticipated goals outlined in the theory of change.

Table 1 Expected Outputs and Realization Path

Expected Project Outputs	Realization Path
Output 1: Enhanced government capabilities with a focus on high-value-added policy support for innovation and sustainable investment	Conducting themed research and writing research reports

Output 2: Expanded innovator network to ensure “innovation for all”	Establishing innovation and entrepreneurship communities, creation camps, workshops, etc.
Output 3: Enabling ecosystem conducive to innovation collaboration and leadership	Establishing a sound project management system; creating an innovative ecological mechanism in the form of conferences, forums, etc.
Output 4: Enabling Innovation-based sustainable development in China and other developing countries promoted through a solution exchange mechanism	Publicizing project achievements and experience

1.2 Structure of the Evaluation Report

This report is divided into five parts: 1) overview, 2) methodology, 3) findings and conclusions, 4) experience, challenges and recommendations, and 5) appendices (see Figure 1).



Figure 1 Chapter structure of the evaluation report

The overview segment of this report is divided into 3 sections that provide readers with background information about the project and the mid-term evaluation:

- Evaluation Overview (**Section I**): Explains the purpose of the evaluation and provides an overview of the structure of this evaluation report.
- Project Overview (**Section II**): Presents the project's background, theory of change, organizational structure, available resources, and challenges faced during implementation.
- Project Interventions and Management (**Section III**): Describes the project's monitoring activities, main interventions, and any changes encountered during the implementation stage.

The methodology segment (**Section IV**) outlines the logical framework, data collection and analysis methods, evaluation schedule, evaluation matrix, and the challenges faced by the evaluation team, providing the foundation for the subsequent sections on findings and recommendations.

The findings and conclusions segment (**Section V, VI**) presents 29 findings categorized under the five evaluation criteria: relevance, effectiveness, efficiency, sustainability, and social inclusiveness. It then concludes with a clear summary of all findings results of this mid-term evaluation.

The experience, challenges, and recommendations segment (**Sections VII, VIII**) consists of two sections: Section VII on Challenges summarizes the project's experience and identifies the challenges faced during implementation. Section VIII on Recommendations, highlights the deficiencies in four areas: annual work plans, project implementation, project team management, and overall strategy. The evaluation team provides four recommendations for improvement.

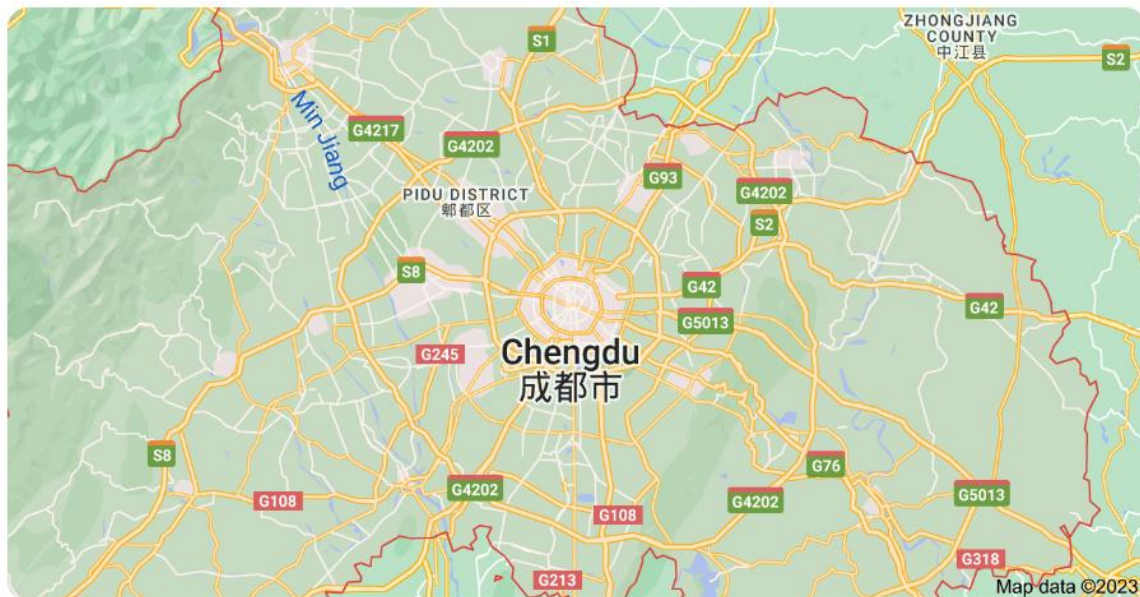
The appendices segment includes all relevant evaluation documents, such as the evaluation terms of reference (TOR), evaluation matrix, list of interviewees, list of reference documents, project results framework, survey outline, and other evaluation-related materials.

II. PROJECT OVERVIEW

2.1 Background

Globally, the unprecedented speed of science and technological change and its depth and breadth are having major impacts on billions of people's lives in both developed and developing countries. The transformation in manufacturing is marked by the fourth industrial revolution, characterized by artificial intelligence, the internet of things, and cloud storage and computing. In such a context, policymakers have become increasingly aware of the role of innovation in sustainable development and have been actively seeking pathways to facilitate innovation-driven development. Science and technology are considered as the primary engine of economic development in China. The government promotes Science, Technology and Innovation (STI) mainly through financial instruments, e.g. tax credits, government procurement programs, followed by other policy interventions such as technology extension services, science parks, incubators and accelerators. Most policies are targeted at high-tech firms, start-ups, as well as micro and small firms, with a focus on transformation of STI outputs, reinforcing intellectual property rights, and cultivating innovative talents.

The Chengdu Hi-Tech Industrial Development Zone was designated as the first National Independent Innovation Demonstration Zone in western China and has long been one of the most influential high-tech zones in China. In 2022, the Gross Regional Domestic Product (GRDP) reached 301.58 billion RMB. As national innovation strategies provide ground-rules, CDHT strives to develop its own capacity. It attaches great importance to STI as well as sustainable development and is committed to growing into a regional innovation center. However, CDHT faces a series of challenges in advancing its own innovation-based sustainable development agenda. The following three challenges are identified.



First, there are gaps in human capital. To begin with, CDHT lags in high-quality human capital and it has yet to see a strong technology-centered, market-oriented model that could continuously

concentrate innovation talents. Besides, as an inland city in western China, Chengdu lacks regular channels to link to and interact with the international markets and societies.

Second, there are problems of imbalanced and insufficient technology diffusion. On the one hand, Chengdu's technology adoption rate is much lower as compared to that in frontier Chinese cities such as Beijing and Shanghai. On the other hand, local governments and enterprises lack efforts in systematically collecting and analyzing the knowledge of innovation development. Thus, there is a serious gap in matching available resources with development needs, resulting in missed opportunities to maximize the utility of technologies and innovations.

Third, the efficiency of harnessing STI for socio-economic development is not sufficient. The lack of an "open" innovation system becomes a barrier in unleashing the creativity and potential of individuals, the government, and private sector in solving problems. Besides, the use of STI may threaten and damage privacy and security while under-regulated technologies may lead to potential risks. In this regard, CDHT is desperate to locate the innovation-based future development momentum so that it will be able to complete the transformation of its development path from productivity-driven to innovation-driven and explore a new model of balanced economic and social development.

At the same time, the UNDP has long been concerned about sustainable development issues, environmental issues, South-South cooperation and other related issues. It is committed to helping countries strengthen their own capabilities to deal with environmental challenges on a global, national and community scale. UNDP is also committed to the dissemination, sharing and exchange of knowledge and experience between countries and the promotion of technical and economic cooperation among developing countries. Under the opportunity that both the UNDP and the CDHT hope to promote local sustainable development, UNDP, CICETE and the CDHTMC jointly established the UNDP SDGs Innovation Pilot Project. By convening the private sector, academia, investment community, innovation community, and public administration into interactive process of mutual learning and knowledge sharing, forces can be gathered to jointly advocate and promote the international innovation practices of high-tech zones and international cooperation on sustainable investment. The project is also committed to promoting exchanges with other countries leveraging UNDP's global network resources and sustainable development experience to establish an international cooperation platform of global high-tech zones with Chengdu Hi-tech Industrial Development Zone as the pilot.

2.2 Project Theory of Change & Results Framework

The theory of change is a tool for result-oriented project management and evaluation, which is used to describe the logical process or causal framework of the changes caused by interventions, revealing the key assumptions behind the intervention and the impact of potential influencing factors on the expected outcomes and outputs. That is to say, it focuses on "how a project produces effect" rather than just "whether it is effective". The theory of change is mainly composed of seven elements: problems, outcomes, indicators, interventions, capabilities, funding and assumptions. The logical framework under the guidance of the theory of change is divided into seven steps, as shown in Figure 2.

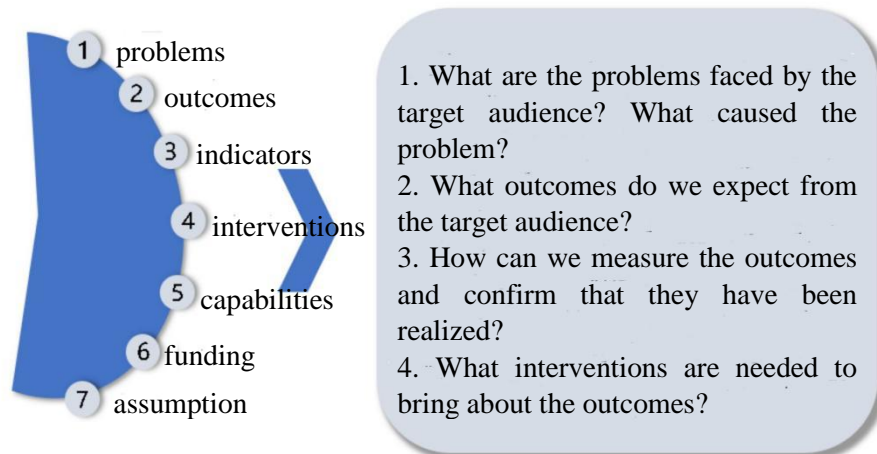
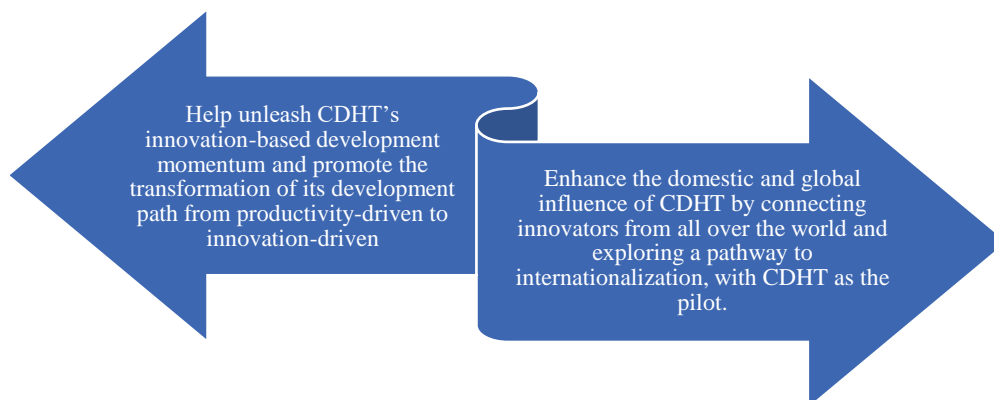


Figure 2 Seven Elements of a Theory of Change

The core steps of the theory of change are to clarify the project purposes, describe the approaches and stages of the project implementation, establish a causal relationship between the process and purpose based on a logical framework, and regularly assess whether the project is developing in the right track.

Therefore, this project takes “innovation” as the core concept. Based on a brand-new approach to project design and implementation, it aims to enhance the innovation ability and influence of CDHT. On the one hand, it will help unleash CDHT’s innovation-based development momentum and promote the transformation of its development path from productivity-driven to innovation-driven. On the other hand, it will seek to enhance the domestic and global influence of CDHT by connecting innovators from all over the world and exploring a pathway to internationalization, with CDHT as the pilot.



Based on the above objectives, the guiding principle of the project is to utilize STI to address the most difficult challenges of poverty, climate change, resiliency and sustainability with a vision to address gaps in policy, technology and science to catalyze at-scale impacts domestically and replicate successes regionally. The guiding principle is comprised of two components, each corresponding to an intended outcome, which can be further divided into two intended outputs.

Activities are designed accordingly. The project is implemented by the cooperation network formed by UNDP Innovation Lab, CDHTMC, and the PAB.

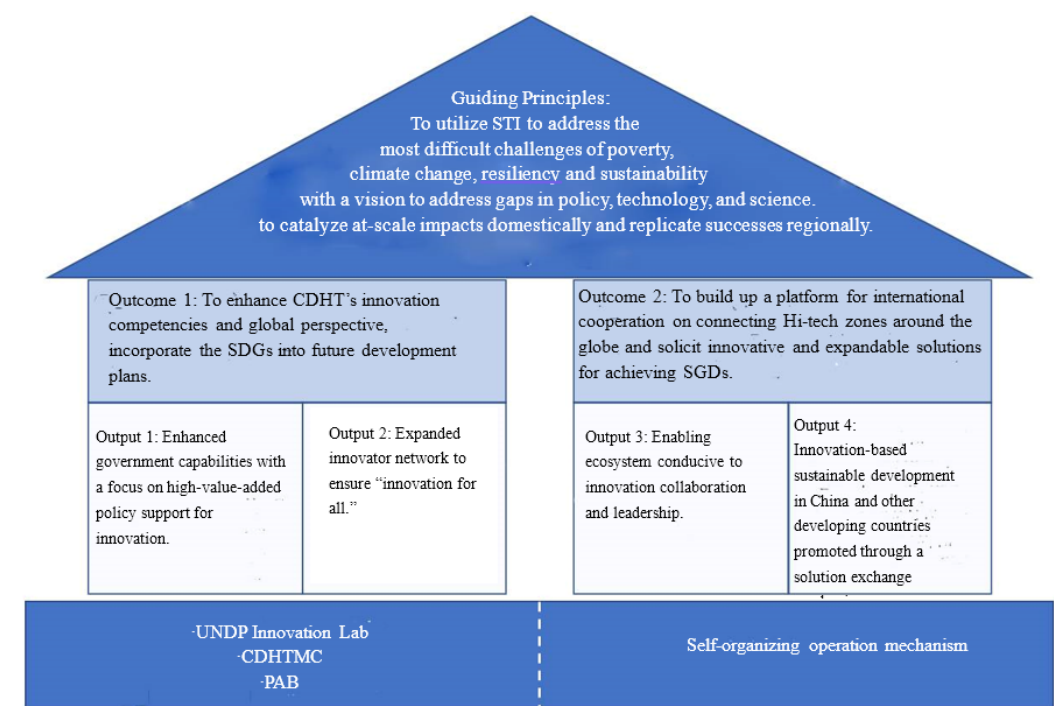


Figure 3 Structural diagram of interventions in the project

The expected outcomes and outputs (i.e. Result Framework) are elaborated below.

Outcome 1: Enhance CDHT's innovation competencies and global perspective, incorporate the SDGs into future development plans and foster a transition away from a focus on pure economic output to sustainable and inclusive development.	
	Output 1: Government capabilities were enhanced with a focus on high-value-added policy support for innovation and sustainable investment, the core of which is to foster the diffusion and expansion of STI through targeted competence-building measures, in order to support high-quality decision-making, research, demonstration and publicity.
	Output 2: Innovator network was expanded to ensure "innovation for all".
Outcome 2: To establish and expand the innovation networks for the globe with CDHT as the pilot, explore a pathway to internationalization and enhance the motivation for opening up; to explore and foster innovative pathways to internationalization based on the SDGs through organizing flagship international activities.	
	Output 3: Ecosystem conducive to innovation collaboration and leadership was enabled.
	Output 4: Innovation-based sustainable development in China and other developing countries was promoted through a solution exchange mechanism and existing STI was leveraged to improve South-South cooperation and make contributions to China's main global development measure.

2.3 Project Strategies

Therefore, to successfully achieve the stated goals through project intervention, a thorough collection of strategies was developed. These strategies serve as the essential framework for all project activities and are organized into three main dimensions, which play a central role in shaping the project's initiatives.

Planning Strategy

To address the development challenges articulated above, the project strategy consists of three seminal components:

- 1) Leverage the capabilities of CDHT on innovation, and UNDP's global network and experience in innovation-based development to facilitate South-South exchange between China and other developing countries and beyond focused on innovation for development;
- 2) Establish a National Innovation Platform in CDHT, which amongst its many roles, will serve as a co-creation space for governments, civil, society, UN, academia and the private sector to seek solutions to major development challenges; build up capacity of government and development practitioners in designing and implementing integrated innovation strategies; and promote exchange and research on STI topics.
- 3) Build up the China-Europe and China-ASEAN Platforms for Cooperation on sustainable investment, establish an incubator with the priority of promoting sustainable development by High-tech enterprises, and involve experts around the globe in providing technical support and experience-sharing.

Implementation Strategy

The implementation strategy of this project includes three parts:

- 1) Implementation Activities: the objective of all the activities in the project is to foster the skills of all participants for undertaking the core activities over the life of the project, and for continuing related activities beyond the program.
- 2) Communication and Dissemination of Project Achievements: the project achievements will be communicated to government, academia and the private sector through knowledge products such as publication of articles, reports, brochures and newsletters, provisions of seminars and workshops, and transfer of technologies, as well as other appropriate communication channels.
- 3) Stakeholders and Community Involvement: the project will widely involve all stakeholders including local governments, NGOs, private sector, financial institutions and communities in providing advice and feedback to the program.

Sustainability and Two-phase Strategy

The project was implemented in two stages. The first phase (the first and the second year) was an exploratory and experimental stage, with the emphasis on:

- Set up the UNDP Innovation Lab;

- Build up the China-Europe cooperation platform for sustainable investment by organizing the international and domestic flagship events with the China-Europe Investment, Trade and Technology Cooperation Fair as its core;
- Incubate and accelerate high-tech enterprises, so as to foster the establishment and development of the platform for sustainable investment

The second phase (from the third year to the fifth year) would focus on the adjustment of outputs and the activities which proved to be effective.

2.4 Objectives and Intended Beneficiaries

As the project aims to strengthen the innovation-based sustainable development momentum of CDHT, the relevant beneficiaries of the project implementation include:

- Government agencies at national, provincial, municipal, and community levels, such as the government of CDHT, Chengdu Municipal People's government, as well as the governments of other regions in China that seek to promote sustainable development, can learn from the experience of this project and organize similar projects to promote sustainable development;
- The managers and management staff of the project team can also benefit from the project. They will not only deepen their understanding of sustainable development, but also improve their ability of project implementation;
- Local community groups, youth organizations, and women in Chengdu: The project will deliver tangible benefits to these groups through capacity building initiatives. They will have opportunities for skill development, job creation, livelihood improvement, and direct income generation resulting from the application of innovative solutions for development.
- Firms and enterprises in Chengdu: The demand for advanced technologies generated by the project will serve as a catalyst for local businesses. This demand will incentivize firms and enterprises in Chengdu to adopt, develop, and adopt more science, technology, and innovation (STI) practices. This, in turn, will contribute to the overall growth and development of the business ecosystem in the region.

2.5 Organizational Structure

This project was jointly established by the UNDP, CICETE and the CDHTMC. The purpose of the project is to strengthen the capability of CDHT to unleash its future development momentum based on innovation and sustainability, to promote the transformation of its development path from productivity-driven to innovation-driven, and to actively explore international cooperation of high-tech zones with CDHT as the pilot. The project is also committed to promoting South-South cooperation and exchanges with other countries leveraging UNDP's global network resources and sustainable development experience.

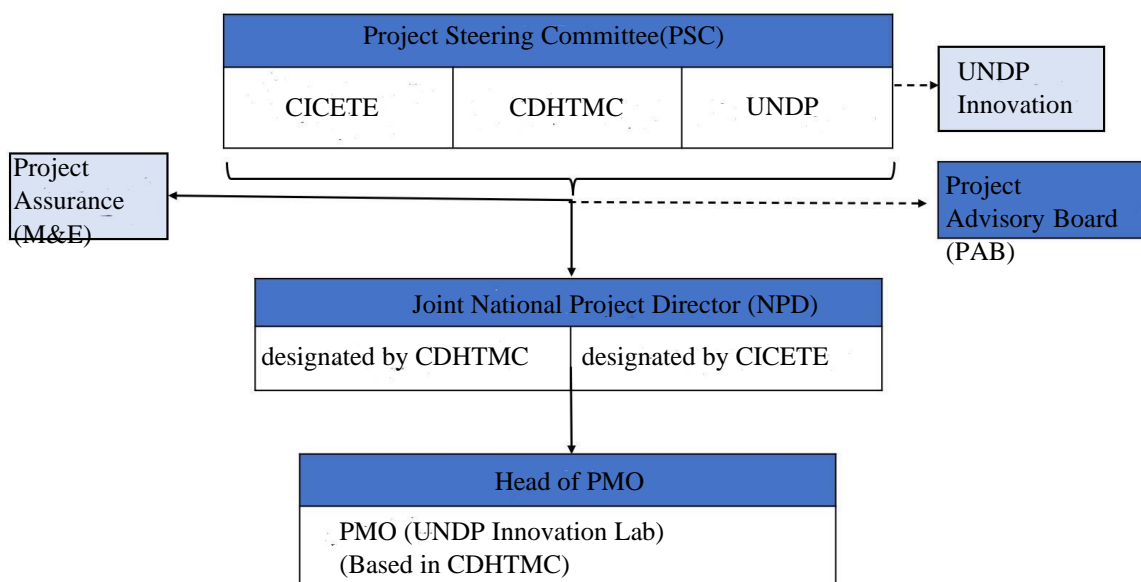


Figure 4: Project Management Structure

To ensure the project is in line with regulations and under effective management, a management, monitoring and coordination organizational structure has been established (see Figure 4).

To begin with, the highest level in the organizational structure is the Project Steering Committee (PSC). The responsibilities of the PSC include:

- Providing guidance and support to project design, implementation and supervision;
- Approving the AWP;
- Reviewing and approving the AWP of the project;
- Providing technical input and advice to the project according to the industry to which it belongs;
- Mobilizing policy, human and matching financial resources to support project implementation;
- Coordinating differences within the project to ensure collaboration among participating organizations; and providing comprehensive evaluation of the final results of the project.

The PSC is joined by representatives from UNDP, CICETE, and CDHTMC. The responsibilities of each component are stated as follows.

- UNDP is responsible for closely communicating with implementing partners and providing direct support for the implementation of activities, following the model of “UNDP providing support for projects implemented at the national level”. The UNDP also collaborates with its Asia-Pacific Regional Hub to actively participate in the design of project activities, connect with relevant expert resources, and provide support in other forms.
- CICETE is responsible for signing project document on behalf of the Chinese government and working together with UNDP to oversee project implementation and overall quality assurance and providing necessary support to the project.

- CDHTMC takes the lead in coordinating relevant government departments in providing guidance, policy, and organizational support for project implementation.

Besides, the project has set up a joint national project director (NPD), which is held by Zhang Yi, deputy director-general of CICETE, and leaders of the CDHTMC. The NPD is responsible for providing guidance for the formulation of the project's AWP; reviewing and submitting the project's AWP to the PSC for approval; guiding and supervising the project implementation to ensure that the project achieves the expected outcomes.

In addition, the project set up a Head of PMO under the joint NPD. The Head of the PMO is responsible for the project implementation under the leadership of the NPD, and reporting the progress of the project implementation to the NPD in a timely manner. During the project implementation, the Head of PMO is also responsible for routine management, implementation, division of responsibilities, supervision and inspection. The responsibilities also include organizing and implementing project activities according to the work plans and budgets to ensure the realization of outputs and outcomes stipulated in the project document, controlling the project progress, observing the potential risks and reporting them to the NPD.

Finally, the PMO led by the Head of PMO is the implementation agency of the project. The PMO is mainly responsible for implementing project activities in accordance with the AWP agreed by all parties and leveraging UNDP's innovation networks for the globe, resources, mode and international experience.

Apart from the aforementioned faculties, a Project Advisory Board (PAB) was established, whose responsibilities include guiding strategic directions and macro policies; providing technical advice; mobilizing relevant resources to support the development of projects; integrating the needs for sustainable development of local communities, supporting the implementation of pilot and demonstration projects, and supporting policy research and the promotion, dissemination, and replication of project results. The PAB is composed of the following 9 experts: Liu Yanhua (Honorary Director of the National Expert Panel on Climate Change), He Kebin (Dean of Institute for Carbon Neutrality, Tsinghua University), Tu Ruihe (representative of the United Nations Environment Programme in China), Wang Huiyao (founder and chairman of Center for China and Globalization), Fang Li (chief representative of the Beijing Representative Office of the World Resources Institute), Lv Xuedu (former deputy director of the National Climate Center), Li Wei (winner of the 2006 China Economic Women Achievement Award), Jiang Xiaoping (School of Public Administration, Sichuan University) and Wang Tun (director of the Institute of Care-life).

According to the work plans, the project will also seek support from other relevant institutions in implementing specific activities. The project will also employ international experts for assistance and establish close cooperation with technical partners to ensure the successful implementation of the project.

2.6 Comparative Advantages and Opportunities

UNDP's Experience of Innovation Practices

This project will leverage UNDP's regional and global initiatives and capabilities to support the sustainable development of CDHT based on its own strengths. In 2014, UNDP established the Global Innovation Facility to foster the design of a new generation of development services by testing promising concepts, methods and emerging technologies. Over the past few years, UNDP has supported 13 Innovation Labs across five regions around the world to shape the next generation of public services through the UNDP Innovation Facility. The Innovation Labs brings diverse actors together to provide experience in innovation and development issues. In response to dynamic and often challenging development context, UNDP identified innovation as one of the key priorities for achieving transformational development change and for designing a new generation of development services.

