Mid-term Review Report

UNDP-GEF Project: Strengthening the protected area network for migratory bird conservation along the East Asian-Australasian Flyway (EAAF) in China

GEF Project ID: 10073 UNDP Project ID: 6110

Country: China

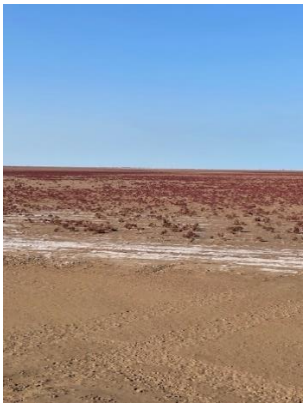
Region: Asia and the Pacific

Focal Area: Biodiversity (GEF-7)

GEF Agency: United Nations Development Programme (UNDP)

Dashanbao NNR

Chongming-Dongtan NNR



Yellow River Delta NNR

Liaohe River Estuary NNR

Photographs taken by J. Lenoci, Oct 2023

Date	Version	Comments
17 November 2023	1	First draft
18 December 2023	2	Draft final

Opening Page

PROJECT DETAILS:	
Project Name:	Strengthening the protected area network for migratory bird conservation along the East Asian-Australasian Flyway (EAAF) in China
Project ID:	UNDP PIMS ID: 6110 GEF Project ID: 10073
Country:	China
Region:	Asia and the Pacific
Focal Area:	Biodiversity (GEF-7)
Focal Area Programming:	**BD-1-1**: Mainstream biodiversity across sectors as well as landscapes and seascapes through biodiversity mainstreaming in priority sectors. **BD-2-7:** Address direct drivers to protect habitats and species and Improve financial sustainability, effective management, and ecosystem coverage of the global protected area estate.
Funding Source:	GEF Trust Fund (GEF-7)
Implementing Agency:	United Nations Development Programme
Implementation Modality:	National Implementation
Executing Agency:	United Nations Development Programme
FINANCIALS:	
Co-financing total:	USD 87,054,532
GEF Project Grant:	USD 8,932,420
GEF Agency Fees:	USD 848,580
PROJECT TIMELINE:	
Received by GEF:	19 September 2018
Concept Approved:	20 December 2018
Project Approved for Implementation:	02 December 2020
State Date:	26 January 2021
Planned Closing Date:	26 January 2027
MIDTERM REVIEW DETAILS:	
Midterm Review Timeframe:	October-November 2023
MTR team:	James Lenoci, International Consultant / Lead Midterm Reviewer Dr. Liu Shuo, National Consultant
MTR Reporting Language:	English

Acknowledgements:

The MTR team would like to acknowledge the information and feedback provided by interviewed project stakeholders.

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Executive Summary

The biodiversity focal area project is being implemented under the GEF-7 replenishment cycle through a national implementation modality, with UNDP as the GEF Agency and the National Forestry and Grassland Administration (NFGA) as Implementing Partner (i.e., Executing Agency). Basic project information is summarized below in **Table 1**.

Table 1: Project information table

Project Title:	Strengthening the protected area network for migratory bird conservation along the East Asian-Australasian Flyway (EAAF) in China		
UNDP Project ID (PIMS #):	6110	**PIF Approval Date:**	01 Dec 2018
GEF Project ID:	10073	**CEO Endorsement Date:**	02 Dec 2020
Award ID:	96248	**Project Document (ProDoc) Signature Date (date project began):**	26 Jan 2021
Country:	China	**Date project manager hired:**	01 Feb 2021
Region:	Asia and the Pacific	**Inception Workshop date:**	11 May 2021
Focal Area:	Biodiversity (GEF-7)	**Midterm Review date:**	Oct-Dec 2023
Focal Area Programming:	BD-1-1; BD-2-7	**Planned closing date:**	26 Jan 2027
Trust Fund:	GEF TF	**If revised, proposed closing date:**	N/A
Executing Agency:	National Forestry and Grassland Administration		
Other execution partners:	N/A		
Project Financing:	**at CEO endorsement (USD)**	**at Midterm Review (USD)***	
[1] GEF financing:	8,932,420	2,839,912**	
[2] UNDP contribution:	200,000	100,000	
[3] Government:	70,000,000	32,940,000	
[4] Other partners:	16,854,532	9,027,326	
[5] Total cofinancing [2+3+4]:	87,118,497	42,067,326	
PROJECT TOTAL COSTS [1 + 5]	**95,986,952**	**44,907,238**	

* Expenditures through September 2023.
** The estimated budget in Quarter 4 of 2023 is USD 732,799. If this amount is incurred by the end of the year, then the total amount spent would increase to USD 3,572,711, or 40% of the GEF project grant.

Project Description

China constitutes a major portion of the globally significant East Asian-Australasian Flyway (EAAF), one of the world's nine great migratory flyways and the one involving the highest number of endangered species. Land reclamation and infrastructure development are leading to the sharp reduction in the area of coastal wetlands in China. While the government has made significant efforts to reduce threats to wetland biodiversity including migratory waterbirds, these efforts have been impeded by a number of barriers, including absence of a strategic approach towards migratory waterbird conservation, limited integration of flyway wetland conservation priorities into the policies, and lack of awareness of the value of wetland ecosystem services and management needs.

The project aims to secure the conservation of globally significant migratory waterbirds through the establishment of a robust, resilient and well - managed network of protected wetlands across the EAAF in China. The project includes the following three components:

1. Flyway PA network planning, expansion, financial sustainability and mainstreaming;
2. Site-based demonstrations of adaptive habitat management and rehabilitation for migratory waterbird conservation; and
3. Knowledge management, awareness, gender mainstreaming and M&E.

The four project demonstration sites include: (1) Liaohe River Estuary Landscape, (2) Yellow River Delta Landscape, (3) Chongming Dongtan Landscape and Local Site Network, and (4) Dashanbao Landscape and Local Site Network. The results of the pilot interventions implemented at the demonstration sites are envisaged to inform the development of national technical guidelines on wetland sustainable use and management.

Objective and Methodology

The objective of the MTR is to gain an independent analysis of the progress midway through the 6-year implementation timeframe. The MTR includes an analysis of the project design, an assessment of progress towards the achievement of the project objective and intended outcomes, an evaluation of the quality of implementation and adaptive management, and a breakdown of factors influencing the prospects that results will be sustained after project closure.

Project performance is based on the indicators of the project's results framework and relevant GEF tracking tools. Findings of this review will be incorporated as recommendations for enhanced implementation during the second half of the project's term.

Project Progress Summary

The project officially started on 26 January 2021, after obtaining GEF CEO endorsement on 02 December 2020. Project implementation during 2021 and 2022 coincided with the COVID-19 pandemic and the associated restrictions on travel and physical meetings posed significant challenges.

Although financial delivery was relatively low in the first two years of implementation, the project has effectively engaged with national, provincial and demonstration site level stakeholders, including delivering legislative assistance to the National Development and Reform Commission (NDRC) and NFGA in the development of the Flyway Conservation Action Plan as well as the Wetlands Conservation Law, as well as to provincial governmental entities. The project financed a comprehensive nationwide gap analysis on critical wetland ecosystems that are unprotected – this deliverable provides a valuable guideline in the strengthening of the protected area system along the EAAF and other flyways in China. The project has also commissioned the development of flyway and habitat monitoring standards and a database system.

Conservation of wetlands and closely linked flyway habitats across China has garnered increasingly levels of attention by the Government of China. Implementation of the project has coincided with the enactment of the Wetlands Conservation Law in 2022 and the Flyway Conservation and Action Plan currently under development by the NDRC and the NFGA. The high-level governmental commitment to these priorities enhances the likelihood that project results will be sustained over the long term.

Implementation of strategic interventions and delivery of extensive capacity building at the four demonstration sites has advanced science-based management planning and operation and also increased management effectiveness of these protected areas, each of which are Ramsar sites. There is also evidence of environmental status change by midterm, specifically regarding stable and/or increasing trends in the populations of several of the endangered and threatened migratory bird species at the demonstration sites. The project has also supported practices of exploring alternative livelihoods at the demonstration sites in collaboration with NGOs and private enterprises. These good practices are useful to leverage more resources to strengthen the conservation of globally significant biodiversity across the EAAF in China

The project benefits from high levels of country ownership and a strong project management and technical advisory team. Reported materialized co-financing by midterm is 48% of the sum committed at CEO endorsement – which does not include contributions that were mobilized from other co-financing partners during implementation, including the Mangrove Conservation Foundation (MCF) and private sector automotive companies NIO and BMW. The project steering committee (PSC) has convened meetings annually, on a rotational basis at the locations of the demonstration sites and includes civil society co-financing partners as observers (good practice).