Building upon the successes of the initial Innovation Labs, in 2019 UNDP launched the SDG Accelerator Lab Network, creating the world's largest, fastest learning network to accelerate sustainable development. UNDP has built 91 Accelerator Labs, serving 115 countries through making progress in areas such as improving air quality, sustainable development, and strengthening food security. The network has also greatly accelerated the knowledge sharing and exchange between UNDP country offices and partner governments.

Meanwhile, UNDP also has several initiatives on SDG financing. At the regional level, the SDG Innovative Finance (UNSIF), established in November 2016, is an effort by UNDP to promote sustainable investment around the globe. It aims to bring together the public and private sector, foster more capital, technology and talents into the implementation of the SDGs, and create financial, environmental and social returns. UNSIF focuses on the Asia Pacific region, and has piloted various initiatives in a few countries, e.g., setting up sustainable business incubators and accelerators. Facilitating cooperation on sustainable development, building up networks and platforms for sustainable investment, and setting guidance for asset owners to raise awareness of sustainable investment and practices.

Project Management Experience of the CICETE

The CICETE has more than 30 years of experience in managing UNDP projects and has successfully organized and implemented more than 900 projects in the field of development. The CICETE signs project documents on behalf of the government, and jointly tests project implementation with UNDP to ensure overall project quality and provide necessary support for the project.

Chengdu's Strategic Location Advantage

Chengdu is an important city connecting the Belt and Road Initiative with the Yangtze River Economic Belt. It was once designated as a comprehensive innovation reform pilot zone, a national independent innovation demonstration zone, and an inland pilot free trade zone. In 2020, General Secretary Xi Jinping presided over the sixth meeting of the Central Financial and Economic Affairs Commission to make major decisions and deployments to promote the construction of the Chengdu-Chongqing economic circle and create an important growth pole for high-quality development. The Chengdu-Chongqing urban agglomeration located in Southwest China was identified as the fourth growth pole. In 2021, the Master Plan for Building up the Chengdu-

Chongqing Economic Circle was publicly released, marking that the construction of the Chengdu-Chongqing Economic Circle has embarked on a new journey of high-quality development.

Chengdu has the foundation and advantages of STI. In 2006, Chengdu was identified by the Ministry of Science and Technology (MOST) as a pilot “world-class high-tech zone”. In 2015, it was designated by the State Council as the first National Independent Innovation Demonstration Zone in western China. In 2020, Chengdu released a strategic plan for building up a Science City, calling for the creation of a nationally influential STI center, a Science Highland, a Western China (Chengdu) Science City innovation source, a main front of the Chengdu-Chongqing Comprehensive Science Center, a national lab and a Tianfu Lab. The Master Plan for Building up the Chengdu-Chongqing Economic Circle also clarifies the strategic positioning of the Chengdu-Chongqing Economic Circle, which is a STI center with national influence, a new highland for reform and opening up, and a high-quality living place.

CDHT has long been one of the most influential high-tech zones in China. CDHT has determined the strategic planning of its three high-tech pillar industries including electronic information industry, bio-pharmaceutical industry and digital economy industry. As of 2022, the number of certified high-tech enterprises in CDHT has reached 4,320, and the net increase exceeded 1,000 for the first time; the number of technology-based small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) has reached 3,900, an increase of about 25%. In terms of talent development, CDHT has gathered more than 750,000 talents of various types, with an average annual increase of more than 100,000 new employees. CDHT has attracted nearly 50,000 young undergraduate talents to settle down, and more than 100,000 technology companies founded by various talents. There are 215 schools of various levels and types, 5 colleges and universities, 2 state key laboratories, and 33 academician workstations in CDHT.

Professional Support from the PAB

This project has established a PAB, which is composed of 9 experts in their respective fields from international organizations, academia and enterprises. The PAB provides advice and guidance for the strategic direction of the project, and provide insights into the global trends and frontier issues of STI. The members of the PAB have rich backgrounds, including Liu Yanhua, He Kebin, and Lv Xuedu, who provide technical guidance for sustainable innovation and development, carbon neutrality, and climate and environmental issues; Tu Ruihe, Wang Huiyao, and Fang Li, who provide support in global strategy and resource research; Jiang Xiaoping and Wang Tun, who provide local strategic guidance; Li Wei, who provides development experience of enterprises.

III. PROJECT INTERVENTIONS AND MANAGEMNET

3.1 Project Workplan and Interventions

The primary objective of this project is to address the complex challenges of sustainable development within the CDHT by leveraging science, technology, and innovation (STI). Additionally, the project aims to extend the project's impact throughout China and replicate its successful experiences in a broader geographical scope. Based on the above guiding principle, the project set up the main interventions with planned activities as shown in Table 2 at the initial stage of the project:

Table 2 Summary of Main Interventions

Expected Output	Expected Output in Detail	Planned Budget (USD)	Planned Activities
Outcome 1: Enhance CDHT's innovation competencies and global perspective, incorporate the SDGs into future development plans and foster a transition away from a focus on pure economic output to sustainable and inclusive development.			
Output 1: Enhanced government capabilities with a focus on high-value-added policy support for innovation	Output 1.1: Project jointly designed and management structure set up and in operation	135,000	1.1.1 Project is jointly designed with engagement of key shareholders 1.1.2 Establish PSC and organize PSC meetings 1.1.3 Set up PMO; Appoint Joint National Project Director 1.1.4 Hire national and international expert consultants for the project 1.1.5 Hold project inception workshop and project management training in Chengdu
	Output 1.2: Project implemented under proper oversight, monitoring and review	342,000	1.2.1 Monitoring, review and management of each project component 1.2.2 Annual Steering Committee and project review meetings 1.2.3 Annual project audit 1.2.4 midterm and final project reviews and workshops
	Output 1.3: Capacity-building for innovation-friendly policies	302,000	1.3.1 Conduct investigations and surveys on current policies and regulations of STI in national and local setting 1.3.2 Evaluate on policy mechanisms and their effects related to innovation-based development in Chengdu 1.3.3 Provide suggestions for innovation-friendly laws, regulations, policies and guidelines 1.3.4 Organize training workshops on policies and regulations

			<p>1.3.5 Enhance communication among different regulatory authorities and stakeholders related to innovation support</p> <p>1.3.6 Develop a platform to facilitate exchange and dialogues on key policy issues</p>
Output 2: Expanded innovator network to ensure “innovation for all”	Output 2.1: Improved managerial practices to facilitate private sector innovation	180,000	<p>2.1.1 Investigate the organizing process, planning, monitoring, and operation of firm-level innovation</p> <p>2.1.2 Organize training sessions related to global best practices in improving innovation management practices for private sectors</p> <p>2.2.3 Provide advisory services to address capacity gaps</p> <p>2.1.4 Develop applicable tools and instruments for effective management of firm-based innovation</p>
	Output 2.2: Inclusive participation in STI by youth, community organizations and other social groups	255,000	<p>2.2.1 Develop cross-disciplinary capacity building activities targeted at youth groups, social organizations and community-based groups</p> <p>2.2.2 Foster the creation and cultivation of a youth innovators community to create a pool of knowledge and experience</p> <p>2.2.3 Sponsor workshops, innovation awards or similar events to encourage localized innovation and community participation</p> <p>2.2.4 Organize annual global innovation conferences to facilitate exchange, mutual learning and networking among innovators</p>
Outcome 2: To establish and expand the innovation networks for the globe, explore a pathway to internationalization and enhance the motivation for opening up: Explore and foster innovative pathways to internationalization based on the SDGs through organizing flagship international activities.			
Output 3: Enabling ecosystem conducive to innovation collaboration and leadership	Output 3.1: Innovation Lab launched and operated in Chengdu	2,530,000	<p>3.1.1 Launch a UNDP Innovation and Technology Lab in CDHT</p> <p>3.1.2 Set up advisory group consisting of top-notch experts</p> <p>3.1.3 Facilitate exchange with and adoption of global and national STI resources through supporting events in the local and international level</p>

			<p>3.1.4 Promote the co-creation, sharing and application of data technology</p> <p>3.1.5 Jointly conduct systematic research in collaboration with stakeholders and publish key knowledge products</p>
	Output 3.2: Development of partnerships and mechanisms for innovative knowledge transfer	201,000	<p>3.2.1 Organize and annual development challenge week</p> <p>3.2.2 Help the government conduct partnership mapping</p> <p>3.2.3 Support pilot and demonstration projects for innovation-based development</p> <p>3.2.4 Design a monitoring and evaluation framework and criteria and set up multi-sectoral evaluation working group</p>
Output 4: Innovation-based sustainable development in China and other countries promoted through a solution exchange mechanism	Output 4.1: Developing innovative solutions exchange mechanism	305,000	<p>4.1.1 Launch the platform of innovative solution exchange</p> <p>4.1.2 Map out available innovation-based development solutions across key SDG sectors and create an inventory of such practices in the region</p> <p>4.1.3 Establish pilot projects on innovation for the SDGs in China and selected South-South Cooperation countries to serve as demonstrations of innovation-driven development</p> <p>4.1.4 Identify development bottlenecks at SDG pilot communities and pilot the innovative solutions exchange mechanisms</p> <p>4.1.5 Validate models and results, identify appropriate opportunities to scale up and replicate successful experiences in other regions or contexts</p>
	Output 4.2: Successful experience and methodologies disseminated	290,000	<p>4.2.1 Co-organize international workshops with South-South cooperation countries</p> <p>4.2.2 Form working groups with enterprises, universities and research centers from South-South cooperation countries to establish a network</p> <p>4.2.3 Organize roundtable meetings with participation from leading high-tech zones around the world</p> <p>4.2.3 Design a theme exhibition hall to showcase the vision and work of the UNDP and CDHT in low-carbon transformation</p>

3.2 Project Monitoring and Oversight

The monitoring of the project is carried out in accordance with all pertinent UNDP procedures in the National Implementation by the Government. The monitoring focuses on outcomes and outputs of interventions, dialogues with partners and advocacy and coordination, with the aim of unleashing CDHT's innovation-based future development momentum and promoting sharing and exchange of innovative knowledge between China and other developing countries, including South-South cooperation countries.

The achievement level of the desired project outcomes and outputs will be monitored by an integrated system. The system consists of monitoring and evaluation (M&E) project activities, AWP and budgets, and peer review and evaluation. The PMO shall deliver the annual report to the joint NPD within 20 days after the end of each year.

The joint NPDs will take the lead to host the annual review meeting, at which PSC members, main project officials and PMO staff shall be present. Apart from reviewing the implementation progress, outputs/outcomes and quality, budget execution rate, and approving the AWP of next year, the review meeting shall also make decisions on major issues, conduct research and address current difficulties and problems, and lastly make adjustments on the overall design, outputs, outcomes, activities and budget of the project if necessary.

UNDP, in collaboration with the Implementing Partner (CICETE), conducts project result verification at least annually. The Back to Office Report (BTOR), including the oversight segment, is completed by the UNDP Programme Officer post-visit. Furthermore, UNDP conducts a project quality assurance (QA) assessment biennially ensuring the project stays aligned with UNDP programing quality criteria.

3.3 Project Changes and Revisions

Most of the planned activities were successfully implemented according to the AWP, and only a small number of planned activities underwent changes (Table 3). The main reason for these changes was the impact of the COVID-19, causing the planned activities to be delayed, which had no substantial impact on the overall progress of the project.

Table 3 Main Project Changes and Revisions

Planned Activity	Cause of Change	Change	Implementation Result
Planned Output 1: Enhanced government capabilities with a focus on high-value-added policy support for innovation			
Based on the current economic development situation, conduct research on digital trade and provide policy recommendations to CDHT on digital trade	The research was canceled for the current year due to the vendor (ITPO)'s disagreement with the content of the contract with CICETE.	Delayed in 2021	Carrying out digital trade research in 2022, and provided policy recommendations to CDHT on the development of digital trade, focusing on

development: evaluation of the Digital Trade Ecosystem in CDHT			evaluating CDHT's digital trade ecosystem
Carry out the SDGs Survey Report	Affected by COVID- 19	Delayed	Released at the Re:Think 2022 conference, which has been delayed until 2023
Planned Output 2: Expanded innovator network to ensure “innovation for all”			
Unchanged	-	-	-
Planned Output 3: Supporting ecosystem conducive to innovation, collaboration and leadership			
Re:Think 2022	Affected by COVID- 19	Delayed	held on 6 March 6 2023
Planned Output 4: Innovation-based sustainable investment and development in China and other developing countries promoted through a solution exchange mechanisms			
Building an exhibition area with the theme of “peaking carbon emissions and reaching carbon neutrality” in CCEC	Affected by COVID- 19 Unexpected disagreement between the management office of CCEC and the local government of CDHT	Delayed	Completing the construction of the exhibition hall in 2023, which became open to the public by appointment
Conduct research and design targeted tech- based poverty alleviation program for Dege county in Sichuan province	Affected by COVID- 19	Canceled	Since the poverty alleviation has been achieved in an all-round way, the field trip in Dege County was canceled, and in 2023, the project office redesigned the “going abroad” activity.

IV. EVALUATION OBJECTIVES, METHODOLOGIES, AND METHODS

4.1 Evaluation Scope

The scope of this evaluation is based on the evaluation TOR. It evaluations project activities conducted between 25 December 2019 and 31 December 2022. The data shows that the budget for this project is US\$5,010,000, and the total project expenditure (including various management fees) as of the evaluation is US\$2,051,424.

The evaluation team comprehensively collected facts and relevant data since the implementation of the project through interviews with key personnel such as the PMO, partners, activity participants, beneficiaries and communities, and project consultants, as well as review of project-related documents and activity reports. With reference to the expected output and outcomes formulated in the project document, the evaluators systematically evaluated the project's ability to 1) "enhance the government capabilities with a focus on high-value-added policy support for innovation and sustainable investment", 2) "expand innovator network to ensure 'innovation for all'", 3) "support ecosystem conducive to innovation, collaboration and leadership", 4) "promote innovation-based sustainable investment and development in China and other developing countries through a solution exchange mechanisms" and 5) concluded the actual outputs and lessons learned.

The evaluation criteria encompass several key aspects, including the project's relevance, effectiveness, efficiency, and sustainability. Notably, particular emphasis is placed on assessing the project's positive contributions towards gender equality and the involvement of vulnerable groups in sustainable development innovation. The report will comprehensively present the highlights of the project in the design and implementation processes, summarize the main successful experience, and deeply analyze the weaknesses of the project and their underlying reasons, and offer corresponding recommendations based on the progress of the project.

The evaluation scope also encompasses a comprehensive assessment of the project's impact on **gender equality and the empowerment of women (GEEW)**. This evaluation focuses specifically on the extent to which the project has contributed to promoting gender equality, addressing gender-based discrimination, and empowering women in various aspects of their lives. To this end, the evaluation examines key indicators such as women's participation and leadership in project activities, access to resources and opportunities, and the inclusion of gender perspectives in project design and implementation. It also considers the effectiveness of gender mainstreaming strategies and the project's ability to address gender disparities and promote positive change in the lives of women and girls.

4.2 Evaluation Objectives

The main purposes of this midterm evaluation are as follows:

- To evaluation the relevance, effectiveness, efficiency, sustainability and social inclusiveness of project interventions;
- To evaluate the exchange and learning between project partners;
- To evaluate the project implementation of the relevant agencies;
- To evaluate whether the project has enhanced the innovation-based sustainable development capability of CDHT;

- To evaluate whether the project has brought about international cooperation and exchange, and created and shared knowledge and experience;
- To evaluate the pros and cons of the cooperation model of the project, and whether it can provide experience for the development of other regions;
- To evaluate the sustainability of the project, i.e. whether it can bring sustainable development momentum to CDHT in a narrow sense, and whether it can enhance the cooperation between the UNDP and local governments in China in a broad sense.

4.3 Evaluation Criteria and Key Evaluation Questions

This report adopts the core content of the *OECD/DAC Principles for Evaluation of Development Assistance*, and conducts a comprehensive evaluation of project implementation. The 22 key evaluation questions were formulated (see Table 4 for details).

Table 4 Evaluation Criteria and Key Evaluation Question

Evaluation Criteria	Key Evaluation Question
Relevance	1. To what extent is the project aligned with the national development priorities, the expected outputs and outcomes listed in the CPD, the UNDP Strategic Plan and the SDGs?
	2. To what extent has the project contributed to theories of change for the expected outcomes and outputs listed in the CPD?
	3. How relevant are the overall design and the approach of the project?
	4. To what extent were the perspectives of those who may influence the outcome, and those who can provide information or other resources to achieve the stated outcome, considered during the project design process?
	5. To what extent has the project promoted gender equality, women's empowerment and the human rights-based approach?
	6. To what extent is the project adaptable to the needs of the different target groups?
Effectiveness	7. To what extent has the project contributed to the expected outcomes and outputs listed in the CPD, the SDGs, the UNDP Strategic Plan and the national development priorities?
	8. To what extent have the project outputs been achieved in terms of time and quality?
	9. What factors enabled or hindered the achievements of expected outputs and outcomes? Are the outcomes and outputs of the project clear, realistic and feasible within its framework?
	10. To what extent are stakeholders involved in the implementation of the project?
	11. To what extent has the project contributed to the realization of gender equality, women's empowerment and human rights?
	12. To what extent has the project been affected by COVID-19? What measures have been taken to offset the impact of COVID-19?
Efficiency	13. To what extent has the project management structure outlined in the project document produced the desired results?

	14. Were resources (funds, human resources, time, expertise, etc.) allocated strategically to achieve expected outcomes?
	15. To what extent were funds and activities delivered in a timely manner?
Sustainability	16. To what extent did the interventions help to sustain the results achieved in the project?
	17. Are there any social or political risks that could jeopardize the sustainability of the project outcomes?
	18. Does the government agencies in CDHT, which are supported by the project, have any corresponding plans to ensure the sustainability of the project outcomes after the project is over? What are they? What can be done to strengthen the exit strategy and sustainability?
Gender	19. To what extent have gender equality and women's empowerment been addressed in the design, implementation and monitoring of the project?
	20. To what extent has the project contributed to positive change in terms of gender equality and women's empowerment? Are there unintended effects on women, men or vulnerable groups?
Crosscutting issues	21. To what extent have the improvised people, the indigenous and disabled people, women, men and other vulnerable and marginalized groups benefited from the project?
	22. To what extent has the project incorporated interventions on human rights, disabilities and vulnerable groups?

4.4 Evaluation Framework

This report has been structured in accordance with the evaluation criteria and guiding questions stipulated in the Terms of Reference (TOR) document. Reflecting on the project's theory of change, the evaluation team conducted a systematic analysis, assessing the project's objectives, activities, outputs, short-term effects, long-term effects, impacts, and the logical progression towards realizing reforms across five dimensions: Needs Evaluation, Theoretical Evaluation, Process Evaluation, Impact Evaluation, and Comprehensive Evaluation.

Needs Evaluation

The Needs Evaluation aims to analyze the project stakeholders' target needs and gauge the degree to which the project addresses these needs. Key questions include: How well does the project align with national development priorities, the expected outputs and outcomes listed in the Country Programme Document (CPD), the UNDP Strategic Plan, and the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)? To what extent has the project enhanced theories of change for the expected outcomes and outputs listed in the CPD? Has the project promoted gender equality, women's empowerment, and a human rights-based approach? How adaptable is the project to the varying needs of different target groups?

Theoretical Evaluation

The Theoretical Evaluation centers around the project's design responsiveness towards the project objectives, specifically in relation to the national and regional SDGs. It tests the project's feasibility with regards to design, exploring questions such as: Are the expected outcomes and outputs clearly

defined? Can the proposed solutions effectively achieve these outcomes and outputs? How well do these outcomes and outputs align with the capabilities of the implementing agencies?

Process Evaluation

The Process Evaluation evaluates the project's activities, operations, and processes, delving into why the project may or may not have achieved its expected outputs. It aids in identifying if the project's anticipated outputs have been realized and assesses the efficiency of the implementation process.

Impact Evaluation

The Impact Evaluation examines whether the project effectively addresses the specific needs of the target groups. It observes the project implementation's support and contributions to sustainable development innovation and gender mainstreaming. This Evaluation aims to confirm if the expected outputs have been obtained (direct impact) and if they have fostered long-term development (sustainable impact).

Comprehensive Evaluation

The Comprehensive Evaluation evaluates the project's overall contribution, its societal impact, and summarizes the local experience and lessons learned by the project in terms of regional sustainable development. It encapsulates the experiences, lessons, and best practices that could be potentially utilized in future projects.

Guided by the aforementioned evaluation logic, the evaluation team aims to uncover the primary paths from planned outputs to key activities, as well as the external impacts and lessons learned during the process. This approach will enable us to assess the project implementation's relevance, effectiveness, efficiency, sustainability, and social inclusiveness, and provide pertinent recommendations for improvement.

4.5 Data Collection Methods

Primary Data Collection

The primary data collection process includes online/offline interviews with all types of stakeholders and beneficiaries which majorly include:

- Interviews with staff from the PMO (innovation lab) were held, in which all project managers and members participated.
- The evaluation team conducted on-the-spot research at the PMO. They visited the working environment of the project, the main venues for activities, and the SPARK Innovation Center for Zero-Carbon Future.
- Interviews with representatives of the main partners of the project were held, including the staff of the UNDP China Office, the CDHTMC, and the CICETE. All the interviewees were deeply involved in the design and implementation of the project.

- Online interviews with representatives of project participants were held. Participant representatives talked about the process and effects of the project and provided their suggestions for the future development of the project from their personal experience.
- Case materials of typical activities were included.

Secondary Data Collection

The evaluation team intensively read and reviewed all available project-related documents, including:

- Project Document
- Annual Work Plans
- Annual Work Summaries
- Risk Evaluation Reports
- Project Audit Reports
- Project Travel Reports
- PMO Meeting Minutes
- Related content on the official website and WeChat official account of the project partner
- Media coverage related to the project and its activities

The evaluation will employ a comprehensive approach to ensure the collection of data related to gender equality and the empowerment of women (GEEW). Data collection tools, such as surveys and interview guides, will be carefully designed to include specific questions targeting GEEW issues, enabling the uncovering of differential experiences, impacts, and challenges faced by women and men. The evaluation team will conduct interviews with a diverse range of respondents, including both women and men, in order to capture a wide range of perspectives and ensure a comprehensive understanding of the gender dynamics at play.

4.6 Data Analysis Methods

Outcome Mapping

Outcome mapping is a method of planning, monitoring and evaluating development initiatives. Through an underlying framework, relevant data on immediate changes are collected. These changes may lead to longer, more transformative changes, and is able to provide a rational evaluation of the “intervention-outcome” relation, examine the validity of theory of change, and thus promote sustainable social change. The strengths of outcome mapping are: being able to identify individuals, groups, or organizations whose behaviors are influenced by the project; being able to plan and monitor behavioral changes and strategies to support these changes and thus ensure that they do not deviate from expected outcomes; being able to review certain questions more accurately through constructing an evaluation framework to adapt to evaluation questions. The application of outcome mapping strengthens the project team’s understanding of the change process and improves the efficiency of the realization of expected outcomes and outputs.

Beneficiary Evaluation

The beneficiary evaluation refers to the evaluation and measurement of the value of the project through the perception and evaluation of the project beneficiaries. Beneficiary evaluation is a qualitative analysis method that attempts to gain understanding of a project from shared experiences and observations. The key indicator of this evaluation method is how the intended beneficiaries evaluate the value of the work, project or policy, and its main purpose is to clarify how the intended beneficiaries evaluate the planned or ongoing development activities. In the beneficiary evaluation, attention must be paid to different stakeholder groups, especially the perception and evaluation of the project by women groups, youth groups, and special groups.

Contribution Analysis

Contribution analysis aims to help project managers, researchers and decision makers evaluate the contribution that project activities have made or are making to specific outputs. It is a project evaluation method for evaluating and inferring causality. Contribution analysis reduces uncertainty about an intervention's contribution to an observed output by understanding why an observed project's expected output was or was not achieved. In this regard, it also excludes the role played by other internal and external factors. Contribution analysis provides reasoning methods and factual evidence for project evaluation. Based on this, reasonable evaluation conclusions will be drawn, i.e., at a certain level of reliability, a certain project has made an important contribution to the outputs produced.

Gender-responsive Evaluation

The evaluation will employ gender-responsive tools and data analysis techniques to ensure a comprehensive assessment of gender dynamics. Gender-responsive tools, such as surveys and interview guides, will be designed to capture gender-specific experiences, impacts, and challenges. Data analysis techniques will include a gender lens, examining disaggregated data by sex and analyzing patterns and trends specific to women and men. By utilizing these gender-responsive tools and data analysis techniques, the evaluation aims to provide a nuanced understanding of the gender dimensions of the program, enabling evidence-based recommendations for promoting gender equality and empowering women.

4.7 Evaluation Matrix

Table 5 Evaluation Matrix

Evaluation Criteria	Evaluation Questions	Data Collection Methods	Data Analysis Methods
Relevance	To what extent is the project aligned with the national development priorities, the expected outputs and outcomes listed in the Country Programme Document (CPD), UNDP Strategic Plan and the SDGs?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Project Document • Annual Work Plans • Annual Work Summaries • Risk Evaluation Reports • Interviews with staff from the PMO (innovation lab) • Interviews with representatives of the main partners of the project, including the staff of the UNDP China Office, the CDHTMC, and the CICETE • Case materials of typical activities 	Outcome Mapping: Examines the validity of theory of change, provides a framework for collecting data on immediate, underlying changes that lead to longer, more transformative changes, and is able to provide a rational evaluation of the “intervention-outcome” relation.
	To what extent has the project contributed to theories of change for the expected outcomes and outputs listed in the CPD?		
	How relevant are the overall design and the approach of the project?		
	To what extent were the perspectives of those who may influence the outcome, and those who can provide information or other resources to achieve the stated outcome, considered during the project design process?		
	To what extent has the project promoted gender equality, women’s empowerment and the human rights-based approach?		
	To what extent is the project adaptable to the needs of the different target groups?		