The project has made concerted efforts to ensure women participation in project activities, including trainings. There is room for improvement in the implementation of the gender action plan, including delivery of regular training for the gender focal points designated at the demonstration sites and monitoring and evaluating progress towards achievement of the gender mainstreaming indicators.

The project has contributed to the UNDP Country Programme Document for China (2021-2025), in line with the United Nations Sustainable Development Cooperation Framework (UNSDCF), specifically in relation to UNSDCF Outcome 3: People in China and the region benefit from a healthier and more resilient environment.

Mid-term Review Ratings

MTR ratings and a summary of achievements are presented below in **Table 2.**

Table 2: MTR ratings and achievement summary table

Measure	MTR Rating	Achievement Description
Project Strategy	Not Rated	The project design was robust and country-driven, drawing upon national priorities and lessons from other projects, including the GEF-5 Wetlands Programme. Environmental and social risks were comprehensively assessed, and safeguard plans and frameworks prepared to guide project implementation. The aim of creating 200,000 ha of new protected areas was validated during the design phase, coinciding with the expansion of the wetlands protected area system in the country and the national parks programme. However, this is an ambitious target over a 6-year project implementation timeframe. Also, applying migratory bird friendly practices across multiple sectors over 600,000 ha outside protected areas, a target under Outcome 4, was not clearly defined and the stakeholder engagement plan does not fully address the requited cross-sectoral involvement.
Progress towards Results	Objective Achievement: **Satisfactory**	*Project objective: To secure the conservation of globally threatened migratory waterbirds through the establishment of a robust, resilient and well-managed network of protected wetlands across the East Asian Australasian Flyway (EAAF) in China.* The project has made substantive progress towards achievement of the objective, including exceeding the target on direct beneficiaries by midterm, through delivery of extensive training. A comprehensive, nationwide gap analysis was completed by the Chinese Academy of Sciences on coastal and terrestrial wetland conservation. This analysis provides valuable guidance for strategic expansion of the wetland PA system. New PA's have not been reported through June 2023 (uncertain whether the end of project target can be achieved by closure). The management effectiveness of the four demonstration PA's improved through midterm, through capacity building, management planning, and implementation of targeted interventions. Environmental status improvements have also been reported at the demonstration sites, i.e., generally stable or increasing populations of endangered and threatened migratory waterbird species.
	Outcome 1: **Satisfactory**	*Outcome 1: Expanded and more representative PA system for migratory waterbird conservation with sustainable financing.* During the first half of the project the PMO completed a PA management capacity gap analysis and developed and delivered training packages accordingly. Institutional capacities of the selected partners, including NFGA and the site level management entities, show improvements through the midterm assessment of the capacity development scorecards. The financial sustainability for the wetland PA system and migratory waterbird conservation has also improved through project midterm, based on an updated assessment of the baseline financial scorecard score and the wetland PA system financing gap. The MTR team observed evidence of significant capital investments at the demonstration sites; however, shortcomings in operational financing were widely noted.
	Outcome 2: **Moderately satisfactory**	*Outcome 2: Flyway wetland conservation advanced through strengthened legislation, planning and sector mainstreaming.* The enactment of the Wetlands Conservation Law, which the project provided technical assistance with, underpins the legislative framework on protection of wetland ecosystems in the country. The China Flyway Conservation and Restoration Action Plan (2023-2030), jointly being developed by the NRDC and NFGA, with technical assistance from the project, ensures that governmental commitment and financing will continue in the coming years. The establishment of the China Flyway Conservation Network (CFCN), a technical task force, helps ensure state-of-the-art approaches and innovation are introduced. The project has not focused on integrating migratory waterbird conservation into the 14th 5-year plans of the agriculture and rural affairs and water resources sectors, as designed. However, the Wetlands Conservation Law and the China Flyway Conservation and Restoration Action Plan are cross-sectoral, applicable to all relevant sectors. The project has made some progress on developing technical guidelines on sustainable use of wetland resources, including grassland sustainable use (Dashanbao NNR) and waterbird friendly rice farming (Liaohe River Estuary NNR). Other earmarked guidelines, on reed farming, aquaculture/mariculture, capture fisheries, livestock grazing, and ecological restoration of former oil production areas, have not been initiated. The project may be better positioned to review existing guidelines and practices in these sectors, rather than development of new guidelines.

Measure	MTR Rating	Achievement Description
	Outcome 3: **Satisfactory**	*Outcome 3: Increased management effectiveness over 305,505 ha of wetland PAs (marine and terrestrial sites).* The project has been particularly successful at engaging with the four demonstration sites, facilitating improved management effectiveness of these PA's, delivering training, preparing management plans and financing strategic, science-based interventions. Moreover, engagement in these project activities and participating in project-sponsored training have contributed to the development of professional capacities of PA staff. Restoration achievements have been largely associated with the removal of the invasive alien species *Spartina alterniflora* (a saltmarsh cordgrass). The Spartina eradication interventions have been financed by governmental programs. The project has provided support with demonstrations of innovative restoration techniques, assessment on the durability of the restoration interventions, applying ecological flow principles in the replenishment of freshwater resources, etc. The project has commissioned an institute to estimate greenhouse gas emissions mitigated through restoration and improved management practices at the demonstration sites and other key PA's within the EAAF. There has been no assessment of midterm progress towards achievement of the targeted mitigation benefits.
	Outcome 4: **Moderately satisfactory**	*Outcome 4: Threats to migratory waterbirds arising from unsustainable land uses reduced over 600,000 ha.* There has been limited progress towards achievement of the envisaged results under this outcome. Waterbird friendly rice farming is being piloted at the Liaohe River Estuary NNR, as mentioned above under Outcome 2, and scaling up of these practices is planned in the second half of the project. Achieving the target of adopting waterbird conflict guidelines across at least 20,000 ha seems questionable. There has been no substantive progress towards application of sustainable use guidelines across 600,000 ha, the other target under this outcome.
	Outcome 5: **Satisfactory**	*Outcome 5: Strong public support for wetland and migratory bird conservation – as indicated by improvements in KAP surveys.* The baseline KAP survey was completed in the first year of project implementation, and the project has delivered a number of trainings, awareness campaigns and environmental education activities to address gaps identified. The midterm KAP survey results were made available to the MTR team after the mission. Based on review of the midterm assessment results, the project is on target to achieve the intended end of project metrics.
	Outcome 6: **Satisfactory**	*Outcome 6: Effective sharing of knowledge supports learning across the project, China and EAAF Partnership.* Standardized monitoring protocols and a database on waterbirds and their habitats along the EAAF in China are being developed by the Chinese Academy of Sciences. Extensive data has been collected on images and descriptions of more than 1,300 waterbird species. The database is also planned to have a public-access section, where interested people can view and upload information. The project has participated in a number of national conferences and workshops, as well as the Ramsar COP14. Knowledge products have also been developed and disseminated, including "Ten successful stories of waterbird protection in China", distributed during the Ramsar COP14, as well as a research report for the Yellow River Delta NNR, a gender mainstreaming story of women working as crane guardians at the Dashanbao NNR, as well as the reed shoes production and training in Chongming Dongtan, Shanghai Municipality, and child friendly picture books on plateau wetland education in Yunnan Province.
Project Implementation and Adaptive Management	**Moderately satisfactory**	Government ownership is high, including at the national (namely the NFGA), provincial and site levels. The project management and advisory teams are qualified and dedicated, reporting was found to be thorough and with candor. Financial delivery was relatively low during the first half of the project; however, the project was effective at implementing adaptive management measures in response to COVID-19 pandemic related restrictions. Delivery has substantially increased in 2023, the third year of the project. Notwithstanding financial delivery, cost-effectiveness has been satisfactory, considering the progress made towards achieving the expected project results. The project is being implemented under a national implementation modality (NIM), with UNDP primarily providing an oversight and assurance role. Technical guidance has been consistently delivered by the UNDP country office and Asia and Pacific regional office.