Effectiveness	To what extent has the project contributed to the expected outcomes and outputs listed in the CPD, the SDGs, the UNDP Strategic Plan and the national development priorities?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Annual Work Document • Annual Work Summaries • Risk Evaluation Reports • Project Travel Reports • PMO Meeting Minutes • Related content on the official website and WeChat official account of the project partner • Media coverage related to the project and its activities • Interviews with staff from the PMO (innovation lab) • Interviews with representatives of the main partners of the project, including the staff of the UNDP China Office, the CDHTMC, and the CICETE • Interview with representatives of project participants • Case materials of typical activities 	<p>Outcome Mapping: Examines the validity of theory of change, provides a framework for collecting data on immediate, underlying changes that lead to longer, more transformative changes, and is able to provide a rational evaluation of the “intervention-outcome” relation.</p> <p>Beneficiary evaluation: Evaluates and measures project effectiveness through project beneficiary groups’ perception and evaluation of the project. Based on qualitative analysis, project participants are observed and interviewed so that their feelings and opinions are collected, which serves as a basis to understanding and evaluating the project outputs.</p> <p>Contribution analysis: Aims to help managers, policymakers draw conclusions about the contribution their project make or is making to a particular output, and reduces uncertainty about an intervention’s contribution to an observed output by understanding why an observed project’s expected output was or was not achieved.</p>
	To what extent have the project outputs been achieved in terms of time and quality?		
	What factors enabled or hindered the achievements of expected outputs and outcomes?		
	Are the goals and outputs of the project clear, realistic and feasible within its framework?		
	To what extent are stakeholders involved in the implementation of the project?		
	To what extent has the project contributed to the realization of gender equality, women’s empowerment and human rights?		
	To what extent has the project been affected by COVID-19?		
	What measures have been taken to offset the impact of COVID-19?		

Efficiency	To what extent has the project management structure outlined in the project document produced the desired results?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Project Document • Annual Work Plans • Annual Work Summaries • Risk Evaluation Reports • Project Audit Reports • Project Travel Reports • Interviews with staff from the PMO (innovation lab) • Interviews with representatives of the main partners of the project, including the staff of the UNDP China Office, the CDHTMC, and the CICETE 	<p>Outcome Mapping: Examines the validity of theory of change, provides a framework for collecting data on immediate, underlying changes that lead to longer, more transformative changes, and is able to provide a rational evaluation of the “intervention-outcome” relation.</p> <p>Contribution analysis: Aims to help managers, policymakers draw conclusions about the contribution their project make or is making to a particular output, and reduces uncertainty about an intervention’s contribution to an observed output by understanding why an observed project’s expected output was or was not achieved.</p>
	To what extent were financial and human resources utilized economically?		
	Were resources (funds, human resources, time, expertise, etc.) allocated strategically to achieve expected outcomes?		
	To what extent were funds and activities delivered in a timely manner?		
Sustainability	To what extent did the interventions help to sustain the results achieved in the project?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Project Document • Annual Work Plans • Annual Work Summaries • Risk Evaluation Reports • Project Audit Report • Interviews with staff from the PMO (innovation lab), in 	<p>Outcome Mapping: Examines the validity of theory of change, provides a framework for collecting data on immediate, underlying changes that lead to longer, more transformative changes, and is able to provide a rational evaluation of the “intervention-outcome” relation.</p>
	Are there any financial risks that could jeopardize the sustainability of the project outputs?		
	To what extent are financial and economic resources available to sustain the benefits achieved by the project?		

	Are there any social or political risks that could jeopardize the sustainability of the project outcomes?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • which all project managers and members participated • Interviews with representatives of the main partners of the project, including the staff of the UNDP China Office, the CDHTMC, and the CICETE 	Contribution analysis: Aims to help managers, policymakers draw conclusions about the contribution their project make or is making to a particular output, and reduces uncertainty about an intervention's contribution to an observed output by understanding why an observed project's expected output was or was not achieved.
	Does the government agencies in CDHT , which are supported by the project, have any corresponding plans to ensure the sustainability of the project outcomes after the project is over? What are they?		
	What can be done to strengthen the exit strategy and sustainability?		
Crosscutting Issues	To what extent have the improvised people, the indigenous and disabled people, women, men and other vulnerable and marginalized groups benefited from the project?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Annual Work Plans • Annual Work Summaries • Related content on the official website and WeChat official account of the project partner • Media coverage related to the project and its activities • Interviews with staff from the PMO (innovation lab) • Interview with representatives of project participants • Case materials of typical activities 	<p>Beneficiary evaluation: Evaluates and measures project effectiveness through project beneficiary groups' perception and evaluation of the project. Based on qualitative analysis, project participants are observed and interviewed so that their feelings and opinions are collected, which serves as a basis to understanding and evaluating the project outputs.</p> <p>Contribution analysis: Aims to help managers, policymakers draw conclusions about the contribution their project make or is making to a particular output, and reduces uncertainty about an intervention's contribution to an observed output by understanding why an observed</p>
	To what extent has the project incorporated interventions on human rights, disabilities and vulnerable groups?		

			project's expected output was or was not achieved.
--	--	--	--

4.8 Evaluation Schedule

Table 6 Evaluation Schedule

No.	Interview Topic	Interviewee	Time
1	<p>Comprehensive Evaluation</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Objectives and Guiding Principle Project design Implementation Process Achievements and Challenges Visiting SPARK Innovation Center for Zero-Carbon Future 	<p>Zhao Yingzhe Project Manager Meng Xinyuan Project Assistant, PMO</p>	<p>Morning of 6 June 2023</p>
2	<p>Project Component Evaluation</p> <p>Output 2: Expanded innovator network to ensure “innovation for all”</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> INSPIRO Network <p>Output 4: Enabling innovation-based sustainable development in China and other developing countries promoted through a solution exchange mechanism, and to leverage existing STI to improve South-South cooperation and make contributions to China’s main global development measure</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Establish a dialogue mechanism promoting information exchange, multilateral communication and sharing best practices and experiences: conduct a series of seminars on innovation, and create a circular tour route on the 7th floor of the Centre for China-Europe Cooperation (CCEC) SPARK Innovation Center for Zero-Carbon Future 	<p>Gong Jun Partnerships and Innovation Analyst, PMO Liu Yilin Communications Assistant, PMO</p>	<p>Afternoon of June 6 2023</p>

3	Project Component Evaluation Plan 3: Enabling ecosystem conducive to innovation collaboration and leadership <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Re:Think Conference 	Zhao Yingzhe Project Manager	Afternoon of 7 June 2023
4	Project Impact Evaluation <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Participation Process of Participants • Participants' gains • Suggestions from participants • Participant Stickiness 	Fan Hongyi Member of INSPIRO, Leader of the Community of Global Outstanding Young Leaders, World Economic Forum, Young Entrepreneur	Afternoon of 7 June 2023
5	Project Objectives and Process Evaluation <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Expected outcomes and outputs • Implementation Participation • Change of leadership of CDHT • Overall Effects and Experience • Anticipations and Suggestions for Improvement 	Staff at the Development Branch of the Sichuan Pilot Free Trade Zone	Morning of 8 June 2023
6	Suggestions from Project impact Evaluation participants <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Participant Screening Mechanism 	Liu Yingqiang Member of INSPIRO, Chairman of the Board of Directors of MagicWe	Afternoon of 8 June 2023
7	Project Design <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Process of Project Participation • Design ideas, expected results and impact • Perfection the design and construction of the SPARK Innovation Center for Zero-Carbon Future 	Shen Bowen Partner of the multimedia interactive program of the SPARK Innovation Center Tang Ke Partner of the overall design and construction of the SPARK Innovation Center	Afternoon of 9 June 2023
8	Project Component Evaluation <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Research Report • Re:Think Conference 	Liang Jie Sustainability Analyst, PMO	Morning of 12 June 2023
9	Comprehensive Evaluation <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Project Strategy Blueprint 	Wu Zhiqiang	Afternoon of 6 July 2023

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Innovative Mechanisms of the Project • Experience 	Risk and Compliance Officer, UNDP China	
10	Comprehensive Evaluation <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Project Strategy Blueprint • Innovative Mechanisms of the Project • Experience and suggestions 	Zhang Wei Assistant Resident Representative, UNDP China	Afternoon of 12 July 2023
11	Comprehensive Evaluation <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Challenges facing the project • Recommendations for improving the project 	Liu Jun Director of Division I of UN Programmes, CICETE Li Boyang Program Officer of Division I of UN Programmes, CICETE	Afternoon of 13 July 2023

4.9 Evaluation Challenges and Countermeasure

Affected by factors such as the nature and characteristics of the project, the ambiguity of project expected outcomes and outputs, and the project cycle, there are certain challenges in project evaluation. The evaluation team proposes the following countermeasures (Table 7).

Table 7 Challenges and countermeasures of this project evaluation

Evaluation Challenge	Countermeasures
Ambiguity of the project expected outcomes and outputs conflict with the clarity of evaluation criteria	Mainly adopt the logic of reverse reasoning; trace back the project expected outcomes and outputs and its realization degree from the project implementation process
Evaluation of causal relationship between the project plan and the project expected outcomes and outputs	Adopt the theory of change; qualitatively measure the causal relationship chain between the project plan and the activities
The cycle of project effectiveness is not synchronized with the established cycle of project implementation	Make a comprehensive judgment on the effectiveness of the project based on the existing implementation outputs of the project, and predict whether the ultimate expected outputs can be achieved

V. FINDINGS

After a thorough review/analysis of the collected data and desk review of project related documents, **the evaluation team comes up with 29 findings categorized by one overarching criterion (ToC, monitoring and oversight, risk management) plus the five evaluation criteria: relevance, effectiveness, efficiency, sustainability, and social inclusiveness.** These findings not only comprehensively evaluate the project's main strategies by the four planned outputs, but more importantly, it assesses to what extent the outcomes/outputs are achieved in dimensions of the effective use of resources, the sustainability of development impact, and the attentions to gender/cross-cutting issues.

5.1 Overarching Issues: Project ToC, Monitoring and Oversight, and Risk Management

5.1.1 Project ToC


Finding 1: The ToC of the project is delicately planned and logically sound, with top-level designs that are ambitious and micro implementation activities that are detailed and feasible considering the capacity of the stakeholders. Nonetheless, the project design doesn't contain a Logframe that contains specific indicators and their means of verification. This may introduce potential operational risks.




The theory of change is a tool for result-oriented project management and evaluation, which is used to describe the logical process or causal framework of the changes caused by interventions, revealing the key assumptions behind the intervention and the impact of potential influencing factors on the expected outcomes and outputs. That is to say, it focuses on "how a project produces effect" rather than just "whether it is effective". The theory of change is mainly composed of seven elements: problems, outcomes, indicators, interventions, capabilities, funding and assumptions.

The core steps of the theory of change are to clarify the project purposes, describe the approaches and stages of the project implementation, establish a causal relationship between the process and purpose based on a logical framework, and regularly assess whether the project is developing in the right track.

This section of the evaluation aims to conduct a thorough analysis of the project's ToC. Adopting a theoretical viewpoint, this section discusses if the activities would contribute to the actualization of the intermediary results, the results the outputs, the outputs the outcomes, and eventually the outcomes and objectives and principle. Such discussions will be arranged in a top-down order. A detailed version of the ToC which demonstrates the flow of change from specific activities to overall objectives of this project is shown as follows (Table 8):

Table 8 Project ToC Structure

Objective: to utilize STI to address the most difficult challenges of poverty, climate change, resiliency and sustainability with a vision to address gaps in policy, technology and science to catalyze at-scale impacts domestically and replicate successes regionally.


Outcomes	<p>Outcome 1: Enhance CDHT's innovation competencies and global perspective, incorporate the SDGs into future development plans and foster a transition away from a focus on pure economic output to sustainable and inclusive development.</p>	<p>Outcome 2: To establish and expand the innovation networks for the globe with CDHT as the pilot, explore a pathway to internationalization and enhance the motivation for opening up; to explore and foster innovative pathways to internationalization based on the SDGs through organizing flagship international activities.</p>
		
Outputs	<p>Output 1: Government capabilities were enhanced with a focus on high-value-added policy support for innovation and sustainable investment, the core of which is to foster the diffusion and expansion of STI through targeted competence-building measures, in order to support high-quality decision-making, research, demonstration and publicity.</p> <p>Output 2: Innovator network was expanded to ensure "innovation for all".</p>	<p>Output 3: Ecosystem conducive to innovation collaboration and leadership was enabled.</p> <p>Output 4: Innovation-based sustainable development in China and other developing countries was promoted through a solution exchange mechanism and existing STI was leveraged to improve South-South cooperation and make contributions to China's main global development measure.</p>
		
Intermediary Results	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. The capacity of innovation-supporting institutions across four core dimensions are strengthened, including policy design, implementation quality, policy coherence and policy consistency and predictability. 2. The ability of private sector partners in long-term innovation planning, target setting, monitoring of performance, and deployment of R&D related human resources skills and incentives is improved. 3. The public-private links by working with the government to support the private sector in achieving the improvements is strengthened. 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. An innovation lab is established in the CDHT Zone as a convening platform that provides integrated support and services to innovation-based development in the city, with the potential to extend such services to other parts of the country as well as the region. 2. Innovative partners for foreign direct investment and trade, public-private partnerships, South-South cooperation and development assistance, or any of such forms combined to facilitate effective knowledge transfer and address practical development issues, are fostered. 3. The platform of innovative solution exchange will be jointly launched by UNDP, Chengdu Hi-tech Zone and other stakeholders. 4. Efforts are made by UNDP and stakeholders in organizing and participating in knowledge sharing events to disseminate the successful experience and methodologies disseminated.
		
Activities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Conduct investigations and surveys on current policies and regulations of STI in national and local settings. • Evaluate policy mechanisms and their effects related to innovation-based development in Chengdu. • Review global practices and experiences related to the management of innovation-supporting policies in cities. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Launch an innovative lab in Chengdu Hi-tech Zone in collaboration with multiple stakeholders from the government, academia, and international organizations. • Set up a Technical Advisory Group consisting of top-notch experts in diversified fields to provide strategic oversight, policy support and technical advisory to the functioning of the innovation lab.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide suggestions for innovation-friendly laws, regulation, policies and guidelines in Chengdu. • Organize training workshops on policies, regulation, and technical standards and help set policy priorities for both short- and long-term STI management in Chengdu • Summarize industry and international experiences, build a policy framework and path that would suit the needs of sustainable investment in the South-western region. • Develop cross-disciplinary capacity building activities (training programmes, study tours and research etc.) targeted at youth groups, social organization and community-based groups. • Foster the creation and cultivation of a youth innovators community to create a pool of knowledge and experience. • Sponsor workshops, innovation awards, hackathons, prize challenges or similar events to encourage localized innovation and community participation. • Organize an annual innovation conference to facilitate exchange, mutual learning and networking among innovators. • Organize training sessions related to global best practices and experience in improving innovation management practices for the private sector. • Investigate the organizing process, planning, monitoring, operation and other management practices of firm-level innovation. • Provide advisory services to address capacity gaps and help companies, especially seed, start-ups and SMEs implement best practices in innovation management. • Develop a one-stop-shop of applicable tools and instruments, to incubate and support start-ups with strong focus on social good. • Establish a cooperation and interaction mechanism for sustainable development in Southwest China, including investors, entity operators, and intermediates to facilitate the construction and development of an ecosystem, initiate in-depth cooperation with Europe and Southeast Asia, promote technology transfer, innovate incubation and cross-border cooperation. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Facilitate exchange with and adoption of global and national STI resources, foster partnerships between Chengdu Hi-tech Zone and the world's leading innovators through organizing events, forums, workshops and seminars in the local and international level. • Promote the co-creation, sharing and application of tech-based and non-tech based solutions for pressing development challenges. • Connect fintech with social innovation, advance fintech for good in areas such as inclusive finance and impact investing, around technologies like big data, cloud computing, machine learning, blockchain, etc. • Jointly conduct systemic research in collaboration with stakeholders and publish key knowledge products. • Organize an annual challenge week. • Help government conduct partnership mapping, leveraging global experience, expertise and best practices to streamline policies and improve mechanisms to systematically engage stakeholder in the process of knowledge transfer. • Develop and implement pilot and demonstration projects for innovation-based development, with a focus on poverty alleviation; Identify and select demonstration cases for various models of innovative partnerships, conduct case analysis to document experience and lessons learned for dissemination and advocacy. • Design an M&E framework and criteria to assess the efficiency of innovation knowledge transfer for the SDGs. Set up multi-sectoral evaluation working group to conduct working group to conduct participatory monitoring and evaluation work. Summarize lessons learned and good practices for global dissemination. • Jointly launch the platform for innovative solution exchange. • Map out available innovative development solutions across key SDG sectors and create an inventory of such practices in the region. • Establish pilot projects on innovation for the SDGs in China and selected South-South Cooperation countries to serve as demonstrations of Innovation-driven development. • Identify development bottlenecks at SDG pilot communities, and select 1-2 problems to pilot the solution exchange mechanism by matching the problem with innovative best-practices solutions from the inventory. • Validate models and results, identify appropriate opportunities to scale up and
--	--	--

	<p>replicate successful experiences in other contexts.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Encourage local institutional and individuals to join impact investment and facilitate potential regional cooperation, therefore matching the demand and supply sides. • Leverage existing high-profile events and mechanisms in Chengdu including the Western China International Fair, organize international workshops as part of the main event or side event, inviting participants from South-South Cooperation countries for knowledge exchange on STI solutions for the SDGs, showcasing and exchanging Chengdu's and other countries' STI policy outcomes, best practices, challenges and pathways towards 2030. • Form working groups with enterprises, universities, and research centres from South-South cooperation countries to establish a network to explore effective and sustainable solution exchange mechanisms under the South-South cooperation framework. • Organize roundtable meetings with participants from leading high-tech zones around the world in knowledge exchange. • Support capacity building and handholding of stakeholders, nurture partnerships across stakeholders, nationally and internationally, to promote the development and replication of the solution exchange mechanism.
--	--

This project takes “innovation” as the core concept. Based on a brand-new approach to project design and implementation, it aims to enhance the innovation ability and influence of CDHT. On the one hand, it will help unleash CDHT’s innovation-based development momentum and promote the transformation of its development path from productivity-driven to innovation-driven. On the other hand, it will seek to enhance the domestic and global influence of CDHT by connecting innovators from all over the world and exploring a pathway to internationalization, with CDHT as the pilot.

Based on the above objectives, the guiding principle of the project is to utilize STI to address the most difficult challenges of poverty, climate change, resiliency and sustainability with a vision to address gaps in policy, technology and science to catalyze at-scale impacts domestically and replicate successes regionally.

As indicated in the project document, technology plays a major role in identifying new and more effective solutions that add value for the people affected by development challenges, insofar as it:

- Generates new technology applications;
- Tests new business models to unlock financing needed to achieve the SDGs;
- Develops the next generation of public services with citizens and governments-based user-centric approaches;

- Builds real-time information systems to improve transparent and responsive decision-making; and
- Leverages behavioural insights to better diagnose development problems and design evidence-based experiments accordingly.

All aforementioned yields of technology contribute significantly to the realization of the objectives of this project by fostering innovation, efficiency, and effectiveness. By generating new technology applications, development solutions become more adaptable and tailored to local contexts. Testing new business models helps unlock diverse financing sources, accelerating progress towards the SDGs. The integration of user-centric approaches enhances public services' relevance and impact, while real-time information systems empower transparent decision-making. Furthermore, leveraging behavioral insights enables more accurate issue diagnosis and evidence-based experiment design, leading to more targeted and impactful interventions across various development issues.

Therefore, to maximize the technological and innovative capacity of CDHT from a policy design point-of-view, the project presents two components of the guiding principle, each corresponding to an intended outcome, which can be further divided into two intended outputs. For example, by generating knowledge products, experience sharing events, and global best practices through Output 1, governments of the area could attain more pertinent know-how regarding policy-making that yields to maximum efficiency in stimulating technological innovation, which eventually leads to a more sustainable and thriving economy, contributing to the SDGs. Also, by establishing the innovation lab as planned by Output 3 and 4, the project supplies the beneficiaries with the essential hardware that leads to a synergetic and conglomerative effect, facilitating the swift exchange of ideas and therefore innovative breakthroughs. Such Outputs also feed the efforts in actualizing the other intended Outputs of the project.

Activities are designed accordingly. The project is implemented by the cooperation network formed by UNDP Innovation Lab, CDHTMC, and the PAB. The project document has listed a library of specific and implementable activities that would contribute to the intended outputs and outcomes. They provide a concrete map of actions needed to bring about the intended changes.

Succinctly, the ToC of the project is delicately planned and logically sound, with top-level designs that are ambitious and micro implementation activities that are detailed and feasible considering the capacity of the stakeholders. If executed smoothly, the ToC of the project would offer a brand-new and holistic approach to the developmental issues of CDHT by combining hardware upgrades with improvements in policy ‘software’, providing consolidated change in capacity, ecosystem and policy environment for a diverse base of beneficiaries as well as people from other regions that might potentially benefit from the pilot project through future exchanges of innovation experiences and best practices.

Nonetheless, due to the lack of quantitative indicators in the original design, it wouldn’t be possible to form a Logframe of the project that contains specific indicators and their means of verification. Considering the massive size and considerable ambition of the project, the absence of a trackable Logframe may lead to difficulties in the monitoring and evaluation work, eventually introducing additional operational risks.

5.1.2 Monitoring and Oversight

Finding 2: The project values the design and review of activities. It sets AWP based on the annual review each year and is subject to an annual audit. However, more rigorous M&E practices such as statistical tracking, case follow-up, and outcome verification are needed to strengthen the project's monitoring framework and assess the overall achievement of objectives.

UNDP together with the PMO is responsible for the project monitoring and process evaluation. The PSC plays an important role in guiding and communicating through the annual meetings and makes relevant decisions for timely adjustments. The PSC is attended by representatives of the project participants to review the progress of the project and suggestions for improvement from the perspective of their respective organizations.

In the interviews with the representatives, the interviewees said that several meetings were held during the implementation of the project to discuss the theme of activities and the AWP. In the meantime, the meetings also made adjustments to the project according to the external environment and the concurrent conditions.

After each activity, all parties involved in the project reviewed their works and offered their perspectives. An outcome report was then published, leaving more detailed textual information for each activity. As most of the members of the PMO have rich experience in project implementation, they can find the strengths and weaknesses of the implementation through first-hand experience.

However, the assessment and verification of activities is highly individualized. Besides, the project does not have sufficient first-hand materials in terms of data and statistics, case tracking and follow-up interviews of participants. Therefore, the control of the overall response to the project's objectives still needs to be improved.

5.1.3 Risk Management

Finding 3: The project team adopts a proactive stance towards risk management, maintaining a regular monitoring and review process of the risk register. This approach is proved to serve as a crucial basis for informed management decisions, enabling adaptive management and necessary adjustments.

The evaluation team prioritizes two risks in this report: sporadic COVID control measures and changes in local leadership.

Impacts of COVID: The project has been significantly affected by the impact of COVID-19, resulting in the need to reschedule, delay, or cancel certain planned activities. To address these challenges, the project team has implemented mitigation measures in examples of:

- **Study Tour Cancellation:** The originally planned study tour to Europe had to be canceled due to travel restrictions and safety concerns. To adapt, alternative activities that can be conducted online or locally have been identified. This ensures that progress continues and knowledge exchange is maintained.

- Re-scheduling the Re:Think Event: The offline Re:Think event, initially scheduled to take place in Chengdu, has been postponed due to pandemic constraints. To mitigate the impact and ensure engagement, the event has been transformed into a combined online and offline approach. This modification allows for participation and interaction through virtual platforms, while essential elements of the event are still conducted in person whenever possible.

By implementing these mitigation measures, the project team aims to minimize disruptions caused by COVID-19 and ensure the effective progression of project activities. Online resources are utilized, and event formats are adapted to suit the prevailing circumstances.

Changes in Leadership: Additionally, a change in the senior management team of the local government in CDHT has occurred. This leadership transition required additional time to establish mutual understanding and consensus with the new government officials, resulting in a slight delay in signing and implementing the 2020 Annual Work Plan (AWP). However, the project management office (PMO) staff effectively managed this risk through proactive communication and clarification of the UNDP's concept of sustainable development. As a result, the change in CDHT's leadership had minimal impact on the overall progress of the project.

5.2 Relevance

Finding 4: The project's activities and interventions are designed and implemented in line with the 2030 Global Agenda of SDGs, UNSDCF China, and UNDP CPD China. They also have largely met and adapted to the needs of all participating parties.

The design of this project is in line with the guiding principle of the UNDP's innovation Strategic Plan, which is exploring new ways of development through a process of innovation at the country and regional levels. At the same time, it also complies with the UNDP CPD China, facilitating the achievement of goals in social governance, economic development and environmental protection. The shared goal of all parties is to bolster the innovation capacity and influence of the CDHT. Through the adoption of a novel approach to project design and implementation, the project aims to strengthen CDHT's trajectory towards innovation-driven future development. Moreover, it seeks to foster local and international exchanges, knowledge sharing, and international collaborations within CDHT. By pursuing these objectives, the project endeavors to establish replicable national innovation practices for sustainable development and construct a collaborative platform for global sustainable development. All project interventions directly align with this shared goal and have significantly contributed to the realization of the anticipated outcomes and outputs.

Throughout the project's design and implementation phases, a strong emphasis has been placed on integrating and aligning with the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). This comprehensive approach ensures that the project's activities, strategies, and outcomes are closely intertwined with the key targets and principles of the SDGs, enabling a synergistic pursuit of the 2030 agenda. Notably, the project places particular emphasis on the following five SDGs, which serve as the cornerstone of its carried-out activities.