Measure	MTR Rating	Achievement Description
		A rating of moderately satisfactory is applied because of the lack of approved safeguard instruments in place by midterm. The project is rated as high risk in terms of social and environmental aspects. Development of safeguard instruments, including the SESA, ESIA and ESMP was initiated in the first half of the project by a contracted safeguards consultant; however, the instruments have not been completed by the end of the 3rd year.
Sustainability	Overall: **Likely**	The overall likelihood that project results will be sustained after GEF funding ceases is considered likely. With respect to the financial aspects, the Government of China has consistently invested heavily into conservation, albeit more for infrastructure than operation. Additional funding is likely in relation to the recently enacted Wetlands Conservation Act and the China Flyway Conservation and Restoration Action Plan. This law and action plan also strengthen institutional framework and governance of wetland conservation across China. The focus on promoting improved practices and increased awareness in production landscapes outside the protected areas is an important contribution towards enhancing socioeconomic sustainability. There are also externalities that affect sustainability, e.g., unpredictable impacts of climate change. The proposed expansion of the protected areas within the EAAF is envisaged to address threats associated with climate change, e.g., enable migratory waterbirds to better adapt to climate change and variability.
	Financial: **Likely**	
	Socioeconomic: **Likely**	
	Institutional framework and governance: **Likely**	
	Environmental: **Likely**	

Summary of Conclusions

The project has ramped up delivery over the past year following the phasing out of pandemic related restrictions on travel and physical gatherings. Some of the activities at the demonstration sites were hindered due to the pandemic related constraints. Notwithstanding these hindrances, the project has been successful in facilitating cooperation with governmental agencies, NGOs and private sector enterprises on advancing conservation of wetland ecosystems in key sites along the EAAF. The project should work on further optimizing the interventions at the demonstration sites.

Rated as a high-risk project in terms of social and environmental risks, the project is running without the safeguards instruments prescribed in the project design, namely the strategic environmental and social assessment (SESA), environmental and social impact assessment (ESIA) and environmental and social management framework (ESMF). While the project works on developing these instruments, there are advances being made to issues that would benefit from having appropriate safeguards in place. For instance, the SESA was meant to tie into the development of the NDRC-led Flyway Conservation Action Plan; the Yellow River Delta National Nature Reserve (NNR) has submitted an application to upgrade to a nation park, which would entail a 70,000-ha expansion of the protected area; land tenure issues and invasive species need to be considered in the development of the restoration plan for the Dashanbao NNR; and proper protocols are required for ensuring protection of personal data on the Flyway database that is being developed.

The project has an ambitious target of adding 200,000 ha of newly created protected areas (PA's) within the EAAF. With the massive increase in the PA system over the past 10-20 years in the country, this was a reasonably achievable metric at the project design phase. In recent years, however, it has become more and more difficult to establish new PA's, largely because of responsibilities devolved to local government units. Based on the 2023 project implementation report (PIR), which reflects progress through June, there has been no new PA's established to date. According to discussions during the MTR mission with provincial level officials, it is possible that the project has not fully captured PA expansion over the past few years, including with respect to the establishment of wetland parks.

The gap analysis on protection of wetland ecosystems provides an important scientific guidance for expanding the PA system, particularly within the EAAF; however, the analysis did not address climate change, one of the primary threats to waterbird habitat and migration patterns identified in the project design. The analysis also does not directly reflect key biodiversity areas (KBAs), which is the standard the GEF applies for funding newly created PA's.

Effective conservation of wetlands, the primary habitats within the EAAF, requires collaboration across sectors, including agriculture, fisheries, water resources, tourism, energy, development, etc. While the project aims to strengthening protection within and outside protected aeras, the primary partners at the demonstration sites are the PA management entities. The PA management entities do have some cooperative arrangements with other sectors, but affecting broad, sector-level adoption of various guidelines has proven to be a substantial challenge for the project,

which is reflected in the progress reported on those indicators focused on improving practices outside PA's by key production sectors.

The project has engaged approximately 50 public sector institutes and non-governmental organizations in the execution of activities. Engagement of these partners has been made through competitive procurement processes, resulting in good value for money and recruitment of qualified service providers. In some cases, the timeframe allocated in the service contracts seems too short, not allowing sufficient time for completion of the tasks and limiting the interaction with the beneficiaries prior to handover. A few examples of such contracts include but are not limited to the development of the Flyway database, operationalization of the Yellow River Delta NNR database, estimation of greenhouse gas emission benefits, restoration planning at the Dashanbao NNR, and scaling up the migratory bird friendly rice-crab farming near the Liaohe River Estuary NNR.