- SDG 5: Achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls

- SDG 9: Build resilient infrastructure, promote sustainable industrialization and foster innovation
- SDG 11: Make cities inclusive, safe, resilient and sustainable
- SDG 12: Ensure sustainable consumption and production patterns
- SDG 17: Revitalize the global partnership for sustainable development

The evaluation team has noted with appreciation that this project demonstrates a comprehensive contribution to all three outcomes of the UNDP China Country Program Document (CPD) 2021-2025, albeit to varying degrees. This reflects the project's integrated and holistic approach, further emphasizing its multifaceted nature and the breadth of its outcomes. Its integrative approach and concurrent contributions also speak to its comprehensive and far-reaching impact.

- Primary UNSDCF/CPD Outcome contributed:
 - **CPD Outcome 1:** Relative poverty and multi-dimensional poverty are reduced, and more coordinated development leads to reduction in gaps between rural and urban areas and among regions, as more people in China, including left-behind groups, benefit from sustainable, innovation-driven and shared high-quality economic development, with enhanced access to economic opportunities arising through innovation, entrepreneurship and rural revitalization, enjoying decent work, sustainable livelihoods, and the right to development equally for both women and men.
- Secondary UNSDCF/CPD Outcome contributed:
 - **CPD Outcome 2:** People in China and the region benefit from a healthier and more resilient environment.
 - **CPD Outcome 3:** Through South-South cooperation and humanitarian cooperation, China makes greater contributions to SDG attainment and the principles of the 2030 Agenda, including leaving no one behind.

For example, the evaluation team found that the project has yielded significant research outcomes in areas such as "dual carbon," "sustainable development," and "digital trade." These findings have not only explored fresh avenues for the future development of the CDHT, but also provided valuable decision-making support to the local government and enterprises in their pursuit of sustainable development. Besides, the project has devised and implemented initiatives like the INSPIRO Network and Digital Trade Training Workshop, which cater to the expanding needs of an inclusive innovator network and ensure "innovation for all." These initiatives have effectively met the requirements of young entrepreneurs, facilitating network building and providing access to domestic and international resources, as well as opportunities for exchange and co-creation. In addition, the project launched the Re:Think Conference as a flagship event, which promoted multi-party discussions and innovative collaboration mechanisms on sustainable development issues. Finally, in purpose of promoting the innovation-based sustainable development of China and other developing countries through a solution exchange mechanism, the SPARK Innovation Center for Zero-Carbon Future was designed and built with a physical space as the carrier to showcase the UNDP and CDHT's vision and work on the transformation of high-tech zones, raising awareness of the United Nations SDGs and pathways to net zero.

Finding 5: Based on the SDGs, UNDP CPD China, as well as the local development demands from CDHT, the project has identified the three core areas, namely 1) dual carbon, 2) digital trade and

3) sustainable development. A cooperation network for project implementation has been built by connecting the government, private sector and academia.

The project is designed to strengthen the capability of CDHT 1) to unleash its future development momentum based on innovation and sustainability, 2) to promote the transformation of its development path from productivity-driven to innovation driven, and 3) to actively explore international cooperation of high-tech zones with CDHT as the pilot. The project has successfully convened the private sector, academia, investment community, innovation community and public administration into the interactive process of mutual learning and knowledge sharing. Building upon the dialogues and exchanges, forces are gathered to jointly advocate and promote the international innovation practices of high-tech zones and international cooperation on sustainable investment guided by the principles of sustainable development.

In example of the successful intervention in line with CDHT's development strategy: a total of 6 research reports in the fields of "dual carbon", "sustainable development" and "digital trade", providing decision-making support for the local government of CDHT and enterprises to promote sustainable development. Moreover, the INSPIRO Network was established, effectively expanding the innovator network. The project also held the Re:Think Conference for three consecutive years, creating an ecosystem conducive to innovation collaboration and leadership. Besides, the project built the SPARK Innovation Center for Zero-Carbon Future to show the vision and work of the UNDP and the sustainable development transformation of CDHT in a physical form, and has made contribution to China's major global development initiatives.

Finding 6: The project successfully built the UNDP SDG Innovation Lab (SPARK Lab). As one of the innovation laboratories of the UNDP in the Asia-Pacific region, SPARK Lab helps the project connect with global innovation resources, networks and international experience, and promotes the CDHT to join the innovation networks for the globe.

The UNDP has built innovation laboratories around the world to reshape services with innovation. These innovation labs have brought diverse actors together, identified innovation as one of the key priorities for achieving transformational development change and for creating new solutions for innovation-based development, which would support governments in tackling increasingly complex challenges they are facing. Building upon the Innovation Labs, the UNDP launched the SDG Accelerator Lab Network to implement sustainable development in the form of accelerators.

This project successfully created the SPARK Lab, which is also the first UNDP SDGs Innovation Lab in China. It provides comprehensive support and services for the innovation-based development as a whole in Western China. Based on the review of interviews, the SPARK Lab serves as an integration platform for global innovation resources, helping CDHT to directly connect with global innovation resources, networks, experience and models, and promoting the CDHT to join the innovation-based sustainable development network for the globe so that the projects achievements and experience on innovation-based sustainable development are disseminated both domestically and globally.

5.3. Effectiveness

The evaluation team assesses the project's effectiveness according to its theory of change and results framework. Findings on whether the project achieved its intended objectives and to what extent are assessed by the four outputs.

5.3.1 Output 1: Enhance Government capabilities with a focus on high-value-added policy support for innovation and sustainable investment

One of the four outputs of this project is to enhance the government capabilities with a focus on high-value-added policy support for innovation and sustainable investment. The core of this output is to foster the diffusion and expansion of STI through targeted competence-building measures, and to support high-quality decision-making, research, demonstration and publicity. Therefore, the research results on “carbon peaking and carbon neutrality”, “sustainable development” and “digital trade” were designed and formed by the project, providing decision-making support for the government and enterprises to promote sustainable development.

Finding 7: Two research reports about carbon neutrality were generated, namely *CDHT's Pathway toward Carbon Neutrality and Developing a Next Gen Carbon Service Hub: Strategy research for CDHT*. They were published at the Re:Think event, attracting over 8,000,000 views. These two reports categorize the carbon service industry for the first time, provide a toolkit for building carbon neutrality and position CDHT strategically as an experimental pilot. They have produced extensive social impact. However, the research reports lack the capability to promote policy making and therefore high-quality recommendations on decision-making are still in need.

To strengthen the government capabilities with a focus on high-value-added policy support for innovation and sustainable investment, this project has conducted research on carbon neutrality and provides policy recommendations to CDHT on the strategic development of carbon dioxide emission peaking and carbon neutrality. The project cooperated with the academia and social organizations in completing the following two reports.

The first report *CDHT's Pathway toward Carbon Neutrality* was jointly launched by the SPARK Lab (Chengdu) and the Chengdu Economic Development Academy:

- This report takes CDHT as an example. The research was launched in September 2021. It investigated the three pillar industries of CDHT, namely electronic information industry, bio-pharmaceutical industry and new economic industry, and conducted online targeted surveys on more than 30 enterprises. Four enterprises were interviewed individually, and one enterprise was surveyed offline. In 2022, the second phase of research on the low-carbon transformation strategy of CDHT was carried out to inject vitality into the economic recovery in the post-COVID era. Finally, the report was released at the Re:Think Conference 2022.
- This report analyzes the opportunities and challenges faced by various industries in the process of low-carbon transformation. The report also formulates a set of enabling policies for local governments, provides suggestions for incentivizing and assisting enterprises to achieve net zero emission goals, and provides new approaches and new ideas for multi-stakeholders on how to conduct innovation collaboration in building climate resilient cities. In addition, the report also provides a toolkit detailing key actors and measures needed to help companies develop net-zero emissions strategies and build green capabilities. It also

- provides policy reference for other national high-tech zones to seek their own low-carbon transformation pathway.
- An expert review meeting was held in Beijing on 14 September 2022. Ten experts from carbon finance, carbon data, carbon law and other industries participated online. Experts from Chengdu Municipal Local Financial Regulation Bureau, Sichuan United Environment Exchange, the environment and resources of the High People's Court of Sichuan Province, Sichuan Academy of Environmental Policy and Planning, Southwest Petroleum University, Sichuan University, Tsinghua Sichuan Energy Internet Research Institute of Tsinghua University and other institutes also attended the review meeting.
 - Based on the main findings of the report, the project organized two panel discussions on low-carbon technologies and transition financing in the CDHT.

The second report *Developing a Next Gen Carbon Service Hub: Strategy research for CDHT* was jointly researched by the SPARK Lab (Chengdu) and the China Alliance of Social Value Investment (CASVI), Shenzhen:

- Based on an extensive literature review, expert interviews and interviews with local companies, this report defines and categorizes the carbon services industry (carbon data, climate finance, carbon consulting, carbon legality and carbon advocacy) and analyzes the advantaged of positioning CDHT as a pilot for cultivating and leading the industrial chain hub of the carbon service industry.
- The report proposes for the first time the carbon neutrality service industry as a new industry, and examines the opportunities and challenges of incubating such industries in CDHT.

The two reports had a wide range of social impacts and laid a practical foundation for the carbon-neutrality development of CDHT:

- The two reports were released at the Re:Think Conference, attracting more than 1 million views from around the world, and the post-dissemination volume reached more than 8 million playback times.
- After the reports were released at the conference, it had an influence in Chengdu. For example, cadres of China International Fair for Trade in Services, editors of the China Sustainable Tribute and friends from various media expressed their willingness to study the text of this report.
- During the research process, various stakeholders actively participated, including government officials, industry leaders, policy experts, the academia and the private sector, thus establishing and forming a multi-stakeholder low-carbon transformation community.

Based on the evaluation team's assessment, the research reports generated by the project have demonstrated a significant influence across various societal levels. However, it has been observed that these reports have not been effectively translated into corresponding policies and regulations. Consequently, there is ample room for enhancing the policy advocacy capabilities of the activities associated with the release of research reports.

To address this, closer collaboration with local government entities is essential. The project should prioritize sustainable development issues that are of concern to the government, actively promote research endeavors, conduct relevant activities, and promptly deliver research findings to the government. By providing high-quality decision-making references to the government in a timely

manner, the project can strengthen its policy advocacy role, thereby fostering the development of local policies. For instance, following significant events or meetings, a series of events or meeting briefings can be developed. These briefings can effectively deliver the project's results to the relevant government department, such as the CDHT, amplifying the project's impact and influence.

Finding 8: On the theme of “digital trade”, the project released the *Digital Trade Development Report for Chengdu Hi-tech Industrial Development Zone*, which provides policy recommendations to CDHTMC on digital trade development, with a focus on evaluating the digital trade ecosystem in CDHT.

The project cooperates with Deloitte to release relevant reports on digital trade. Given CDHT's robust e-commerce foundation and its transformation into a prominent digital economy hub in western China, digital trade emerges as a pivotal component within the realm of the digital economy. Hence, the project strategically selects digital trade as the central theme of the report, providing a comprehensive overview of its construction status within CDHT.

As the first baseline research on digital trade in CDHT, the report evaluates the strengths and weaknesses of the digital trade sector in CDHT through a baseline survey of 60 digital trading companies and a focus group meeting with 8 experts from local governments, industry associations and academic institutions. In this way, the current policy gaps, business needs and expectations for the CDHT's digital trade policy were identified.

The research further provides recommendations for the policy formulation of CDHT in terms of project incubation, human resources, digital infrastructure, digital financial services and digital laws. It also provides further suggestions and references for the overseas business of local enterprises. Some of the participating companies expressed their interest in doing business in Chengdu because they were attracted by the favorable local business environment therein.

Finding 9: The project has undertaken baseline research on SDG practices of enterprises in China and sustainable development for three consecutive years, and released three serial reports at the Re:Think Conference, which helped these enterprises better achieve the coordinated development of business practices and SDGs.

The “SDG Practices of Enterprises in China” serial research was jointly conducted by the UNDP, PwC, and the China Chamber of International Commerce. The research objects include large, medium and small enterprises, which are in line with the concept of “Leaving No One Behind”, advocated by the UNDP. The serial reports examine the historical changes of current practices and key trends, and discuss future opportunities and common challenges, providing suggestions for enterprises to achieve low-carbon transformation and sustainable development.

During the creation of the reports, PwC and the China Chamber of International Commerce used their network platform to assist in the distribution of questionnaires. The three parties formed high-quality reports through questionnaire surveys and case studies, and released them at the annual Re:Think Conference.

- The first report of the serial research was published in July 2020. The report conducted a baseline survey on the awareness of SDGs of 89 companies in China.

- The second report was published in June 2021, which has collected feedback from 117 companies, including those located in the CDHT, and conducted in-depth interviews with 12 key companies including Sichuan United Environment Exchange. While focusing on the SDG practices of enterprises in China, it also pays special attention to how enterprises adapt to changes in the policy environment. It proposes specific action plans for enterprises and specifies practical toolkits as well. The report also articulated the support needed from policymakers and regulators in the process of low carbon transition. The report was finally presented at the second Re:Think Conference on 13 December 2021.
- In the third report, a total of 218 enterprises participated in the survey, 10% of which were from Chengdu-Chongqing region. The report provides insights and analysis on the emission reduction activities of companies operating in different industries in China, and makes recommendations on how companies can accelerate the low-carbon transition through case studies. The report was finally presented at the third Re:Think Conference.

5.3.2 Output 2: Expand innovator networks to ensure “innovation for all”

Finding 10: The project focuses on cultivating innovative talents. Through building an innovator network, it brings together academia, private sector, and civil society so that ideas on innovation-based sustainable development can be learned and exchanged, which is conducive to innovation collaboration.

The INSPIRO Network and the Digital Trade Training Workshop are the two important strategies for expanding the innovator network and ensuring “innovation for all in the SDG innovation pilot project. The above two practical activities have brought together a large number of innovative practical talents, who were able to interact through activities, forums, conferences and other forms to explore innovative cooperation in the field of sustainable development. In the process, innovative talents were cultivated, and the innovator networks were expanded. The INSPIRO Network alone brought together more than 100 young entrepreneurs from more than 20 countries, and held more than 10 exchange activities, focusing on educational technology, green technology, impact investment and she-power. The network expanded the influence of the project. The digital trade training workshop explored the developmental characteristics of regional digital trade with various experts, scholars, and business representatives in the form of workshops. It led the digital trade companies to re-understand digital trade to grasp the trend of ecological development of digital trade.

(1) INSPIRO Network

The INSPIRO Network is under the SPARK Lab, initiated by the UNDP, the CDHTMC, the CICETE. It is an online/offline combination of entrepreneurial growth projects and cross-cultural communities for outstanding SDG-mindful entrepreneurs around the world. INSPIRO means “inspiration” in Latin. It also stands for the core values of this program - Innovative, Sustainable, Peer-Inspired, Resilient, and Optimistic. INSPIRO Network aims to bring together SDG-mindful young entrepreneurs from around the world to exchange ideas around how to advance the SDGs through advanced technological innovations. Among them, low-carbon transition, smart education, health technology, and gender equality are discussed. Through a series of interactive events and workshops, the initiative supports its participants to integrate their understanding of sustainable development into their business strategies, facilitate innovation collaborations in sustainable

development, create more market value, promote collaborations between SDG-mindful entrepreneurs, investors, and large companies, and deepen and expand cooperation between CDHT and young, international communities of entrepreneurs working in sustainable development.

The INSPIRO Network aims at young entrepreneurs under the age of 45, who are founders or core executives of their companies, with cross-cultural communication skills. The products of these companies are supposed to accelerate the realization of the SDGs and have a positive social impact. For Chinese companies, an overseas business or a plan to go overseas is required and for companies from abroad, a business in China or a plan to enter the Chinese market is required.

The INSPIRO Network held its opening ceremony on December 13, 2021, and its first seminar on the following day. More than 10 entrepreneurs, chairpersons of chamber of commerce, enterprise executives from both home and abroad were invited as speakers and panelists to discuss opportunities for China-EU cooperation in the fields of science and technology and sustainable development. So far, the network has attracted over 300 applicants and recruited 107 new members from more than 20 countries to include 103 young entrepreneurs, 30 of which are women). Their startups range from education, healthcare, green buildings, artificial intelligence, marine plastic recycling, bio-degradable materials to substitute plastics.

Finding 11: The project makes active use of the global networks to attract the participation of the youth and therefore the continuous expansion of innovator network. The INSPIRO Network launched by the project gathered 107 SDG-mindful and innovative young entrepreneurs from around the world, featuring those from Chengdu and Europe, to explore how to promote advanced technologies in the realization of SDGs-advanced technologies in the realization of SDGs.

Up to now, the INSPIRO Network alone brought together more than 100 young entrepreneurs from more than 20 countries, and held more than 10 exchange activities, focusing on educational technology, green technology, impact investment and she-power. Among them, the main activities include:

- **INSPIRO roundtable: How can technology empower education in the post-COVID era?** The roundtable meeting invited different stakeholders from the Chinese and European educational ecosystems, including traditional educational institutions, non-profit institutions, emerging innovative educational institutions, Internet companies, educational technology venture capital funds, etc., to discuss how technology can empower education in the post-COVID era and reduce the imbalance in the distribution of educational resources. At the same time, the discussion also promoted the integration and linkage of China and Europe in education technology. They also conducted closed-door exchanges on improving educational inclusiveness, promoting inclusive education, and creating a society of lifelong learning. Combining their own experience, guests from China and Europe provided INSPIROers with new ideas and insights. The event has established potential cooperation contacts for young entrepreneurs. Through the INSPIRO Network, educators in China and Europe could learn from each other and understand the most cutting-edge education development information. Both sides looked forward to jointly promoting education inclusiveness in the future.
- **INSPIRO roundtable: it promoted digital innovation in facilitating zero-carbon transformation.** The roundtable meeting invited many experts, scholars and business

- representatives from China and Europe to discuss the role, development process and prospects of digital innovation in zero-carbon transformation in different industries. During the closed-door exchange, guests and participants exchanged views on the development of the industry and discussed the problems and challenges encountered by enterprises in the zero-carbon transformation, so as to understand the possibility of communication and cooperation in the development of zero-carbon transformation in different industries.
- **INSPIRO Carbon Service Technological Innovation Roadshow:** The event gathered innovative resources such as leaders in the carbon neutrality service industry, well-known influential capital, experts from research institutions, multinational corporations, and technology start-ups. By sharing industry development trends, discussing innovation opportunities and challenges, presenting technology demonstrations and exchanges, all stakeholders were encouraged to collaborate to help realize carbon neutrality and green, low-carbon and sustainable development. The event attracted a total of 30,000 online viewers, and triggered active discussions on carbon service industry. The INSPIRO Carbon Service Technological Innovation Roadshow has built a multi-party cooperation platform to open up the industrial chain and innovation chain, gather innovation resources in the cloud, share high-quality projects in the cloud, and connect innovation subjects in the cloud, so as to promote the transfer and transformation of innovation achievements, help start-ups in carbon service industry grow stronger, and promote the integration and development of technical elements and capital elements.
 - **“Designing Resilient Cities of the Future—Enterprises in Action” exchange and display event** includes two sections: “Workshop for Women in Impact Investing in Technology” and “Science and Technology Innovation Boosts Urban Resilience”.
 - **Workshop for Women in Impact Investing in Technology** focused on the difficulties and challenges faced by female entrepreneurs in the process of obtaining investment and other entrepreneurship. It gathered innovative resources in the field of impact investing and injected more momentum into women entrepreneurs in technology. The event invited Li Wei, co-founder of New Hope, and Zuo Lin, partner of Sequoia and Envision Carbon Neutrality Fund, to share their thoughts on the theme. The workshop also specially provided opportunities for flashmob roadshows for female entrepreneurs in technology sector, so that they can not only showcase innovative technological solutions, but also obtain immediate feedback and suggestions from influential investors, which was conducive to continuously optimizing and improving their entrepreneurial financing capabilities.
 - **“Science and Technology Innovation Boosts Urban Resilience” exhibition and exchange event** was a year-end exchange event for the INSPIRO Network members. The event was dedicated to promoting mutual inspiration through project roadshows, topic discussions and exchanges. It enhanced communication and cooperation, exerted the positive influence of talent networks, and encouraged innovative entrepreneurs to move forward hand in hand to jointly create a smarter, more resilient and more sustainable future city. Six members of the INSPIRO Network from China and European countries shared their technological innovation solutions. In addition, the event set up a exchange session for INSPIRO Entrepreneurship, where entrepreneurs in the technology sector shared thoughts and ideas with representatives of outstanding innovation resources from the government, the industry, capitals, universities, research institutes, incubators and professional institutions. Discussions about smart cities and resilient future were triggered.

Finding 12: The INSPIRO Network's activities have proven to be highly beneficial for its members, providing them with an enriched understanding of the SDGs, enabling them to integrate these goals into their business strategies, fostering connections with potential partners and investors, and promoting CDHT as a viable business hub.

Members of the INSPIRO Network regularly held online/offline activities, where they discussed global cutting-edge technology trends, international business environment, product exporting cases, and shared entrepreneurial experience. Participants benefited from the series of activities and workshops.

First, they gained a deeper understanding of the SDGs and integrated them into their own business strategies. For example, they might apply gender-sensitive recruitment policies, carbon accounting and carbon reduction. Second, they communicated with peers, impact investors, and executives from large enterprises so that they could establish contacts with them and seek business opportunities and strategic partnerships. Third, they positioned CDHT as an attractive business center, and were considering setting up offices and businesses in CDHT. Fourth, for women entrepreneurs, they received special attention from the project and were empowered with capabilities, exposure and investment, which could enable them to build a comparative advantage in the market place.

A member of the INSPIRO Network said, “I am willing to establish contacts with these potential partners and outstanding entrepreneurs at home and abroad. So for me, the INSPIRO Network is not just a network. It is networking resources, with which relationships between people can be established. The connection between people is of great value. I think this kind of connection and binding is very important. In addition, since UNDP has been talking about the SDGs, it attracts SDG-mindful entrepreneurs through its activities and communities. In this way, a high-quality network of SDG-mindful young entrepreneurs is built. Since each of us has pursuits and ideas, it’s easy to build connection and start collaboration within the network.”

Finding 13: So far as the INSPIRO Network has been in operation, a group of core members have stood out for their great activeness and community building capabilities and they work to promote the self-organizing operation of the network. However, it would be more beneficial if the network could work in a more decentralized and thus self-organizing manner.

The PMO will launch the core member group of the INSPIRO Network in 2023. The group of core members will be decided by the activeness and community building capabilities of the members, then work to promote the self-organizing operation of the network. A project manager said, “We are also exploring how to improve spontaneity. We hope to promote the INSPIRO Network to innovate this year. We will establish a core member group and screen members from the network according to factors such as activeness and personal willingness. We hope to form a new mechanism. The group will be re-selected every single year and then the group members will be in charge of the operation of the community that year.”

However, the evaluation team found that the self-organizing capacity of the current INSPIRO Network needs to be improved. At present, most of the activities of the INSPIRO Network rely on the planning and undertaking of the PMO. However, the PMO only has a limited number of staff members, resulting in a low frequency of activities. At present, a self-organizing operation model

driven by community members has not yet been formed, and the degree of decentralization needs to be further improved. Members of the INSPIRO network suggested that community members could organize activities by themselves under the theme and framework set by UNDP and in this case, the UNDP only played a supervisory role, rather than doing everything for them.

(2) Digital Trade Training Workshop

Finding 14: The digital trade training workshop has played a significant role to help the policymakers to further clarify the factors which may enhance or impede digital trade development and design enabling policies in CDHT. It also helped enterprises form an understanding of the development trend of digital trade and get access to the market trends, development strategies, business planning and pioneering experience.

Based on the needs of CDHT, this project has carried out a series of capacity-building training in the field of digital trade for the local government of CDHT. The project organized a digital trade closed-door training workshop in November 2022, ten policymakers from 5 digital trade-related departments in CDHT participated in the workshop, where they shared and discussed research key results and related policy recommendations. The workshop helped policymakers to further clarify the factors that might enhance or impede the development of digital trade in CDHT, which was conducive to subsequent policy formulation.

In addition, the project also carried out a series of themed digital trade innovation and development workshops, including “digital content drives global innovation” workshop on digital trade innovation and development, “co-creation on the cloud, steady and long-term progress” digital trade overseas acceleration camp, “Digital Service Enabling Industry Upgrading” Digital Trade Innovation Development workshop and others where participants explored the development characteristics of regional digital trade with experts, scholars and business representatives. These guests are the leader of digital trade companies who can help the participants to re-understand digital trade, grasp the ecological development trend of digital trade and learn about how to make good use of the RCEP rules, efficiently develop the new market of blue ocean and get to know market trends, development strategies, business plans and leading experience.

5.3.3 Output 3: Enabling eco-system conducive to innovation collaboration and leadership.

Finding 15: The project has provided a platform for dialogue through the initiation of forums. For the third consecutive year, the Re:Think Conference is launched as a flagship event for Chengdu’s sustainable development, which facilitates multi-stakeholder discussions and innovative collaborative mechanisms in this regard.

In a highly interconnected world, addressing economic, social and environmental challenges requires a new way of working. During the fourth industrial revolution, potential solutions to global challenges are as diverse as the challenges themselves. Technological innovation has the capacity to address these problems through new and integrated measures, but it also poses the threat of exacerbating existing divides between countries, communities and individuals. Policymakers must therefore be forward-looking. From finance and education to the emergence of new jobs and business models, both governments and companies face the challenge of simultaneously balancing innovation with the needs for inclusion in a rapidly changing environment. It is against this

backdrop that UNDP hopes the project can achieve the following goals by convening the Re:think Conference each year as its flagship event:

- UNDP was going to unveil the latest addition to its global innovation network – the SDGs Innovation Lab – during its inaugural Re:Think Conference in 2021. The SPARK Lab is also UNDP’s first Innovation Lab for SDGs in China;
- In the form of online and on-site meetings during Re:Think, UNDP aims to bring together like-minded organizations, companies and individuals from government and the private sector, both in China and abroad, to share innovation ideas, exchange experiences, discuss challenges and forge new partnerships;
- UNDP also expects to strengthen partnerships with government agencies (CICETE and CDHTMC) during the Re:Think Conference in a bid to explore future opportunities and address complex issues of SDGs implementation that require cooperation among different stakeholders.

With this in mind, UNDP and the CDHTMC co-organized the first Re:Think conference on 28 April 2021. Building on this experience, Re:Think 2021 and Re:Think 2022 of this project were held on 13 December 2021 and 6-7 March 2023 respectively. The continuity of these conferences indicates their perceived value in fostering innovation and inclusion in a rapidly evolving socio-economic landscape.

Finding 16: The project exchanges innovative ideas by organizing a series of thematic conferences. Gradually deepening conference topics spark perspectives from all parties and foster partnerships for a sustainable future.

The inaugural Re:think conference was held under the theme of “Harnessing Digital Solutions for Resilient Economies & Societies” and covered five sections including innovation, finance, technology, society and gender. The Conference explored the challenges and opportunities of digital transformation; analyzed how digital solutions could be used to reduce inequality; sought to improve resilience against climate change and future crises; and promoted social inclusion and sustainable development. The topics discussed in the conference gradually deepened:

- **Finance section** - Digital Financing for Sustainable Development; the main topic is how will mobile banking and fintech startups change the financial market. Specific sub-topics include: How does the financial market leverage data for sustainable development? What are the challenges confronting FinTech in emerging markets? What is the future of financial services after COVID-19? In addition, two targeted keynote speeches were also delivered in this section, namely "The Future of Finance in the Digital Age" and "Utilizing FinTech to Achieve the SDGs".
- **Technology section** – Tech4Good showcase, for which the China Consulting Leader, PwC China was invited to give a keynote speech on "The Impact of Digitization on SDGs".
- **Society section** – Digitalization for Resilience; the main topic is how digitalization can make our economy and our lives more sustainable. Specific sub-topics include: How can digital technologies create jobs rather than replace them in the future? How can we ensure that digital transformation is inclusive and does not add to existing or emerging divides? In addition, two targeted keynote speeches were also delivered in this section, namely

"Digital Transformation Accelerates the Implementation of the SDGs in the Post-pandemic Era" and "Government Efforts on Guiding the Revolution Towards an Inclusive Future".

Re:Think 2021 focused on innovation in the areas of policy, science and technology and finance and expect to facilitate low-carbon transition towards a zero-carbon future. Experts around the world observed on the policy trends of climate change both in China and abroad; explored the role of local governments in decarbonization and scaling-up green technologies; and emphasized the necessity of accelerating the establishment of a sustainable financial system.

Re:Think 2022 on Designing Resilient Cities of the Future explored how cities can build resilience in an uncertain world. This conference aims to promote international dialogue on innovation for sustainable development. Focusing on preparing cities for climate change, it supported city leaders to rethink urban planning approaches and policies and explore social innovation and community-led engagement to build resilient and inclusive cities for the future.

The conference was conducted in a thematic format that not only sparked perspectives from all parties, but also built up a platform for partnerships:

- The inaugural Re:Think conference invited more than 150 experts, scholars, entrepreneurs, government officials and other guests from both China and abroad to conduct online and on-site dialogues and exchanges.
- Re:Think 2021 brought together more than 200 experts, scholars, entrepreneurs and other guests from both China and abroad to carry out online and on-site dialogues and exchanges.
- Re:Think 2022 brought together top government officials, renowned scholars, civil society leaders and representatives of the private sector.
- The conference also invited some influential actors, such as guests in the field of education innovation and community revitalization.
- The conference featured stand-up comedians who shared some of the challenges and barriers that people with disabilities face in the city.
- The inaugural conference gained more than 600,000 views via live-streaming, and data from the post-conference audience engagement survey showed a satisfaction rate of 95%.
- Re:Think 2021, for the first time, employed the groundbreaking format of dual venues – connecting the China-Europe Center in Chengdu and the UN Compound in Beijing with video.
- Re: The Think 2022 conference received over 1.1 million views via live streaming. It was covered by more than 200 media outlets, including People's Daily, Xinhua News Agency and CGTN, and received more than 3 million broadcasts. In addition, the conference awarded certificates of appointment to the project's advisory board, and organized an array of events, including a warm-up event in the title of "Citizen's Voice - How to Make the City More Comfortable" and q bazaar under the theme of "City for All". Diverse activities attracted more than 500 registrations to attend and more than 1 million viewers from both China and abroad to watch online.
- CDHTMC believes that the Re:Think conference is a very important window for more people to learn about the Zone.

5.3.4 **Output 4: Promoting innovative sustainable development in China and other developing countries through experience-sharing mechanisms.**

The project hopes to promote innovative sustainable development in China and other developing countries through experience-sharing mechanisms, utilizing existing science, technology and innovations to improve South-South cooperation and contribute to China's key global development initiatives. For example, the event of Panda Cultural and Creative Products and Experiential Activities combine UNDP's global innovation efforts with China's local cultural symbols. In addition, the SPARK Innovation Center for Zero-Carbon Future aims to raise public awareness of low-carbon and net-zero through exhibitions. What's more, the project also showcases Chengdu's experience in SDGs innovation through multiple communication channels.

(1) The project developed cultural and creative products and experiential activities featured in panda.

Finding 17: The project developed cultural and creative products and experiential activities featured in panda which embodies the characteristic of Chengdu. These efforts showcase UNDP's key innovation projects of sustainable development around the world and displays the local customs and traditions at the same time, which combines UNDP's global innovation efforts with local cultural symbols.



The PMO joins hands with Chengdu Research Base of Giant Panda Breeding to develop a series of cultural and creative products and innovative panda cultural experiences based on the project's innovative efforts and panda culture. A number of cultural and creative products have been produced, including panda USBs, panda stickers, panda pillows, panda passport holders, and panda dolls with UNDP and SDGs' logos. In addition, during the 15th EU-China Business & Technology Cooperation Fair held in Chengdu on 11-12 November 2020, UNDP organized an exhibition featuring in 18 lightboxes (17 SDGs' lightboxes and 1 lightbox with UNDP's logo) which

showcases UNDP's SDGs innovation pilot projects around the world. The lightboxes were painted with the images of UNDP Pambassadors "Qiqi" and "Diandian", as well as QR codes for visitors to learn more about the SDGs as they engage in the interactive Q&A.

The project combines UNDP's global innovation efforts with cultural symbols of Chengdu, Sichuan Province, through the development of cultural and creative products and experiential activities featuring in panda. These showcase UNDP's key innovation projects of sustainable development around the world and displays the local customs and traditions at the same time.

(2) SPARK Innovation Center for Zero-Carbon Future

Finding 18: The project designed and launched the SPARK Innovation Center for Zero-Carbon Future which showcases the vision and practice of UNDP and the CDHT in promoting sustainable development. This Innovation Center helped to raise public awareness of SDGs and the net-zero. Nonetheless, the overall design of its setting and visiting routes still needs to be improved. Meanwhile, it is not yet open on a regular basis.

This project designed and launched the SPARK Innovation Center for Zero-Carbon Future which is located on the 7th floor of the China-Europe Center in the CDHT. The Innovation Center exhibits in detail the SDGs, the work of UNDP in China, and the CDHT's efforts to realize the dual-carbon targets. In addition, through a variety of interactive games, the exhibition creates a participatory atmosphere for learning low-carbon knowledge and advocates for low-carbon living and production styles of individuals and communities. The exhibition hall adopts recycled materials as much as possible, and the visual symbol of "∞" is used throughout the area, which symbolizes the "infinite possibilities" brought by the promotion of low-carbon and environmental protection notions, and also embodies the community facilitation effect formed by "connection".

The exhibition consists of the following seven parts:

- The first part, the entrance area, displays the development history of UNDP in China over the past 40 plus years as well as some of its representative projects.
- The second part is the exhibition's visual center which is a digital experience area equipped with interactive LED screen. When the screen is in standby mode, it can be switched to the interactive scene of visualized global carbon emission data or of digital art. When visitors approach the screen, they can interact with the digital content on the screen and freely explore the real-time global carbon emissions data. At the same time, a physical countdown timer for reaching carbon peak is set up in this area. Since the ever-changing countdown figures are relevant to everyone of us, we can sense the urgency more vividly.
- The third part presents international community's efforts to address climate change, the protocols adopted and other relevant achievements. In the meantime, this part also demonstrates the results of UNDP's SDGs innovation pilot projects around the world through visualization equipment and texts. On the right side of the interior of the wall, innovative interactive projection technology was used. With the support of illustrator Icy Tan, the visualization integrated 13 UNDP's representative projects for the adaption to climate change and is finally presented with complementary textual information. Visitors can touch the illustrations of representative characters from different countries to learn more about the corresponding projects.

- The fourth part is an interaction area for communities. It combines popularization of SDGs with four games, which enables visitors to learn more about low-carbon knowledge, and to further promote the practice of low-carbon life through community links and to further build up a low-carbon city.
- The fifth part displays the basic information of the CDHT and the development history of UNDP's SDGs innovation pilot projects. In the meantime, this area also demonstrates the results of SPARK Lab's work and other UNDP projects in Chengdu.
- The sixth part presents the dual-carbon related cases of enterprises from various sectors in the CDHT. This area is a semi-open space enclosed with suspended PET sheets, which enable cases guided by SPARK Lab's research program to be displayed in a dynamic manner. At the same time, there are two touchable screens on the wall opposite to the exit of this area. Visitors can slide on one end of the screen according to their needs so as to quickly check the low carbon practice of relevant enterprises.
- The seventh part is an area for resting and photos. It has a board-flipping game zone and a photo backdrop painted with UNDP's logo and SDGs elements.

SPARK Innovation Center for Zero-Carbon Future will be presented as a long-term exhibition for raising public awareness of the 17 SDGs and green development. Meanwhile, it will also showcase the highlights of SPARK Lab's work in a visualized manner.

Nonetheless, the overall design of the exhibition's setting and visiting routes still needs to be improved. At the same time, it is not yet open on a regular basis. Firstly, the exhibition is not organized in a strongly immersive and attractive manner, which makes it difficult for visitors to realize the harm brought by high-carbon production and life. It's also not likely for them to sense the worsening of the current environmental crisis and the necessity of living a green life. Secondly, the current visiting time of the whole exhibition is only 20-30 minutes. The content and visiting routes of the exhibition can be further enriched so as to extend the visiting time to about 1 hour.

(3) Exporting the project's experience on sustainable development

Finding 19: The project creatively utilizes multiple forms of events such as conferences, forums, workshops, and exhibitions to facilitate the implementation of the project. Besides, the project also considerably promotes the concept of sustainable development and exports the CDHT's experience through various media outlets such as official websites, WeChat, Weibo, Instagram, LinkedIn and Chinese and international mainstream media.

The project team is affiliated to UNDP's Communication, Innovation and Partnerships (CIP) team whose strengths are information disseminating and resources pooling. CIP has launched a number of innovative campaigns on raising public awareness of the SDGs and is committed to establish good and extensive partnerships between UNDP and the government, the private sector, and academia.

Based on this, the project focuses on pooling resources and disseminating experiences. Firstly, the project creatively utilizes multiple forms of events such as conferences, forums, workshops, and exhibitions to facilitate the implementation of the project and the achievement of the project objectives. These efforts are conducive to international exchanges in the field of sustainable development and the export of Chengdu's practical experience. Secondly, the project effectively

publicized its activities through various media outlets such as official websites, WeChat, Weibo, Instagram and Chinese and international mainstream media. The total media impression reached 8 million and the impression of some of the activities ranging from 100,000 to a million. Taking Re:Think as an example, the Inaugural Re:Think Conference for Innovation and Sustainable Development gained more than 600,000 views online; Re:Think 2021: Innovative Pathways Towards Net Zero Cities received more than 500,000 online views from both China and abroad; and Re:Think 2022: Designing Resilient Cities of the Future earned more than 1 million online views from both China and abroad.

5.4 Efficiency

In terms of efficiency, the evaluation thoroughly examines the project's utilization of both financial and human resources, as outlined in the project documents, to determine if they have yielded the desired outcomes.

5.4.1 Strategic Allocation of Project Resources

Finding 20: The project was adequately funded and was able to maintain a high implementation rate despite the influence of extremely unfavorable factors such as COVID-19.

The total budget of the project is US\$5,010,000, of which US\$5 million comes from the CDHTMC and US\$10,000 from UNDP core funds. Despite the impact of the COVID-19 during the project's operational cycle, the annual implementation rate was maintained at a high level and the project was adequately funded (Table 8).

Table 9 Budget and Expenditure of the Project's Funds

Year	Annual Budget (USD)	Annual Expenditure (USD)	Allocation of Expenditure (Bearer)	Audit Amount	Delivery Rate
2020	562,000	293,293.62	100,664.61 (Government)	293,293.62	52.19%
			192,629.02 (UNDP)		
2021	920,000	966,074.95	594,436.39 (Government)	966,074.95	105.01%
			371,638.56 (UNDP)		
2022	1,120,000	792,054.81	537,229.81 (Government)	792,051.81	70.71%
			254,822.00		

			(UNDP)		
--	--	--	--------	--	--

Regarding the use of funds, CDHTMC and UNDP have their respective focuses:

- The funds of CDHTMC were used for: Identification and preparatory work of the project, including workshops and training; Costs of short-term domestic experts; Workshops: travel costs, accommodation, allowance, venue costs; Domestic study tours and training: covering participants' accommodation, allowance and travel costs in China; Overseas training: travel costs of some trainees, domestic costs related to application and preparation; Follow up of actions, including dissemination workshops and related materials printing; Partial costs of PMOs' operation, including communication, transportation as necessary procurement of project-used equipment and materials for PMOs; All necessary resources to facilitate program management and sub-program implementation.
- The funds of UNDP were used for: International and national consultants and resource persons; Supporting technical services, training activities, study tours, symposiums and workshops, partial operation costs of national PMO including recruitment of project experts, communication, in-city travel and office facilities as necessary; Monitoring and evaluation; Material and equipment to a limited degree.

5.4.2 Human Resource Allocation

Finding 21: All the staff of the PMO have broad international perspectives and rich project experience. There is complementarity of duties within the team, which guarantees the effective operation of the project. However, needs for strengthening the capacity of community operation and enhancing communication with government still exist.

The orderly implementation of the project highly depends on the hard work of the members of the PMO. The activities involved in this project are high in frequency, large in scale, and affected by the pandemic. With a broad international perspective and rich project experience, the members of the PMO learned from each other and worked intensively to ensure the effectiveness and continuance of planning, implementation, review and reimbursement of the annual plan.

The team adjusted its working approach in time, changing from the one-person control-all methods to each person being responsible for one part of the activity, such as being responsible for publicity, process control, overall supervision and so on. Every part is interconnected with each other and each person in charge gradually accumulated experience in each section, forming a set of workflows applicable to each activity, which contributes to the successful implementation of activities.

Nevertheless, implementation of the project was still confronted with the challenge of human resources shortage. The activities involved in the project are intensive and complex, but the PMO is understaffed. Faced with the heavy workload, the PMO needs to recruit more volunteers and enrich their participation in the project. Therefore, the project team urgently needs to strengthen the capacity building of community operation, as well as enhance the key ability to understand and master communication with government.

Finding 22: There is a clear division of responsibilities in project management. The establishment of the Project Advisory Board (PAB) enriches the management structure. The group is a core strength that enables the project to run smoothly.

Abiding by the UNDP National Implementation Modality, the project set up the following steering, management and advisory responsible parties.

- **Programme Steering Committee (PSC)**

In line with overall project objectives, a Programme Steering Committee (PSC) was established. It is joined by representatives from CICETE, UNDP, and the CDHTMC. The PSC convenes at least once per year. The responsibilities of the PSC include: 1) providing guidance and support to project design, implementation and supervision; 2) approving the AWP; 3) reviewing and approving the AWP of the project; 4) providing technical input and advice to the project according to the industry to which it belongs; 5) mobilizing policy, human and matching financial resources to support project implementation; 6) coordinating differences within the project to ensure collaboration among participating organizations; and 7) providing comprehensive evaluation of the final results of the project.

- **National Project Director (NPD)**

The project designates two joint National Project Directors (NPDs), respectively by CICETE and CDHTMC (representative from the CDHT shall be the Deputy Director of the CDHTMC who is in charge of new economic development, and should be the same person with the representative from PSC). The NPD will be accountable to the PSC and will be a member of the PSC; the NPD will also be responsible for guiding the formulation of the AWP, reviewing and submitting the AWP to the Committee for approval, guiding and monitoring the implementation of the project; overseeing the implementation of the project funds according to the AWP approved by the Committee; and coordinating project implementation to ensure that the project achieves the expected results.

- **Programme Management Office (PMO)**

The PMO will be located at the CDHTMC, the Director of which shall be appointed by CDHTMC, and will be responsible for project implementation under the leadership of the NPD, and report the progress of the project implementation to the NPD in a timely manner. The Director of the PMO will be responsible for the day-to-day management, project implementation, division of staff, supervision, inspection and evaluation reports; the organization and implementation of project activities in accordance with the work plan and related budgets to ensure the achievement of the outputs and results set out in the project document; controlling the progress of the project, identifying project risks in a timely manner and report to the NPD.

- **UNDP SDGs Innovation Lab**

To better leverage the global and regional resources of UNDP, under the coordination of the PMO, a Technology for SDGs Innovation Lab was established, in order to connect UNDP's innovation networks, resources, mode and international experiences. The team of SPARK Lab is responsible for implementing some parts of the direct support, in accordance with the AWP under the consensus of all parties. Under "UNDP direct support to the national implementation (NIM)" modality, UNDP provides support in implementing

activities in accordance with UNDP rules and regulations and in close consultation with implementing partners. Those direct-support activities may include specific studies on emerging fields, competence building, collecting solutions on global sustainable development, and connecting global innovation network, resources and experts. UNDP China will be in collaboration with UNDP Asia-Pacific Regional Hub to take an active part in designing relevant events, connecting experts and resources and providing support in other areas.

In this project, the works of the Lab and the PMO were gradually integrated through development. The project manager of the PMO is responsible for the overall operation of the PMO and coordinating the outputs of the SPARK Lab in the meantime.

- **Project Advisory Board (PAB)**

A Project Advisory Board is established to provide guidance on the strategic direction of the project. The group will be composed of relevant domestic and foreign experts, whose responsibilities include: guiding strategic directions and macro policies; providing technical advice; mobilizing relevant resources to support the development of projects; integrating the needs for the sustainable development of local communities, supporting the implementation of pilot and demonstration projects, and supporting policy research and the promotion, dissemination and replication of project results. The members of the PAB will be jointly confirmed by the PSC. In 2022, 9 experts accepted the invitation and have joined the PAB. They are leading experts in their fields from international organizations, academia and the private sector, three of whom are women.

5.4.3 Partnerships Structure

(1) Communication and collaboration among PSC members

Finding 23: As the three actors of the project, UNDP, CDHTMC, and CICETE, are in close contact and actively support the project in funds, professional skills and expert connection, which laid a solid foundation for the follow-up implementation of the project.

This project is jointly launched by UNDP, CICETE and the CDHT. The three parties closely collaborate with each other and provide funds, professional skills and other needed resources for the project.

At the international level, UNDP is the main international organization leading the project. As largest multilateral development assistance agency among UN branches, UNDP promotes sustainable human development through technical assistance. So far, UNDP has carried out development projects in more than 100 recipient countries, with a network of regional offices all over the world.

- Under “UNDP direct support to NIM” modality, UNDP provides support in implementing activities in accordance with UNDP rules and regulations and in close consultation with implementing partners. UNDP provides direct support for the implementation of activities and takes the lead in project design. It also provides assistance for policy advocacy,

- technical and project management and the production, dissemination and exchange of knowledge as required.
- UNDP China in collaboration with UNDP Asia-Pacific Regional Hub to take an active part in designing relevant events, connecting experts and resources and providing support in other areas.
- UNDP also actively participates in the establishment and operation of the SPARK Lab through utilizing its global network, especially its experience and expertise in innovation-based development.

At the national coordination and management level, CICETE is designated by the Ministry of Commerce of the People's Republic of China (MOFCOM) as the coordinating and managing agency for UNDP cooperation projects in China. CICETE has more than 30 years of experience in managing UNDP projects and has successfully organized and implemented more than 900 projects in the field of development, which ensures the quality of projects and provides necessary support to the projects.

- CICETE signs the Project Document on behalf of the government;
- CICETE works with UNDP to monitor project implementation, ensure overall project quality and provide necessary support to the project.

CDHTMC provides guidance, policy recommendations, organization and coordination support for project implementation.

- At the local level, CDHTMC takes the lead in coordinating different government departments. In 2019, the New Economy Bureau of CDHTMC was the local focal agency of the project. From the end of 2022 onwards, focal point changes to the Bureau of International Business. The CDHT was recognized by the Ministry of Science and Technology as a pilot zone for the creation of a "World-class Hi-Tech Park" in 2006. In 2015, it was approved by the State Council as the first National Innovation Demonstration Zone in China's west. the CDHT is the Comprehensive Innovation Reform Pilot Zone in Sichuan Province and the core area of the Pilot Free Trade Zone, making it one of the most influential high-tech zones in China. The leading industries of the Zone include: 1) electronic information industry led by integrated circuits, optoelectronic displays, intelligent terminals and others; 2) biomedical industry characterized by biotechnology drugs, new chemical and pharmaceutical preparations, modern Chinese medicines, high-performance medical devices; and 3) new economy industry focused on 5G communications and artificial intelligence, online audiovisual and digital cultural and creative products, big data and cyber-security.

Finding 24: The project successfully identified and maximized the convergence between the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and the economic and social development needs of the local government. Utilizing a participatory approach, the project design and implementation were tailored to reflect the demands and priorities of all involved parties.

The project was meticulously designed and implemented with a clear vision: to harmonize the advancement of SDGs with the local government's economic and social development objectives to the greatest possible extent. The UNDP had a primary objective for the project, which was to

achieve the SDGs, a set of goals tailored to address global challenges related to poverty, inequality, climate change, environmental degradation, peace, and justice. On the other hand, the local government of CDHT had its unique expectations. They aimed to bolster the city's capacity for innovation and development, formulate effective policies to stimulate local innovation, and ultimately transform the city into a regional innovation hub. This ambitious goal was driven by the vision to carve out an innovative pathway that could lead to both economic growth and social development.

Therefore, the design and the subsequent implementation of the project became an exercise in finding the greatest common interests. The project team facilitated extensive negotiations and communications among all stakeholders involved. This collaborative approach ensured that all parties' views were reflected in the project, leading to a shared commitment to the project's goals and a mutual understanding of the strategies required to achieve them.

This alignment of interests not only bolstered the project's chances of success but also served as a model for how diverse stakeholders could work together to address complex development challenges. The approach is particularly relevant in today's interconnected world, where achieving sustainable development requires concerted and collaborative efforts across different sectors and scales.

(2) National/Local Partnerships

Finding 25: Due to the innovative and exploratory nature of the project's objectives, extensive coordination is required during implementation. Therefore, the project designates two joint NPDs to ensure the smooth implementation of the project, which turned out to be effective. Moreover, in order to effectively connect and utilize UNDP's global and regional resources, some of the activities of the project are directly implemented by UNDP SDGs Innovation Lab instead of simply being handed over to the PMO.

The project for the first time employs the dual-NPDs structure. The project designates two joint NPDs under the PSC organized by UNDP, CICETE and the CDHTMC. The joint NPDs are the Deputy Director of CICETE and the Head of CDHTMC respectively. This innovative organizational structure enables the main parties of the project to have a deeper understanding of its implementation and to participate in the entire planning, supervision and implementation process of the project. This to some extent strengthens communication and coordination, which contributes to the successful implementation of the project.

This project differs from previous projects in which the PMO is responsible for implementing all activities. This project launched the UNDP SDGs Innovation Lab, which enables UNDP to facilitate the implementation of nearly one-half of the project activities. In full accordance with the rules and regulations of UNDP and relevant policies of the Chinese government, UNDP in China facilitate the implementation of the project on the basis of the plan agreed upon by CICETE and UNDP. It supports multiple activities such as the carbon-neutral research programme and the China-Europe Young Entrepreneurs Seminar. The direct implementation of some of the activities by the UNDP SDGs Innovation Lab can effectively utilize UNDP's own advantages, enable the project to better connect to UNDP's global innovation network, resources and models, and import

high-quality international experience, so as to provide direct support for the implementation of activities in various aspects.

(3) Partnerships with other entities in the private sector and social organizations

Finding 26: The project partners with well-known enterprises and social organizations to promote networking, researching and activities. The establishment of partnerships with other entities in the private sector and social organizations has connected experts, platforms and other resources to support the project, which is conducive to the achievement of project objectives. The project has established a stable external cooperation mechanism through “external purchase” and “joint release”.

To build innovation networks, write research reports and organize flagship events, the project cooperates with well-known enterprises, social organizations and universities. First, the project has cooperated with well-known enterprises and social organizations, pooled intellectual resources from multiple sides, and jointly wrote the reports on “dual-carbon targets”, “sustainable development”, “digital trade”, and so on after collective research. For example, the project cooperated with PwC and the China Chamber of International Commerce (CCOIC) to conduct a series of studies on the SDGs practices of enterprises in China; with the Institution of New Economic Development (INED) of Chengdu to compose the CDHT's *Low Carbon Transition Strategies and Planning Report*; with the China Alliance of Social Value Investment (CASVI) for *Developing the Next Service Hub: A Strategy Research Report for CDHT*; and with Deloitte to write the *Digital Trade Development Report for Chengdu Hi-tech Industrial Development Zone*.

Secondly, the project invites guests from well-known enterprises such as Tencent, Huawei, Alibaba, MEGVII and DJI, as well as experts and scholars from universities in both China and abroad to exchange ideas at the flagship Re:Think conference, striving to make a difference with people from all walks of life. Thus, it's easy to note that the establishment of partnerships with other entities in the private sector and social organizations has connected experts, platforms and other resources to support the project. Meanwhile, it is also conducive to extensive communication and joint contribution, as well as the continuous expansion of UNDP's SDGs innovation network.

In addition, the project has established a stable cooperation mechanism through “external purchase” and “joint release” with other entities in the private sector and social organizations. For example, the PMO has outsourced the overall framework construction and interactive multimedia design of the SPARK Innovation Center for Zero-Carbon Future to Chengdu ALLAB and Chengdu BurnLab, and has formed a stable partnership with them. The PMO has also collaborated with PWC, Deloitte, CASVI, and the INED to jointly release research reports and establish stable and sustained partnership.

5.5 Sustainability

In terms of sustainability, the evaluation team analyzes the likelihood of the project's development results enduring over time based on the five criteria highlighted in the UNDP evaluation guidelines: financial sustainability, socio-political sustainability, institutional sustainability, environmental sustainability, and overall sustainability. The evaluation places particular emphasis on examining

the mechanisms that contribute to sustainability. Through this assessment, the evaluation team has identified the following key findings regarding sustainability:

Finding 27: The project has demonstrated clear efforts towards achieving long-term sustainability across various dimensions that will be critical to safeguarding its impacts over time. However, in order to support the sustainable development of the project, it is necessary to establish a decentralized and self-organizing operation system, which requires CDHTMC's engagement, support and guidance.

Financial Sustainability: Financial sustainability is a paramount consideration for the long-term viability of the project. Despite the challenges posed by the COVID-19 pandemic, the project has demonstrated its ability to maintain a high annual implementation rate and secure sufficient funding. This stable funding arrangement has facilitated the smooth execution of all planned activities, including the organization of conferences, forums, exhibitions, and the establishment of community networks focused on the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

Socio-Political Sustainability: The project's engagement with communities and networks reflects its socio-political sustainability efforts. The INSPIRO Young Entrepreneurs Network for SDGs and the SPARK Innovation Center for Zero-Carbon Future are significant achievements. The flagship event Re:Think conference has already had moderate influence and wide dissemination in the field of sustainable innovation and development, which laid a solid foundation for the continuation of the event. These initiatives foster long-term exchanges and contributions in sustainable innovation and development. The project can keep working on deep community integration and the alignment of goals with local socio-political contexts to prevent the project from facing resistance, lack of relevance, or inability to drive lasting change.

It is worth noting that both in theoretical design and real-life execution the project has demonstrated a commitment to gender quality and empowering those in need (particularly young people), which contributes to the socio-political sustainability of the project.

Institutional Sustainability: The project's institutional sustainability involves refining its operational mechanisms and ensuring autonomous functioning. After more than three years of operation, the project has gradually found its operation model and mechanisms, including the organizational structure and staffing setup of the management team, the design of project objectives, the standard workflow of project activities, the experience of writing research reports, the experience of community building and operation and the mindset of dissemination, which laid a solid foundation for its sustainable development in the future. Meanwhile, the project has also exported its experience to other long-term sustainable development projects.

In addition, the project has planned to incorporate the gender factor into the mainstreaming strategy to ensure that gender-related issues are among the key components of the project, as gender mainstreaming will contribute to achieving necessary institutional and organizational reform, thereby ensuring that gender quality is a continuous commitment, without which the intended project outcomes are hardly going to be achieved.

However, the project has not yet established a decentralized and self-organizing operation system. In order to ensure the sustainability of the project results, it is necessary to bring together the project

participants and give full play to their initiative in a bid to guide communities to realize autonomous operation. Therefore, the project can achieve sustainable development through joint contribution of the participants. In addition, the CDHTMC has strongly supported the project in terms of funding, policy recommendations, organization and coordination but the project's sustainable development still requires more engagement of CDHTMC as well as a long-term strategic plan.

Environmental Sustainability: The project's focus on the SPARK Innovation Center for Zero-Carbon Future underscores its environmental sustainability efforts. The center promotes low-carbon lifestyles and sustainable development values. This physical exhibition serves as a long-term platform for environmental awareness.

Overall Sustainability: Achieving overall sustainability requires harmonizing various aspects. The project's events, networks, and initiatives contribute to the continuous dissemination of SDGs and sustainable experiences. While these accomplishments are notable, the absence of a decentralized operation system and full engagement from the CDHTMC present risks. Empowering participants for autonomous operation and securing ongoing support are crucial for sustaining the project's impact. Without this holistic approach, the project might struggle to evolve and thrive, undermining its broader contribution to sustainable development.

5.6 Social Inclusion: Gender and cross-cutting issues

The project demonstrates a strong commitment to addressing gender and other cross-cutting issues across its entire life cycle. The evaluation team has identified two primary areas of focus within this context: gender equality and other cross-cutting issues. These areas receive special attention and are considered key priorities in the project's efforts to promote inclusivity and social impact.

5.6.1 Gender Equality

Finding 28: The project incorporates gender considerations into the mainstreaming strategy and values female participation in all aspects of the project to ensure that gender-related issues are a key component of project formulation, implementation and evaluation.

Gender equality is one of the SDGs and an important principle of the project. Therefore, the outcomes and outputs of the project also primarily revolve around promoting women's involvement in the science, technology, and innovation (STI) industry. The project has explicitly prioritized gender equality as a key objective, and gender indicators have been incorporated into numerous activities outlined in the Annual Work Plan (AWP). By explicitly outlining these gender indicators in the AWP and actively involving women partners in the project's design process, the project has been able to increase access to opportunities and resources for a greater number of women beneficiaries.

To ensure equal participation of women and men in program/project activities, special attention has been given to fostering equitable and effective engagement throughout the project's design process. Women representatives have been particularly encouraged to actively participate in various project activities, assuming roles such as speakers, moderators, workshop trainers and trainees, hosts, panelists, and general participants. Therefore, the project management system incorporates gender mainstreaming, which specifically reflected in:

- During the inaugural Re:Think conference, some of the panel discussions were designed and organized for female leaders and participants. The event ensured a high level of female representation, with their roles spanning keynote speakers, panelists and moderators.
- Over 13,000 viewers watched Re:Think Inno Camp 2022 online and 58% of participants were women.
- CDHT Digital Trade Study ensured equal opportunities for women as stakeholders, with over 30% of the survey questions being gender related.
- The INSPIRO network attracted more than 300 applicants. Currently, 107 members have been recruited, including 30 women. SPARK Lab organized five interactive events based on the INSPIRO network, including workshops and roadshows on the theme of women's empowerment.

In terms of gender mainstreaming in project management, the project has implemented measures to foster gender inclusivity by extending invitations to female representatives to join the newly formed Project Advisory Board. At present, the board comprises three accomplished female members. Furthermore, deliberate efforts have been undertaken to expand the representation of women on the board, aiming to enhance gender diversity and ensure a broader range of perspectives. Gender specialists have been invited to those discussions to ensure that gender perspectives have been adequately incorporated into the full cycle of the project. To ensure balanced gender perspectives have been incorporated right from the design stage of the project, external consultants, including a distinguished female leader serving as the Secretary of the G20 Youth Entrepreneurs' Alliance, have collaborated with the project to oversee the UNDP China-Europe Tech fellowship. Furthermore, in the initial brainstorming phase, the project sought input from diverse women stakeholders to gather their valuable feedback before finalizing the activities.

5.6.2 Cross-cutting issues: Youth, Disabilities, PLHIV, and other minority groups

Finding 29: The project pays special attention to youth. It integrates advantageous resources to empower youth, supports and nurtures young innovators and entrepreneurs in a bid to fully tap into their potential and mobilize their strengths. Nonetheless, the project could have more systematically addressed cross-cutting issues to maximize inclusiveness.

The project fully implements the concept of “leaving no one behind”. In the process of carrying out various activities, the project fully considers the participation of the youth and provide support for them, which is specifically reflected in the following:

As international supporting partner, UNDP participates in the organization of U&AI Camp, which brought together more than 1,300 young creators from more than 50 countries around the world. They engaged in online learning and discussions on eight themes related to human and global development, including health, education and climate change.

The project initiated the INSPIRO Young Entrepreneurs Network for SDGs which gathers Chinese and international entrepreneurs in the field of science and technology to discuss how to promote the achievement of SDGs with the facilitation of cutting-edge innovations. This network also strives to deepen and expand the cooperation between the CDHT and overseas young entrepreneurial communities in the field of sustainable development.

However, it was found that the project falls short in adequately addressing other cross-cutting issues such as disabilities and HIV, among others. While the project commendably opens its doors to and involves marginalized groups to a certain degree, it appears to lack a systematic approach and comprehensive coverage for these cohorts. The lack of a holistic and inclusive approach limits the project's ability to effectively address the unique challenges faced by these groups. This deficiency suggests a missed opportunity to fully integrate and address the needs of these vital demographic groups within the project's design and implementation, thereby potentially limiting the project's overall impact and effectiveness.

VI. CONCLUSIONS

6.1 Conclusion on Overarching Issues: Project ToC, Monitoring and Oversight, and Risk Management

The project utilized a robust theory of change (ToC) model that was rigorously reviewed annually by the Project Steering Committee to ensure activities aligned with strategic objectives and workplan targets.

The project's monitoring and oversight system has played an important role in self-evaluation and timely adjustment and has maintained the flexibility of the project and the organizational structure. The PSC conducts annual reviews of project implementation and the monitoring and evaluation system of the PMO provides data support in assessing gender equality and social inclusion. However, the monitoring and oversight system is not yet competent enough in tracking the effectiveness of activities and the cumulative results of the project.

The integrated risk management approaches applied demonstrated the project's agility in navigating challenges. Through these means, disruptions caused by the three-year COVID-19 pandemic were successfully mitigated, allowing for meaningful development results to still be achieved.

6.2 Conclusion on Relevance

First, the project's activity-specific practices are highly relevant to the project's objectives and consistent with an array of plans and goals, including the country programme's outputs and outcomes, UNDP strategic plan and the SDGs. The project has demonstrated a high degree of adaptability to external shocks of COVID-19 and effectively mitigated the negative influence of the pandemic through timely adjustments to the AWP, coordination of remote working, online and on-site activities and the design of activities to turn crises into opportunities. In addition, each year's AWP is still closely centered on the core objectives of the UNDP SDGs Innovation Pilot Projects without deviating from the concept of SDGs innovation. The AWP's aim to promote exchanges at international level and fully considerate and adapt to the needs of different groups.

Secondly, the project aligns with the development strategy of the CDHT and conducts research on key areas of concern to the government, such as "dual carbon target" and "digital trade", to support the government in capacity building and offer references for relevant policy formulation. Through holding the Re:Think conference, the project enhances the international influence of the CDHT and its communication and cooperation with the rest of the world.

Thirdly, thanks to SPARK Lab, the project connects global innovation resources, networks and international experiences, facilitates the CDHT to join the global SDGs innovation network, introduces more international resources to the CDHT, and localizes the concept of sustainable development.

6.3 Conclusion on Effectiveness

The evaluation assessed the effectiveness of the project based on the four outputs set during the project's design stage.

6.3.1 Conclusion on effectiveness of Output 1: Enhanced government capabilities with focus on high-value-added policy support for innovation and sustainable investment.

Overall, the project has generated extensive social advocacy through research on specific topics and the release of research reports at flagship events, but there is still much room for improvement in terms of policy advocacy.

The project completed a total of six research reports, including two on carbon neutrality, one on digital trade, and three on SDGs practices of enterprises in China. When developing these reports, the team actively collaborated with partners such as CASVI, Tsinghua University and PwC. All six reports were released at the Re:Think conference with a media impression of up to 8 million. Even the editors and members of relevant industries expressed their desire to access the reports, attracting great social attention, the reports' effectiveness in terms of policy advocacy still needs to be improved.

6.3.2 Conclusion on effectiveness of Output 2: Expanded innovator network to ensure "innovation for all".

Overall, the project focuses on fostering innovative talents, building innovation networks and bringing together academia, enterprises and society to learn from each other in the fields of innovation and sustainable development, and to promote cooperation in SDGs innovation.

Among them, the INSPIRO Young Entrepreneurs Network for SDGs brings together Chinese and international young entrepreneurs in the field of SDGs innovation to discuss how to promote the realization of SDGs with the facilitation of cutting-edge innovations. Members of the network gained partnerships in the community. At the same time, they are able to develop a deeper understanding of the SDGs and further incorporate it into their own business strategies. However, the current INSPIRO network is not mature enough in self-organization and decentralization and has not yet been able to operate in a self-organizing manner.

The Digital Trade Workshop helps the government staff of the CDHT to gain a deeper understanding of factors that may affect the development of digital trade, and helps enterprises to learn about market trends, development strategies, business planning and leading experience. However, the frequency of Digital Trade Workshops is currently low, which needs to be improved.

6.3.3 Conclusion on effectiveness of Output 3: Enabling ecosystem conducive to innovation collaboration and leadership.

Overall, the project is committed to promoting the joint contribution, sharing and application of technology-based and non-technology-based experiences to address pressing development challenges. The project facilitates the exchanges and adoption of Chinese and international STI resources by organizing large-scale conferences and events to promote collaboration between the CDHT and leading innovators.

To be specific, the project held three flagship Re:Think Conferences during which it unveiled the UNDP SDGs Innovation Lab and brought together like-minded organizations, enterprises and

individuals from the government and the private sector from both China and abroad, online and on-site, to share innovative ideas and exchange experiences.

The project has held many discussions before each conference to decide on the theme, while the topics of each conference have been gradually deepened to attract various parties to participate in the discussion. During the conference, stakeholders express their views and exchange opinions and build up partnerships to facilitate sustainable development.

6.3.4 Conclusion on effectiveness of Output 4: Innovation-based sustainable development in China and other developing countries promoted through a solution exchange mechanism.

Overall, the project has enhanced the CDHT's international influence and communication with the rest of the world. First, the project showcases UNDP's vision and efforts on low-carbon transition, promotes UN's concept of sustainable development and introduces international resources to the CDHT. Secondly, the project widely disseminates Chengdu's innovative experience of sustainable development globally through its excellent communications capacity and enhances the international influence of the CDHT.

In particular, the project developed cultural and creative products and experiential activities featuring in Chengdu's panda culture to showcase UNDP's SDGs innovation projects around the world as well as the local customs and traditions. However, relevant experiential activities have not been sustained to date.

The project designed and launched the SPARK Innovation Center for Zero-Carbon Future which has received more than 200 visitors and gained favorable reviews. The Innovation Center enables the visitors to develop a deeper understanding of sustainable development and zero carbon lifestyle. However, the overall design of the exhibition's setting and visiting routes still needs to be improved and it is not yet open on a regular basis.

6.4 Conclusion on Efficiency

First, secure financial investment is one of the key factors for a successful SDGs project. Meanwhile, a high implementation rate is maintained in spite of the impact of the pandemic and other difficult circumstances. The structural analysis of expenditure found that the project spent most of its funds directly on large-scale conference operation and the use of funds can be subsequently adjusted by allocating some funds to help community members to carry out small-scale activities.

Secondly, lack of human resources is still a constraint for the effective implementation of the project. The staff of the PMO and the partners are all highly professional and dedicated. Nevertheless, relying only on PMO staff for project implementation is obviously insufficient for a project with a large scale, broad audience, high complexity, vague goals and heavy communication and coordination tasks. Therefore, in the future, it is necessary to give full play to the self-organizing ability of community members to establish an innovative system that operates in a self-organizing manner. It is also necessary to recruit volunteers to support the project in a more flexible way.

Thirdly, the project's partnership structure has been established. The tripartite cooperation among UNDP, CDHTMC and CICETE enables the project to align and balance the achievement of SDGs and the economic and social development needs of local government to the maximum degree. Therefore, the project's design and implementation are based on mutual consultation and demands. The project has also actively expanded its cooperation with the private sector and other social organizations but the formation of long-term and stable cooperation at official level still has a long way to go.

6.5 Conclusion on Sustainability

The project presents a robust sustainability profile, demonstrating financial resilience, socio-political integration, institutional solidity, and environmental stewardship. Despite the challenges posed by the COVID-19 pandemic, it has shown financial sustainability by maintaining a high implementation rate and securing sufficient funding. Socio-political sustainability is evident in its community engagement and alignment with local contexts, while institutional sustainability has been achieved through refining operational mechanisms and advocating for gender equality. The project's environmental sustainability is highlighted by its focus on promoting low-carbon lifestyles.

However, to ensure overall sustainability, it is critical to establish a decentralized operation system, deepen engagement with CDHTMC, and foster autonomous operation among participants.

6.6 Conclusion on Social Inclusion

The project has a good track record of mainstreaming gender equality and social inclusion. It incorporates gender considerations into the mainstreaming strategy, prioritize gender-related issues in discussions, provide equal opportunities for women in all activities, empower women entrepreneurs and support women's development. Furthermore, the project has taken proactive measures to enhance women's representation in management positions. Recognizing the significance of gender equality in fostering social inclusion, the project has prioritized the promotion of gender balance across all levels. Moreover, the project focuses on youth, emphasizes their participation, supports and fosters young innovators and entrepreneurs, and strives to tap into their full potential.

However, the project lacks comprehensive strategies and interventions deliberately targeting the inclusion and empowerment of marginalized populations. More intentional design and coverage of cross-cutting social issues is needed to realize the pilot's aspiration of leaving no one behind.

VII. LESSONS LEARNED AND CHALLENGES

7.1 Lessons learned

7.1.1 The project set up a primary breakdown and response system for vague goals.

This project is a pioneering pilot exploration of this kind thus its objectives and the implementation path are not clear and predictable enough. Rather, it is very vague. Surprisingly, the project set up a primary breakdown and response system for vague goals in the implementation process. Firstly, the general objective and core concept of the project need to be clarified. These goals are relatively vague in this project. Secondly, the vague general objective should be deconstructed and broken down. Based on this, the project generated and clarified its two outcomes and four outputs. Thirdly, specific activities and implementation requirements are designed on the basis of the four outputs. Finally, the system would focus on the generation of concrete results of SDGs innovation. This process is shown in Figure 6:

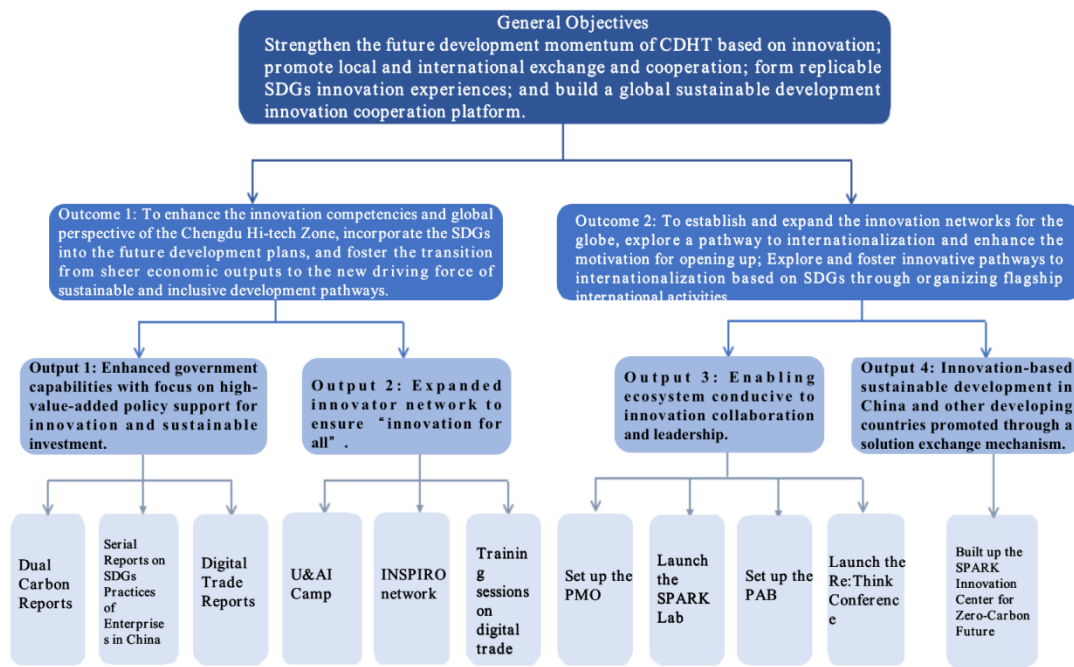


Figure 6 Breakdown and Response System for Vague Goals

At a broader level, the project revolves around the concept of innovation, with its overall objective being somewhat broad and open-ended. In order to achieve this objective, the project adopts a novel approach to its design and implementation. This approach serves multiple purposes and intentions, including enhancing the innovation capacity and influence of CDHT, bolstering its development by leveraging innovation, establishing country-specific innovation models that can be replicated and shared, fostering international cooperation and knowledge exchange, and establishing a global platform dedicated to sustainable development innovation and collaboration.

To be specific, firstly, the project aims to strengthen the CDHT's capacity of releasing the innovation-based development momentum, promote the transformation of its development path from capacity-driven to momentum-driven and explore an internationalization path that can be employed by Hi-Tech Zones across China. Secondly, the project hopes to enhance the international influence of the CDHT and its exchanges and cooperation with the world through diversified activities at both international and local level. Besides, the project aims to introduce more international resources as well as the concept of sustainable development to the CDHT and further localize the concept. Thirdly, the project hopes to integrate resources from the government, civil society, UN, academia and business, striving to support the government and innovators in capacity building. Fourth, based on the network of UNDP Innovation Labs, the project values high-tech enterprises' role in promoting sustainable development. The project mobilizes global experts and resources for enterprises to provide technical support and experience sharing thus empowering local enterprises.

On the basis of the above-mentioned macro-objectives, the project focuses on two outcomes and four outputs. In line with the needs of different outputs, the project has carried out a series of policy research, capacity building and publicity activities centered on SDGs innovation. The project's two outcomes, four major outputs, the main activities to achieve these and their effectiveness are set out below:

Outcome 1: To enhance the innovation competencies and global perspective of the CDHT, incorporate the SDGs into the future development plans, and foster the transition from sheer economic outputs to the new driving force of sustainable and inclusive development pathways.

Output 1: Enhanced government capabilities with focus on high-value-added policy support for innovation and sustainable investment, the core of which is to foster the diffusion and expansion of STI through targeted competence-building measures, in order to support high-quality decision-making, research, demonstration and publicity.

- Conducted research on carbon peak and carbon neutrality, provided policy recommendations to the CDHT on the strategic development in this regard and examined the opportunities and challenges of incubating carbon service industries in the CDHT as a new conceptual sector;
- Promoted baseline research on SDGs and wrote a series of reports on practices of enterprises in China, examining enterprises' awareness of and contribution to the achievement of the SDGs;
- Conducted research on digital trade to support the building and decision-making of digital trade in the CDHT.

Output 2: Expanded innovator network to ensure "innovation for all".

- The project co-created the U&AI Camp to help young leaders jointly contribute to AI-based solutions in a bid to accelerate the achievement of the SDGs;
- The project established the INSPIRO Young Entrepreneurs Network for SDGs which gathered Chinese and international entrepreneurs in the field of science and technology to discuss how to promote the realization of the SDGs with the help of cutting-edge technological innovation;
- The project launched a series of training activities and workshops about digital trade for SMEs in the CDHT to help them grasp the ecology and development trend of digital trade.

Outcome 2: To establish and expand the innovation networks for the globe, explore a pathway to internationalization and enhance the motivation for opening up; Explore and foster innovative pathways to internationalization based on SDGs through organizing flagship international activities.

Output 3: Enabling ecosystem conducive to innovation collaboration and leadership.

- The project set up a PMO in the China-European Center at the CDHT which is responsible for project implementation and progress control;
- The project launched the SPARK Lab and carries out relevant activities to support project implementation and to connect with global innovation networks;
- The project set up the PAB to provide guidance on the strategic development of the project;
- The project held the Re:Think Conference for Innovation and Sustainable Development which brings together people from all walks of life to share innovative ideas, exchange experiences, discuss pressing issues and establish new partnerships

Output 4: Innovation-based sustainable development in China and other developing countries promoted through a solution exchange mechanism, and to leverage existing STI to improve South-South cooperation and make contributions to China's main global development measure.

- The project initiates the SPARK Innovation Center for Zero-Carbon Future to disseminate and promote low-carbon lifestyle and production for individuals and communities.

7.1.2 The project explored an innovative platform-based operation model

The project has explored a unique operation model: a series of platforms for supporting activities and a systematic management system. The former includes websites, forums, research, reviews, funding and publicity. The latter consists of a systematic management mechanism and institution on top of the platforms. These were summarized by the evaluation team as the operation model of platform-based innovation (Figure 7). The platform innovation operation model initially created by the project team goes beyond the innovation model targeting organizations or industries. The project team creatively establishes a model featuring clustering and systematization, which eventually triggers a multi-center chain innovation process.

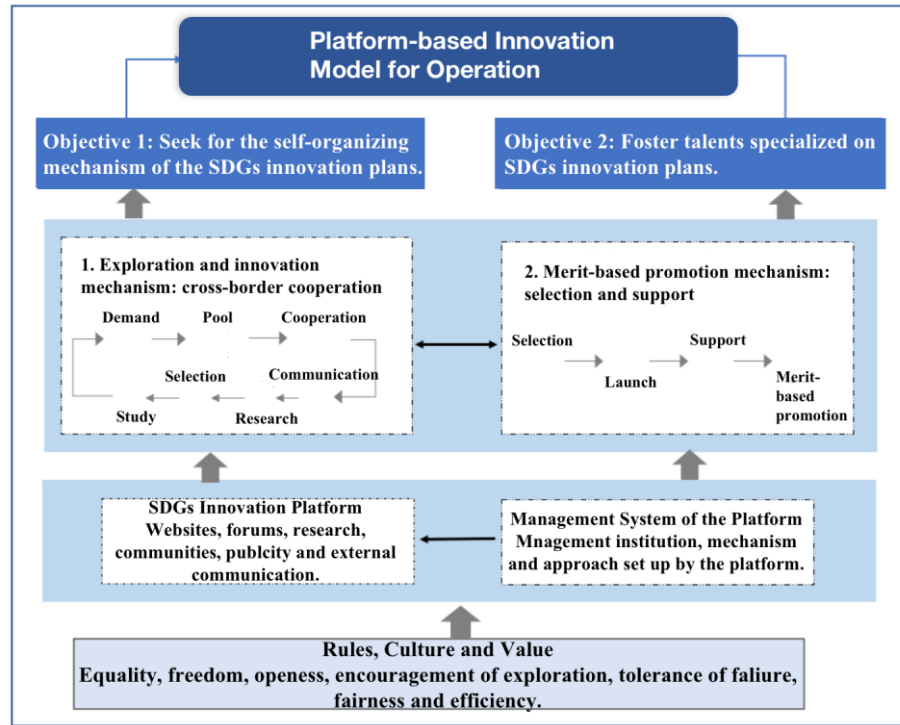


Figure 7 Platform-based Innovation Model for Operation

At the level of rules, culture and values behind the project, the project emphasizes independence, equality, freedom, openness, encouragement of exploration, tolerance of failure, fairness, impartiality and efficiency. The cultural values behind UNDP and its team include the core concepts of independence, freedom, equality, development, exploration and fairness. The project grows and develops on the basis of these values.

At the level of activities and processes, the project realizes the pursuit of SDGs through a platform-based innovation model. To start with, a mechanism for exploration and innovation based on cross-sector cooperation has been built. At the early stage, firstly, the project puts forward the needs and targets of pursuing SDGs innovation. Secondly, through publicity and activities, the project gathers as many actors, resources and solutions as possible. Thirdly, the project fully showcases and promotes cooperation among various actors, resources and solutions in activities such as workshops, conferences, forums, communities. In this process, existing SDGs innovation was highlighted in particular. Fourthly, the project provide sufficient opportunities for various actors to contact and communicate with each other and to further improve the plans through contact and communication. Fifthly, after the activities are completed, the project conducts follow-up research, review and improve the results achieved, striving to build up a data base that can be efficiently applied. Sixth, the project evaluates all plans in a fair and scientific manner, select the best suits and announce to the public. Seventh, the project encourages actors to learn from the best plan and seek for progress. Based on the above-mentioned process, the project continues to improve the activities designing and plans formulating of SDGs innovation.

Secondly, a merit-based promotion mechanism based on screening and support is established. In the follow-up promotion of the project, firstly, the project further screens out the winning

sustainable development actors and their solutions. Secondly, the winners and their sustainable development solutions are promoted both inside and outside the system. Thirdly, the stakeholders within the project operating system are suggested to support the winning solutions in prior, so as to enhance the efficiency of resource allocation within the project operating system. Fourthly, through the dissemination of information, the project sponsors are advocated to prioritize the winning plans in a bid to achieve the optimal allocation of social resources. From exploration and innovation to merit-based promotion mechanism, the SDGs innovation pilot projects operated on the platform-based model have been advanced effectively and the SDGs innovation target will be achieved gradually.

7.1.3 The project established a primary-stage standardized internal process for activity acceptance within the PMO.

The project established a primary-stage standardized internal process for activity acceptance within the PMO, which can provide guidance and support for its implementation. The PMO promotes no fewer than five activities each year but not every activity has to be controlled by the PMO completely. Project acceptance is the key tool to control the overall quality. In the case of a large number of events are handled by limited number of staff, a set of standardized workflow can improve the team's execution capability in the acceptance process and enhance the effectiveness and efficiency of the project.

During implementation, the project team drew lessons from the experience of past events and established a set of standardized internal processes for project acceptance of the PMO. The specific workflow is as follows:

- Suppliers submit the first draft of the report and the results achieved;
- Invite a total of about 10 experts, including incumbent and leaders of CDHTMC and external experts, such as professors from universities, to form an expert committee to review and grade the result. If the grade exceeds 80, then the report can be passed. If it's lower, it means that the report should be revised based on the comments;
- When the results meet the criteria, the project will invite partners and suppliers to release the report at one of the sessions of a flagship event.

7.1.4 The project created a dynamic system to build up consensus by employing flagship events as platforms.

The project created a dynamic system to build up consensus by employing flagship events as platforms. The project takes Re:Think as a platform to gather government officials from the CDHT and talents from all walks of life to have in-depth exchanges on various topics. Meanwhile, the conference also invites influential local actors to share their experiences, such as outstanding guests working on community revitalization and community inclusion. Thanks to the participation in Re:Think, these actors were able to further advance their efforts on SDGs issues when returning to their own workplaces.

All in all, the program attracts the attention of the government and relevant parties through flagship events and takes the conference as a platform for communication, helping members to build up consensus and expand their circles of friends. These efforts will bring about an extended

community effect for the actors and help a wide range of people to take root in the cause of sustainable development.

7.2 Challenges

7.2.1 The participation level of CDHTMC needs to be improved.

This project is a pilot project of SDGs innovation in the CDHT, which is a tripartite cooperation among UNDP, CDHTMC and CICETE. The CDHTMC, as the implementing agency, takes the lead in coordinating various departments within the Zone to guide and manage the project and has given strong support in terms of funding, policy recommendations, organization and coordination, resource connection and events guidance. The involvement of the CDHTMC can influence the AWP, the design, implementation and effectiveness of events. In particular, it influences the compatibility of the project design and implementation with the development needs of the local government, the sustainability of the project and the long-term effects of the project.

As an innovative pilot project with in-depth cooperation among multiple parties, the project can take root in the CDHT only if the commissioning party is involved in the implementation in a leading and immersive manner, which will bring the Zone with future momentum on SDGs innovation and influence both in China and abroad.

To start, CDHTMC needs to move away from the traditional mindset of dominating public purchase processes. Unlike conventional government procurement projects, the project's goals can't be achieved merely by purchasing the services of the Project Management Office (PMO) and UNDP. Instead, CDHTMC needs to fully engage in the project, ensuring its outcomes have a lasting and significant impact on CDHT's development post-project acceptance. Moreover, every department within CDHTMC should be deeply involved in the project's implementation. This involvement will foster an organic integration of project events with their own work and ensure the project serves the actual needs of all departments. Consequently, CDHTMC will directly benefit from the project's success.

7.2.2 A decentralized and self-organizing operation system for the SPARK Lab needs to be established.

The SDGs Innovation Lab has not yet established a decentralized and self-organizing operation system. At present, the project implementation mainly relies on the staff's in-person planning and execution, which consumes too much of their energy. However, in order to realize self-innovation, the platform-based innovation model for operation demands for the full play of all the participants' initiative. This requires UNDP and the Lab staff to pay more attention to top-level design rather than practical implementation. That is to say, the staff need to play a guiding role in project implementation, steer the overall direction of the project in a bid to ensure that the project moves steadily in the direction of achieving the SDGs. Since the practical implementation of the project needs to mobilize and give full play to the strength of the society, it is necessary to set up a decentralized and self-organizing operation system.

For example, most of the events under the INSPIRO Young Entrepreneurs Network for SDGs are organized and planned by the staff of the Innovation Lab. However, since the Lab now is

understaffed plus the impact of COVID-19, the number and form of community events are not as expected. Therefore, the INSPIRO network also needs a decentralized and self-organizing operation system to increase events' frequency and enrich the forms of it by mobilizing the initiative of community members. In addition, the SPARK Innovation Center for Zero-Carbon Future also purely relies on the Lab's staff to organize public visits, which makes regular open of the exhibition impossible. The Innovation Center has only received more than 200 visitors since its completion, so we can try to recruit external volunteers to assist in the operation of the exhibition.

7.2.3 The project team's capability of community collaboration and government communication needs to be strengthened.

Although a project can surely recruit all kinds of excellent talents, it is the building and management of the whole team that can make the team more efficient thus creating more values. In the process of organizing events, it is inevitable for the project team to communication with the government. Therefore, the PMO has already designated specialized personnel to be in charge of the negotiation and communication with the government.

At the same time, the platform-based innovation model adopted by the project relies on self-organizing operation, which requires large-scale application of this model on project sub-communities' operation as well. Because the communities' operating capacity to a large extent determines the project's influence and effectiveness. However, according to the evaluation team's observation, the project team is relatively short of talents specialized on community operation, which makes the project less likely to utilize social forces to promote relevant events and the project's capability of running in a self-organizing manner also needs to be improved. A typical example in this regard is that the SPARK Innovation Center for Zero-Carbon Future fails to be open on a regular basis.

7.2.4 The flagship events still lack innovative iteration and participants' active engagement.

The attraction of platform-based innovation is gained through not only an all-encompassing design but also the full employment of the platform's own strengths and features. By holding multiple events, the project can find its own progress path and then approach the target, thus developing a core competitiveness to attract a steady stream of people to participate in sustainable development. The evaluation team observed that although the flagship events have already become the representatives of the project, it still lacks innovative iteration and the adaptation capacity for meeting uncertain and ambiguous challenges.

At the same time, the evaluation team found that the project also lacks participant stickiness, which limits the impact of the flagship events to a certain extent. Participants' stickiness of the events can facilitate the establishment of community relationship and make the events truly meet the demand of the public, so that the public is willing to accept the concept of sustainable development and participate in the cause of sustainable development. Therefore, the question of how to attract more people's continuous attention to the events is something that the project team needs to address. For example, although the Re:Think conference has been held for three consecutive years as one of the project's flagship events and has achieved good communications results, the event still lacks highlights that can be remembered easily. Meanwhile, the event is only conducted in the form of a conference, resulting in limited impact and insufficient participants' stickiness. Therefore, the event

needs to be updated and iterated so that it can be organized in various forms and derivatives in a bid to enhance the continuity of the event and the stickiness of the participants.

7.2.5 Engagement of the PAB needs to be improved.

The project established a PAB in 2022, inviting a total of nine leading experts in their respective fields from international organizations, academia and the private sector to join. The project hopes that these experts would be able to provide insights on global trends and cutting-edge issues in science, technology and innovation, offer professional and unique advice on the strategic direction of the project's future development, and make use of their own reputation and expertise to make the project more influential. However, the evaluation team found that PAB's engagement in the project has been limited due to the multi-layer impact of short history, COVID-19 and other factors.

In the future, the engagement of the PAB needs to be further strengthened in order to provide effective advice and concrete support for the project's strategic direction and macro-level interventions: firstly, the PAB will provide technical support and guidance on SDGs innovation; secondly, the PAB will assist the project team in mobilizing resources from various sources, connecting local sustainable development needs and supporting the implementation of pilot SDGs projects; and finally, the PAB will support policy research, as well as the promotion and export of the project's results and experience.

7.2.6 The project's capability of connecting global innovation network needs to be improved.

When initiated, the project took the CDHT's needs of strengthening international cooperation into consideration. The CDHT hopes to make use of UNDP platform to connect with global innovation networks, resources and experts, resonate to the China's national policy of "bringing in and going out" and facilitate the sustainable development of the CDHT and the Chengdu Municipality at large.

However, due to the impact of COVID-19, all project events must comply with national and local pandemic prevention and control regulations, resulting in constraints on the implementation of some of the events. These weakened the project's influence in international exchanges, experience sharing, thematic research, capacity building and many other respects. These also limited the speed of the CDHT's internationalization. For example, the Re:Think conference was carried out in the form of both online and on-site rather than the original purely on-site plan. Many non-Chinese experts were unable to be present in person for the events. The event failed to meet expectations at the time of its development. As a result, the project's capability of connecting global innovation network needs to be improved.

7.2.7 The continuous influence of the project's results needs to be strengthened.

The project expects to bring sustainable development momentum based on innovation and influence in both China and abroad to the CDHT. The project hopes to carry on the project's existing results rather than only bringing short-term impact to the Zone. Therefore, it is necessary to maintain the steady operation of the project's existing platforms, resources, networks and other results, so as to provide long-term support for the future SDGs innovation of Chengdu.

However, the sustainability of the project's results is yet to be improved. The impact of the current events is gradually fading, so there are still challenges in maintaining and deepening the effectiveness and impacts of these events. The local government's participation in the project is still limited to some extent. It seems that they have not been involved in the project management on a sustained basis, which makes it difficult for project events to reflect their will and to be fully integrated into their overall work plan. This in turn affects the continuous advancement of the events and their in-depth development. After the completion of the project, it is not likely to ensure that the existing event platforms and resource networks will continue to operate and exert influence. It will also be difficult to truly expand and deliver the results of SDGs innovation to China's western region and even to the whole country.

VIII. RECOMMENDATIONS

The evaluation report provides a comprehensive set of actionable recommendations derived from the above analysis, findings, and conclusions. **These recommendations span four key areas of focus: project planning, project implementation, project management capacity, and project overall strategy.** By addressing these specific aspects, the report aims to guide future improvements and enhance the project's overall effectiveness and impact. Moreover, to ensure practicality and accountability, the report (for certain recommendations) attempts to suggest the tentative responsible party, facilitating their implementation and monitoring.

Moreover, these recommendations may further extend beyond the confines of the project itself. **They are anticipated to contribute to and inform the broader and future programming efforts of UNDP in China,** covering the following USDCF/CPD Outcomes. Ultimately, we suggest the adoption of these recommendations can pave the way for more impactful and successful initiatives, benefiting both this project itself and UNDP's programming efforts as a whole.

- Primary UNSDCF/CPD Outcome to be informed:
 - **CPD Outcome 1:** Relative poverty and multi-dimensional poverty are reduced, and more coordinated development leads to reduction in gaps between rural and urban areas and among regions, as more people in China, including left-behind groups, benefit from sustainable, innovation-driven and shared high-quality economic development, with enhanced access to economic opportunities arising through innovation, entrepreneurship and rural revitalization, enjoying decent work, sustainable livelihoods, and the right to development equally for both women and men.
- Secondary UNSDCF/CPD Outcome to be informed:
 - **CPD Outcome 2:** People in China and the region benefit from a healthier and more resilient environment.
 - **CPD Outcome 3:** Through South-South cooperation and humanitarian cooperation, China makes greater contributions to SDG attainment and the principles of the 2030 Agenda, including leaving no one behind.

8.1 Recommendations on project planning (AWPs)

The Annual Workplan (AWP) is an important tool to define the project's development pathways, clarify its goals and advance its implementation. Regarding the adjustments on this year's AWP, the evaluation team would like to present three recommendations as follows:

8.1.1 Improve the logic of the goals breakdown system.

The breakdown of vague goals largely affects the development of the project. The project has established a primary set of goals breakdown system to deconstruct, break down and refine the macro-goals of the project and then promote the implementation of the project on the basis of short- and medium-term goals. However, the current breakdown of project goals is still very segmented and lacks logic. Therefore, it is necessary to further improve the logic of the goals breakdown system.

8.1.2 Enhance the coherence and integrity of the AWP.

The events carried out by the project on the basis of the AWP each year are featured and attractive but in general they lack coherence and integrity. Therefore, the correlation between the AWP should be strengthened and the connection between different events should be improved, so as to ensure that the themes are deeper and deeper year after year and the results of SDGs innovation can be achieved constantly. When designing the outputs and specific events in the AWP, it is necessary to give full consideration to the existing results of the project on the basis of the objectives and outputs. It is also significant to dig deeper into the development prospects of the activities and to carry out re-design on the basis of current results, so as to strengthen the effects of the events.

For example: (1) The AWP for “Enhanced government capabilities with focus on high-value-added policy support for innovation and sustainable investment” proposes detailed plan to conduct further research on existing reports on the theme of dual carbon, SDGs practices of enterprises and others; (2) The AWP for Output 2: Expanded innovator network to ensure “innovation for all” put forwards the arrangement on the organization of next year's community building of the INSPIRO Young Entrepreneurs Network for SDGs; (3) The AWP for Output 3: Enabling ecosystem conducive to innovation collaboration and leadership points out the work plan of the PAB for the next year as well as the theme and holding forms of Re:Think; (4) The annual plan for Output 4: Innovation-based sustainable development in China and other developing countries promoted through a solution exchange mechanism clarified the ideas of exhibition design and operation for the SPARK Innovation Center for Zero-Carbon Future.

8.1.3 Strengthen the connection between the AWP and the demands of the local government.

In the process of design and implementation, the project should endeavor to connect with the local government's work plan and meet their demands, thus increasing the attention and participation of the local government in the project and enhancing the implementation effect and sustainable development capacity. Currently, the project's AWP have not yet been able to respond to all the demands of the local government. Therefore, it is necessary to further strengthen the connection between the AWP and the needs of the local government, striving to incorporate the events, meetings, reports and other works in the AWP into the overall work plan of the local government. By doing these, the project implementation is likely to bring about direct benefits on the performance of the local government thus increasing the government's attention to the project and ultimately to win-win results of multi-stakeholders.

8.2 Recommendations on the project implementation

The implementation approach and process determine whether the project can play a pilot role in achieving the SDGs. Regarding adjustments on the project implementation, the evaluation team would like to offer five recommendations as follows:

8.2.1 The project needs to roll out more sub-events to improve the iteration capacity and participants' full engagement of the flagship events.

The platform-based innovation model requires the participation of a constant stream of actors, which demands the project's events to be attractive enough that the government, enterprises and society can pay attention to it. Although the project has designed a variety of events and organized its flagship Re:Think Conference, the iteration capacity and participants' stickiness still need to be improved.

For example, the past three Re:Think were organized in the form of a conference, which often lasted for a relatively short period of time. Although it gained widespread attention, its influence is hard to sustain, and substantive changes are not likely to appear after the conference. In this regard, the evaluation team learned that the PMO is planning to upgrade Re:Think conference to Re:Think Week in 2023. This kind of iteration is an effective way to increase the participants' stickiness of the event. This approach extends the duration of the event to a whole week or even a month. During this period of time, continuous exchanges and discussions on sustainable development-related topics will be organized, which can deepen the engagement of participants and further improve their stickiness. Ultimately, the project can engage the public in SDGs innovation in an in-depth and sustained manner.

8.2.2 The project is recommended to generate wrap-up briefs for the government to strengthen its role in policy advocacy.

The project's existing reports and events have a limited impact on government policies. In the future, the project needs to strengthen its cooperation with the local government. To be specific, the project should focus its research and events on SDGs issues that concern the government and present the results of its studies and events to the government. By doing so, the project can provide the government with high-quality reference to decision-making, thereby strengthening the project's role in policy advocacy and further enhancing the influence of SDGs in the CDHT, as well as in Chengdu and Sichuan Province at large.

Specific practices include: (1) in the selection of topics for reports and events, the project team needs to further study the policies of the national and local governments, keep communicating with the local government, especially leaders of relevant departments and proactively respond to the government's most current concerns about SDGs issues; (2) after each important event, the project is recommended to generate wrap-up briefs and present them to the CDHT. Afterwards, the results would be submitted to the municipal government of Chengdu and the government of Sichuan province through the government's channel, thus attracting the attention of high-level leaders and amplifying the influence of the project.

8.2.3 The project should free the PMO staff from detailed implementation but support them in playing a steering role and let the communities to operate in a self-organizing manner.

The platform-based innovation model for operation requires to bring together as many participants as possible and give full play to their initiative so that the project can achieve SDGs innovation through the participants' joint contribution. To meet this requirement, PMO staff should focus more on steering the project rather than advancing detailed events in the process of implementation. That is to say, the PMO staff need to focus on guiding work, such as directing the project, rather than execution work, such as designing and advancing specific events. Under the premise of controlling the general direction of the project, the PMO should hand over some project's design and events'

implementation works to platform participants and guide communities to achieve self-organizing operation. For example, for INSPIRO Young Entrepreneurs Network for SDGs, the project can set up an incentive mechanism to expand community membership and give full play to members' initiative, so as to improve the activity of the community and realize self-organizing operation. Detailed practices include:

(1) Set up a specialized fund for events to increase events frequency and stimulate participants' initiative.

To start with, UNDP can set up an exclusive fund for INSPIRO community to support its members to organize small-scale activities related to the SDGs within the community which can be carried out once a week or a few times a month. Secondly, members who are interested in applying for the fund to host community activities need to first propose detailed plans, and then the PMO and the evaluation team composed of core community members will assess each plan and select the best ones to be funded. A complaint mechanism will also be set up in this process so that the evaluation will be open and transparent. Thirdly, the winners will host the activity and invite representatives from relevant departments of the government, enterprises and social organizations to attend so that extensive consultation and joint contribution can be achieved. Finally, after the activity, the discussion topics and co-creation results will be summarized and sorted out to form briefs, reports and other documents, which will be released to the public.

This approach can truly stimulate the participants' initiative and achieve win-win results for community members, the PMO and the government. For the members, organizing activities can increase the exposure of their own entrepreneurial brand, connect to government resources and meet potential partners. For the PMO, it can enhance the activity of the community network, realize the self-organizing operation of the network and reduce the workload of them. For the government, it can help them to understand the current development trend of innovation and entrepreneurship thus accelerating the roll out of high-quality policies.

(2) Expand community membership and establish a withdraw mechanism for the members.

Firstly, expand the membership of the community network. Under the platform-based innovation model, the generation of high-quality plans relies heavily on the communication and joint contribution of a large number of participants. The INSPIRO Young Entrepreneurs Network for SDGs has 107 members, and it needs to recruit more outstanding young entrepreneurs. Therefore, in addition to self-application, the project can also encourage current members, enterprises, international and social organizations to recommend suitable candidates. Secondly, a withdrawal mechanism for network members should be established. The project should suggest those members who have not participated in any activities withdraw from the network so as to maintain the activity of community.

8.2.4 The project needs to improve the exhibition design and give a full play of social actors' strengths in operation.

Although the SPARK Innovation Center for Zero-Carbon Future has been built up and put into use, the exhibition is not organized in a strongly immersive and attractive manner and its visiting routes also need to be enriched. In addition, the exhibition is not open to the public on a regular basis

because it relies on the PMO staff's guided tour and visitors need to book online in advance. In this regard, the evaluation team recommends the project team to further improve the overall design of the exhibition and fully mobilize social actors to participate in the operation of it. Detailed recommendations are:

(1) Enrich the visiting routes and enhance the attractiveness of the exhibition.

First, enrich the overall design of the visiting routes. The current visiting time of the exhibition is only 20-30 minutes. So, it is necessary to further enrich the routes by expanding the content of each section of the exhibition or making the routes more interesting and interactive so that the visiting time can be extended to about 1 hour. Secondly, improve the attractiveness of the exhibition. Currently, the exhibition is not organized in a strongly immersive and attractive manner and lacks sustained attraction for the visitors. Therefore, the project can improve the content design of the exhibition and improve the storytelling of the exhibition hall through adding pictures and videos. Secondly, the project can enhance visiting experience by adding more interactive and immersive activities such as leaving their comments on intelligent message boards and winning souvenirs through participating in games.

(2) Fully mobilize social forces to participate in the operation and achieve regular open of the Innovation Center.

The project can try to recruit volunteers from universities and other sectors to become tour guides of the SPARK Innovation Center for Zero-Carbon Future. The volunteers will receive systematic training from the PMO staff and formally become a tour guide of the Innovation Center after passing the assessment. These efforts will expand the influence of the Center and at the same time solve the problem caused by the lack of staff, thereby the Center can open to the public on a regular basis.

8.2.5 The project should enhance its communication with all parties and accelerate the innovation-based development of the CDHT.

Strengthening external communication and building up a platform for exchange and cooperation is an important way to enhance innovation capacity. In the future, the project needs to further strengthen its external communication and enrich international dialogues on innovation and development by using its events as the platform. In the implementation, the project should give full play to the advantages of UNDP in the thematic research of innovation, capacity building and collection of global sustainable development solutions, so as to enhance the project's capability of connecting to global innovation network. By doing so, the CDHT can improve its influence on SDGs innovation both at home and abroad.

8.3 Recommendations on project management capacity

Team building is the foundation of the project. Regarding the project management team's capacities, the evaluation team offers the following three recommendations:

8.3.1 Strengthen the project team's understanding on the governance logic of the local government.

The project is launched in the CDHT with the CDHTMC as the main partner. Therefore, members of the PMO need to fully understand the governance logic of the local government and develop the capability of communicating with them. If the PMO's working direction is in line with the local government's policy, the project will obtain all due support, which will create a favorable external environment for the project implementation. The evaluation team therefore recommends the project's team to strengthen their understanding of the governance logic of the local government. UNDP can support the PMO in conducting relevant training on capacity building in government relations for project staff.

8.3.2 Strengthen the project team's capability of community operation.

Good community operation can connect people with common values and maintain the participants' stickiness. When community users are targeted and active enough, they can greatly help the project to disseminate content and activities, and even become the major contributor to the project. Therefore, the evaluation team recommends the project team to recruit a person with excellent community operation skills or invite experts in the field of community operation as consultants in a bid to improve the team's community operation skills and thus increase the activity of the community.

8.3.3 Strengthen the project team's capability of research and reflection.

As an innovation pilot project, the project requires more innovative thought and theoretical research. According to the evaluation team's observation, the project team mainly follows the AWP to promote the project implementation and has strong execution ability to promote the smooth implementation of activities in daily works. However, the project team has thought relatively little about the logical links between the overall objectives, short- and medium-term goals and specific actions. Due to the heavy workload, the project team lacks time to reflect on, summarize and refine the project implementation experience or model, which has made it difficult for the project to give full play to its role as an "innovation model". Therefore, the evaluation team recommends the project team to improve its capability of research and reflection and export the project's experience based on that.

8.4 Recommendations on project overall strategy

The overall strategy is an important guidance on the project management. Regarding the overall strategy, the evaluation team offers the following three recommendations:

8.4.1 Improve the research and platform-based innovation model for operation.

As an innovation pilot project launched by UNDP in the field of sustainable development, the project needs to give full play to its innovative and demonstrative effects, so as to provide effective operation model and project experience for other subsequent projects in this field. Therefore, it is necessary to strengthen the research and refinement of the project's unique platform-based innovation model for operation. In this regard, the evaluation team suggests that, first, the project's existing operation model should be reconsidered and a set of effective operation models for platform-based innovation should be concluded from that. Secondly, the platform-based innovation

model for operation should be further improved and developed to trigger the process of multi-center chain innovation in the field of sustainable development.

8.4.2 Give full play to the role of the PAB.

As an innovation pilot project for sustainable development, the project faces the challenge of vague goals, fuzzy means and ambiguous causal relationship between the two. So the project requires the guidance of experts on its strategic direction and the means of implementation. Therefore, the evaluation team recommends the project to give full play of the strength of the PAB and invite experts from different fields provide insights and professional support for sustainable development innovations on the basis of their professional knowledge and experience. They can offer their views from many perspectives, including climate issues, dual-carbon research, enterprise development and local strategies.

8.4.3 Improve the CDHTMC's participation in the project.

As an important partner of the project, the CDHTMC's engagement plays a key role in whether the project can take root and grow steadily in the CDHT and bring in sustainable development momentum based on innovation. In this regard, the evaluation team recommends the CDHTMC to be deeply involved in the operation of the project. Firstly, the CDHTMC should eliminate the misconception that the government always dominates public purchase. Secondly, all departments of the CDHTMC should proactively deepen their participation the project. For example, the CDHTMC can assign government staff to the PMO to be responsible for guiding project-related work and be deeply involved in all aspects of project implementation.

Annex I. Evaluation TOR

As separately attached and uploaded in ERC.

Annex II. Evaluation Matrix

Evaluation Criteria	Evaluation Questions	Data Collection Methods	Data Analysis Methods
Relevance	To what extent is the project aligned with the national development priorities, the expected outputs and outcomes listed in the Country Programme Document (CPD), UNDP Strategic Plan and the SDGs?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Project Document • Annual Work Plans • Annual Work Summaries • Risk Evaluation Reports • Interviews with staff from the PMO (innovation lab) • Interviews with representatives of the main partners of the project, including the staff of the UNDP China Office, the CDHTMC, and the CICETE • Case materials of typical activities 	Outcome Mapping: Examines the validity of theory of change, provides a framework for collecting data on immediate, underlying changes that lead to longer, more transformative changes, and is able to provide a rational evaluation of the “intervention-outcome” relation.
	To what extent has the project contributed to theories of change for the expected outcomes and outputs listed in the CPD?		
	How relevant are the overall design and the approach of the project?		
	To what extent were the perspectives of those who may influence the outcome, and those who can provide information or other resources to achieve the stated outcome, considered during the project design process?		
	To what extent has the project promoted gender equality, women’s empowerment and the human rights-based approach?		
	To what extent is the project adaptable to the needs of the different target groups?		
Effectiveness	To what extent has the project contributed to the expected outcomes and outputs listed in the CPD, the SDGs, the UNDP Strategic Plan and the national development priorities?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Annual Work Document • Annual Work Summaries • Risk Evaluation Reports • Project Travel Reports 	Outcome Mapping: Examines the validity of theory of change, provides a framework for collecting data on immediate, underlying changes that lead to longer, more transformative

	To what extent have the project outputs been achieved in terms of time and quality?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • PMO Meeting Minutes • Related content on the official website and WeChat official account of the project partner • Media coverage related to the project and its activities • Interviews with staff from the PMO (innovation lab) • Interviews with representatives of the main partners of the project, including the staff of the UNDP China Office, the CDHTMC, and the CICETE • Interview with representatives of project participants • Case materials of typical activities 	<p>changes, and is able to provide a rational evaluation of the “intervention-outcome” relation.</p> <p>Beneficiary evaluation: Evaluates and measures project effectiveness through project beneficiary groups’ perception and evaluation of the project. Based on qualitative analysis, project participants are observed and interviewed so that their feelings and opinions are collected, which serves as a basis to understanding and evaluating the project outputs.</p> <p>Contribution analysis: Aims to help managers, policymakers draw conclusions about the contribution their project make or is making to a particular output, and reduces uncertainty about an intervention’s contribution to an observed output by understanding why an observed project’s expected output was or was not achieved.</p>
	What factors enabled or hindered the achievements of expected outputs and outcomes?		
	Are the goals and outputs of the project clear, realistic and feasible within its framework?		
	To what extent are stakeholders involved in the implementation of the project?		
	To what extent has the project contributed to the realization of gender equality, women’s empowerment and human rights?		
	To what extent has the project been affected by COVID-19?		
	What measures have been taken to offset the impact of COVID-19?		
Efficiency	To what extent has the project management structure outlined in the project document produced the desired results?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Project Document • Annual Work Plans • Annual Work Summaries • Risk Evaluation Reports • Project Audit Reports 	Outcome Mapping: Examines the validity of theory of change, provides a framework for collecting data on immediate, underlying changes that lead to longer, more transformative

	To what extent were financial and human resources utilized economically?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Project Travel Reports • Interviews with staff from the PMO (innovation lab) • Interviews with representatives of the main partners of the project, including the staff of the UNDP China Office, the CDHTMC, and the CICETE 	<p>changes, and is able to provide a rational evaluation of the “intervention-outcome” relation.</p> <p>Contribution analysis: Aims to help managers, policymakers draw conclusions about the contribution their project make or is making to a particular output, and reduces uncertainty about an intervention’s contribution to an observed output by understanding why an observed project’s expected output was or was not achieved.</p>
	Were resources (funds, human resources, time, expertise, etc.) allocated strategically to achieve expected outcomes?		
	To what extent were funds and activities delivered in a timely manner?		
Sustainability	To what extent did the interventions help to sustain the results achieved in the project?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Project Document • Annual Work Plans • Annual Work Summaries • Risk Evaluation Reports • Project Audit Report • Interviews with staff from the PMO (innovation lab), in which all project managers and members participated • Interviews with representatives of the main partners of the project, including the staff of 	<p>Outcome Mapping: Examines the validity of theory of change, provides a framework for collecting data on immediate, underlying changes that lead to longer, more transformative changes, and is able to provide a rational evaluation of the “intervention-outcome” relation.</p> <p>Contribution analysis: Aims to help managers, policymakers draw conclusions about the contribution their</p>
	Are there any financial risks that could jeopardize the sustainability of the project outputs?		
	To what extent are financial and economic resources available to sustain the benefits achieved by the project?		
	Are there any social or political risks that could jeopardize the sustainability of the project outcomes?		

	Does the government agencies in CDHT , which are supported by the project, have any corresponding plans to ensure the sustainability of the project outcomes after the project is over? What are they?	the UNDP China Office, the CDHTMC, and the CICETE	project make or is making to a particular output, and reduces uncertainty about an intervention's contribution to an observed output by understanding why an observed project's expected output was or was not achieved.
	What can be done to strengthen the exit strategy and sustainability?		
Crosscutting Issues	To what extent have the improvised people, the indigenous and disabled people, women, men and other vulnerable and marginalized groups benefited from the project?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Annual Work Plans • Annual Work Summaries • Related content on the official website and WeChat official account of the project partner • Media coverage related to the project and its activities • Interviews with staff from the PMO (innovation lab) • Interview with representatives of project participants • Case materials of typical activities 	<p>Beneficiary evaluation: Evaluates and measures project effectiveness through project beneficiary groups' perception and evaluation of the project. Based on qualitative analysis, project participants are observed and interviewed so that their feelings and opinions are collected, which serves as a basis to understanding and evaluating the project outputs.</p> <p>Contribution analysis: Aims to help managers, policymakers draw conclusions about the contribution their project make or is making to a particular output, and reduces uncertainty about an intervention's contribution to an observed output by understanding why an observed project's expected output was or was not achieved.</p>

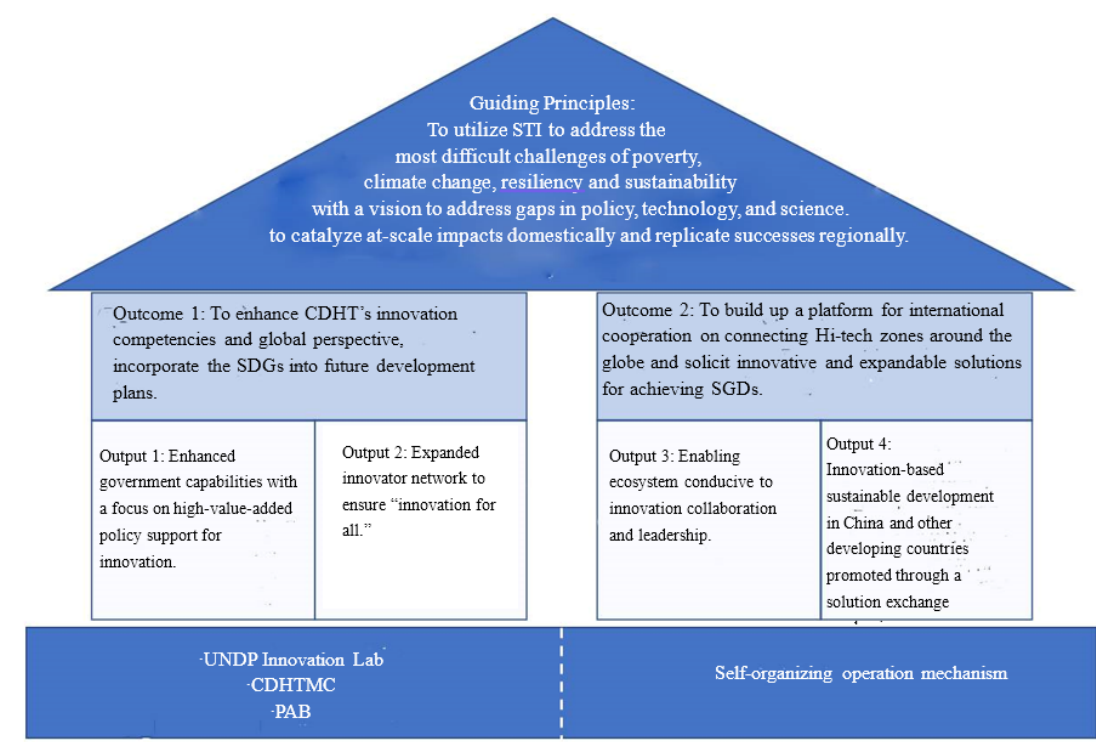
Annex III. List of Interviewees

No.	Name	Gender	Unit	Title
1	Zhao Yingzhe	Female	PMO	Project Manager
2	Gong Jun	Female	PMO	Partnerships and Innovation Coordinator
3	Liang Jie	Female	PMO	Sustainability Analyst
4	Liu Yilin	Female	PMO	Communications Assistant
5	Meng Xinyuan	Male	PMO	Project Assistant
6	Ren Qingrui	Male	CDHTMC	Staff at the Development Branch of the Sichuan Pilot Free Trade Zone
7	Zhang Wei	Female	UNDP	Assistant Resident Representative
8	Wu Zhiqiang	Male	UNDP	Risk and Compliance Officer
9	Liu Jun	Male	CICETE	Director of Division I of UN Programmes
10	Li Boyang	Female	CICETE	Program Officer of Division I of UN Programmes
11	Fan Hongyi	Male	Young Entrepreneur	Member of INSPIRO, Young entrepreneur
12	Liu Yingqiang	Male	MagicWe	Member of INSPIRO, Chairman of the Board of Directors of MagicWe
13	Shen Bowen	Male	BurnLab	Partner of the multimedia interactive program of the SPARK Innovation Center
14	Tang Ke	Female	Chengdu ALLAB	Partner of the overall design and construction of the SPARK Innovation Center

Annex IV. List of Documents Reviewed

- Project Document: "UNDP SDGs Innovation Pilot Project"
- Annual Work Plans (AWPs) for the years under evaluation
- Annual Project Progress Reports (PPR)
- Financial reports detailing project expenditures (CDR)
- Meeting minutes from Project Steering Committee (PSC) meetings
- Monitoring and oversight reports; back to office report (BTOR)
- Knowledge products (policy briefs, research reports, etc.)
- UNDP policy documents and guidelines
- UNDP Country Programme Document (CPD)
- All available external reports or studies relevant to the project
- All available project-related communications and advocacy materials
- Baseline and endline survey reports
- Risk logs or issue logs associated with the project
- Project procurement plan
- Relevant government (Chengdu) policy documents and strategic plans.

Annex V. Projects Results Framework



Outcome 1: Enhance CDHT's innovation competencies and global perspective, incorporate the SDGs into future development plans and foster a transition away from a focus on pure economic output to sustainable and inclusive development.

- Output 1: Government capabilities were enhanced with a focus on high-value-added policy support for innovation and sustainable investment, the core of which is to foster the diffusion and expansion of STI through targeted competence-building measures, in order to support high-quality decision-making, research, demonstration and publicity.
- Output 2: Innovator network was expanded to ensure "innovation for all".

Outcome 2: To establish and expand the innovation networks for the globe with CDHT as the pilot, explore a pathway to internationalization and enhance the motivation for opening up; to explore and foster innovative pathways to internationalization based on the SDGs through organizing flagship international activities.

- Output 3: Ecosystem conducive to innovation collaboration and leadership was enabled.
- Output 4: Innovation-based sustainable development in China and other developing countries was promoted through a solution exchange mechanism and existing STI was leveraged to improve South-South cooperation and make contributions to China's main global development measure.

Annex VI. Interview Outline

For PMO in Chengdu

Overall evaluation

1. Please describe the project's ideal blueprint expected by the PMO. What are the specific aspects that you expect to change through this project?
2. What is the short- and medium- term goal of the project? Could you please explain the specific targets phase by phase?
3. Could you tell us how the expected outcomes of the project were determined for the four outputs? And how did the goals are broke down? And then what events or activities were promoted to support these goals? Could you please provide some detailed information on the project implementation, such as clarifying the people involved, the development process and the breakdown of goals.
4. Could you please describe the process of project implementation regarding the four outputs? Please emphasize on the following: In what form were the events being carried out? How to determine the people involved and what did each group of participants do in the process? What effects and impacts are expected to be achieved in the events?
5. We found that adjustments are frequently seen in events organization. And there are not many events that are continuously promoted around a specific theme. What are the considerations for these adjustments? What are the procedures and processes required for these adjustments?
6. Could you please talk about the experiences and practices refined and challenges encountered during the implementation of the project, including the mutually supportive relationship formed during the process and the main reasons why some of the goals or plans are difficult to achieve?
7. Could you please briefly talk about the results achieved by the project in the field of sustainable development within the region and in international cooperation at large?
8. Could you please provide information on the organizational structure, staff responsibilities, operational mechanisms and monitoring system established during the project implementation, with emphasis on: what considerations were took into the process of setting up the organizational structure and what experiences and challenges existed in the process of operation?
9. Could you please talk about what contribution has the project made to the development of innovation capacity and sustainable development in the region? What contribution has it made to international cooperation in the field of sustainable development? And what kind of withdrawal mechanisms have been designed to consolidate the current development results?
10. How do you recognize the vulnerable groups that the project is targeting at? How do you identify the vulnerable groups that the project needs to help? For example, do you think a female entrepreneur is from a vulnerable group?
11. Could you please talk about what development opportunities does the project offer to relatively vulnerable groups such as the poor, indigenous and disabled persons, women, youth, etc.? What are the main mechanisms for them to enjoy the fruits of development?
12. Under what circumstances do you think the project has achieved the goals of the first phase and can proceed to the second phase of implementation?

13. Could you please comment on the overall effectiveness of the first phase of the project, including: (1) What do you think are the lessons that can be drawn from the results achieved, such as the management model and the form of activities, etc.? (2) What are the goals that have not been realized as expected in this phase and what are the reasons affecting the failure?
14. Could you please offer some suggestions for the project implementation of the next phase? Could you talk about how to improve the solutions to the problems encountered in the first phase?

Project-specific evaluation

Output 1	Enhanced government capabilities with focus on high-value-added policy support for innovation and sustainable investment, the core of which is to foster the diffusion and expansion of STI through targeted competence-building measures, in order to support high-quality decision-making, research, demonstration and publicity.
Indicators	Research on sustainable development, carbon peak and carbon neutrality <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • CDHT's Low Carbon Transition Strategies and Planning Report • Developing the Next Service Hub: A Strategy Research Report for CDHT Serial reports on SDGs Practices of Enterprises in China <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Research on digital trade • Digital Trade Development Report for Chengdu Hi-tech Industrial Development Zone

1. Could you please talk about what is the expected goal of the research on themes related to “carbon peak and carbon neutrality”, “sustainable development” and “digital trade”? How does it serve the overall goal of the Chengdu SDGs Innovation Project?
2. Could you please describe the preparation process of each report, such as key information on the participating departments, research focus and details, consensus reached and results produced?
3. Could you please describe how each report was released, for example, released on seminars/conferences or direct publication? What groups have been reached by the reports? What benefits would these groups obtain?
4. What are the policy and social implications of the results of each report? Have these reports made an actual difference? If so, please provide examples.
5. What do you think are the conditions/factors that need to be put in place for UNDP, as an external organization, to be able to play a policy advocacy role and further influence government policies?
6. Based on the experience of the implementation in the first phase of the project, could you please give some suggestions for the diffusion and promotion of STI in the second phase of the project?

Output 2	Expanded innovator network to ensure “innovation for all”.
Indicators	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Conduct a series of capacity building training on a wide range of topics include SDGs financing/Investment for China-EU, Digital Economy, etc. • Carry out a series of training sessions/workshop on digital trade.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Conduct workshops for young entrepreneurs and start-ups (U&AI Camp). • Establish INSPIRO Young Entrepreneurs Network for SDGs.
--	---

1. Could you please briefly introduce the expected goal of conducting the workshops on digital economy and young entrepreneurs, and establishing the INSPIRO Network? How does the goal serve the overall target of the Chengdu SDGs Innovation Project?
2. Could you please offer some details on the process of carrying out each activity, the main results achieved, experience and practice learned and the challenges emerged?
3. How does the PMO engage all relevant parties? How did the collaborative network form? For example, how to reach consensus, shift values and support each other? What are the flagship events and connecting mechanisms in the operation of the network? How to ensure the sustainable operation of the network?
4. What is the relationship between the PMO and the collaborative network? What are the roles of the PMO in the collaborative network, e.g. convener, supporter or decision maker?
5. Could you please tell us that in what way does the activity ensure the participation of young entrepreneurs? What supports and influence did the activity bring to young entrepreneurs?
6. Are there any experience emerged from the expansion of the innovation network that can be scaled up? What are the key areas that needs continued improvement?

Output 3	Enabling ecosystem conducive to innovation collaboration and leadership.
Indicators	<p>Establish the SDGs Innovation Lab and carry out relevant events</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop a series of cultural and creative products and innovative panda culture experience activities. <p>Conduct serial online communication events involving experts from both from China and abroad and host SDGs innovation competition /entrepreneurs' dialogue/debate.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Advance China-EU cooperation and capacity building on innovation. • Held three Re: think Conference. • Set up the PAB.

1. Could you please talk about the expected targets and the concepts that the project wish to convey in developing cultural and creative products and experiences with panda cultural elements? How can the panda elements be connected to the concept of sustainable development? What is the meaning behind the panda as a cultural symbol of the project?
2. Could you please describe the objectives, planning (e.g. selection of themes and selection of participants), implementation, achievements, experiences and challenges of the Re:think Conference? During the process, how did the participation of social forces was stimulated? And what obstacles arose in the process of participation of each party? What do you think is the future direction of organizing Re:think?
3. What is the role of the PAB? What kind of guidance do you expect from the it?
4. Could you please tell us about other efforts to realize Output 3: Enabling ecosystem conducive to innovation collaboration and leadership? For example, how to promote international cooperation and capacity building in innovation between China and Europe?

5. Could you please talk about the networks and mechanisms for innovative collaboration and sustainable development emerged from the implementation of the activities? And what kind of withdrawal mechanisms were put in place to consolidate the development results?
6. Where do you see the role of the SPARK Lab in the global system of UNDP Accelerator Labs? What is the position of the SPARK Lab among the innovation labs built in Asia? Do other innovation labs around the world support the SPARK Lab? How can the the SPARK Lab make a difference?

Output 4	Innovation-based sustainable development in China and other developing countries promoted through a solution exchange mechanism.
Indicators	<p>Conduct research and design targeted lech-based poverty alleviation programme that is in line with SDGs for Dege county in Sichuan province (Not yet completed).</p> <p>Establish a dialogue mechanism so as to promote information exchange, multilateral communications, good practice and experience sharing:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1.1 Conduct serial report on innovation; 1.2 Design a circular route on he 7h floor of Centre for China-Europe Cooperation to introduce the project and other UNDP projects in Chengdu. <p>Design an exhibition area with the theme of “peaking carbon emissions and reaching carbon neutrality” in CCEC.</p>

1. Could you please talk about how the activities of the targeted lech-based poverty alleviation programme have been carried out? What are the results? How is the follow-up management? If some of the activities had not been completed as scheduled, could you please briefly talk about the reasons and possible solutions?
2. How did the relevant innovative sustainable development activities selected improve South-South cooperation? Could you please talk about the implementation process, main achievements, experiences and practices and challenges faced by each activity?
3. Could you please tell us what exchange mechanisms have been formed during the implementation of the activities? And what impact have they brought to the sustainable development of China and other developing countries?
4. Based on the experience gained from the implementation of the first phase of the project, could you please offer some suggestions for the second phase of the project on how to promote innovative and sustainable development in China and other developing countries through experience exchange mechanisms?

For the Government: CDHTMC

1. Please describe the project’s ideal blueprint expected by the CDHTMC. What are the specific aspects that you expect to change through this project?
2. What is the short- and medium- term goal of the project? Could you please explain the specific targets phase by phase?
3. Could you please tell us what specific activities of the project that the CDHTMC is mainly engaged in? For example, the preparation of the CDHT's Low Carbon Transition Strategies and Planning Report and participation in Re:think. What objectives and impacts are expected to be achieved in the activities?

4. Could you please tell us why the CDHTMC's department that is responsible for communicating with UNDP PMO changes from the New Economy Bureau to the Bureau of International Business?
5. Could you please tell us what impact the program has had on the Chengdu government's concept of innovation-based development? How has it helped or influenced policy making? How has it contributed to the development of innovation capacity and sustainable development in the region?
6. How has the project contributed to the development of communication mechanisms and cooperation networks between local governments and other actors?
7. What contribution has the project made to international cooperation in the field of sustainable development? And what kind of withdrawal mechanisms have been designed to continue to consolidate the current development results?
8. How do you view the vulnerable groups targeted by the project? How do you identify the vulnerable groups that the project needs to help?
9. Could you please comment on the overall effectiveness of the first phase of the project, including: (1) What do you think are the lessons that can be drawn from the results achieved, such as the management model and the form of activities, etc.? (2) What are the goals that have not been realized as expected in this phase and what are the reasons affecting the failure?
10. Could you please offer some suggestions for the project implementation of the next phase? Could you talk about how to improve the solutions to the problems encountered in the first phase?

For the beneficiaries

1. How aware are you of the "UNDP SDGs Innovation Pilot in Chengdu Project" and its objectives?
2. Have you actively participated in any activities or programs initiated by the project? If yes, please describe your experience and the impact it has had on you and your community.
3. What specific benefits or improvements have you observed in your daily life or community as a result of the project's interventions?
4. How has the project addressed the unique needs and challenges of your community or target group?
5. In what ways has the project engaged and collaborated with local stakeholders, including community leaders, organizations, and government authorities? Do you feel their involvement has been effective and meaningful?
6. Has the project adequately addressed the cross-cutting issues that affect you or your community, such as disabilities, HIV, and other marginalized groups? If not, what improvements would you suggest?
7. How well has the project communicated its activities, progress, and impact to you and the wider community? Do you feel sufficiently informed about the project's objectives and outcomes?
8. Have you faced any challenges or barriers in accessing or benefiting from the project's initiatives? If yes, please describe them and suggest ways to overcome such obstacles.
9. What suggestions or recommendations do you have to enhance the effectiveness and relevance of the project in addressing the needs of your community and achieving sustainable development goals?

10. Are there any unintended consequences or negative impacts resulting from the project's activities that you have observed or experienced?
11. How do you envision the long-term sustainability of the project's outcomes beyond its completion? What measures should be taken to ensure the continuity of the project's benefits?
12. Do you have any additional comments or feedback regarding the "UNDP SDGs Innovation Pilot in Chengdu Project" that you would like to share?

For UNDP China

1. Please describe the project's ideal blueprint expected by UNDP. What are the specific aspects that you expect to change through this project?
2. What is the short- and medium- term goal of the project? Could you please explain the specific targets phase by phase?
3. Could you tell us how the expected outcomes of the project were determined for the four outputs? And how did the goals are broke down? And then what events or activities were promoted to support these goals?
4. Where do you see the role of the SPARK Lab in the global system of UNDP Accelerator Labs? What is the position of the SPARK Lab among the innovation labs built in Asia? Do other innovation labs around the world support the SPARK Lab? How can the the SPARK Lab make a difference?
5. What contribution has the project made to international cooperation in the field of sustainable development? And what kind of withdrawal mechanisms have been designed to continue to consolidate the current development results?
6. How do you recognize the vulnerable groups that the project is targeting at? How do you identify the vulnerable groups that the project needs to help? For example, do you think a female entrepreneur is from a vulnerable group? Could you please talk about what development opportunities does the project offer to relatively vulnerable groups such as the poor, indigenous and disabled persons, women, youth, etc.? What are the main mechanisms for them to enjoy the fruits of development?
7. Could you please comment on the overall effectiveness of the first phase of the project, including: (1) What do you think are the lessons that can be drawn from the results achieved, such as the management model and the form of activities, etc.? (2) What are the goals that have not been realized as expected in this phase and what are the reasons affecting the failure?
8. Could you please offer some suggestions for the project implementation of the next phase? Could you talk about how to improve the solutions to the problems encountered in the first phase?