The GEF financing has provided important added value to conservation and sustainable management of key habitats within the EAAF. However, the additionality of the GEF funding is unclear in some cases due to the high levels of parallel government funding, albeit which is primarily focused on infrastructure related investments. A couple examples include the ecological flow assessments at the Yellow River Delta NNR; the service provider conducting this work has provided long-standing technical assistance to the NNR. The restoration of the Saunders gull habitat at the Liaohe River Estuary NNR has deployed the same technique that the NNR made several years ago.

The EAAF extends across 18 countries, with many of the important sites located in China. The project is well positioned to strengthen regional collaboration and knowledge transfer. The project is collaborating with international non-governmental organizations, including Wetlands International, WWF, International Crane Foundation, as well as the EAAF Partnership; however, there is room for improvement in terms of facilitating South-South and North-South cooperation. Budget allocated in the project budget in the Project Document for international learning exchanges, for example, has not yet been utilized by midterm. The restrictions related to the COVD-19 pandemic is part of the reason for this. The administrative procedures associated with arranging international travel for Chinese officials are also a factor in this regard.

The project has made concerted efforts to ensure women participation in project activities, including trainings. There is room for improvement in the implementation of the gender action plan, including delivery of regular training for the gender focal points designated at the demonstration sites and monitoring and evaluating progress towards achievement of the gender mainstreaming indicators.

Good practices noted during the MTR include the following: convening PSC meetings at the location of the demonstration sites on a rotational basis; including the international NGO cofinancing partners as observers to the PSC meetings; initiating financial spot checks of the demonstration site partners; and arranging cross-learning exchanges among the demonstration sites. Meanwhile, the project mobilized various types of private sectors, NGOs and schools, to jointly implemented relevant activities, which disseminated a series of good practices, skills and modalities to relevant interested stakeholders through knowledge products developed under the project. The project also encouraged women to utilize available resources to seek alternative and waterbird-friendly manners to enhances incomes, such as reed shoes production, crane patrols, which improved their skills and extended their visions.

Recommendations

The MTR recommendations are presented below.

No.	Recommendation	Responsibility
1.	The project should complete the prescribed safeguards instruments, including the SESA, ESIA and ESMP without further delay and integrate these into the implementation of the project.	PMO, UNDP
2.	The project should reassess the reported establishment of new protected areas within the EAAF, e.g., capturing wetland parks and other relevant PA's, and develop a system for obtaining regular updates from the EAAF provincial partners.	PMO
3.	As an addendum to the CAS gap analysis, the project should prepare a scientific expert opinion on how the gaps in wetland ecosystem protection would also address the threat of climate change on waterbird habitat, e.g., providing expanded coverage of protected areas would enable migratory waterbirds to better adapt to climate change and variability. The addendum should also describe how KBAs are reflected in the identified gaps of unprotected wetland ecosystems.	PMO, CAS
4.	The project should adjust and clarify some of the indicators and targets in the project results framework, as described below in **Table 3**. No changes to midterm targets are recommended, rather the focus is on achievement of the end targets by project closure.	PMO

No.	Recommendation	Responsibility
5.	As an adaptive management measure, the project should deliver technical assistance to provincial forestry and grassland bureaus and/or nature reserve management entities on applying PA's for inclusion as approved EAAF sites. This activity should be made in collaboration with the EAAF Partnership.	PMO
6.	As an adaptive management measure, the project should provide technical assistance to an existing pilot implementation of an OECM or a newly initiated pilot of an OECM within the EAAF.	PMO
7.	The project should extend some of the ongoing contracts and ensure sufficient time is allocated in upcoming contracts in second half of project. Examples of ongoing contracts to consider extending include, but are not limited to, the following: development of the Flyway database; operationalization of the Yellow River Delta NNR database; estimation of greenhouse gas (GHG) mitigation benefits; restoration planning at the Dashanbao NNR; scaling up of the migratory bird friendly rice-crab farming in Liaohe River Estuary NNR.	PMO
8.	The project should systematically document adaptive management measures implemented, providing justification for changes from indicative activities in the project document and on the allocation of funds. Some examples of adaptive management measures noted by the MTR team include the following: challenges in implementing rotational grazing practices at the Dashanbao NNR due to complex land tenure issues; extensive progress and experience by the Chongming-Dongtan NNR on Spartina control and suggestion to allocate the GEF funding elsewhere; the indicative activity involving ecolabelling of a local rice variety in Chongming-Dongtan not being needed, as the local name recognition has sufficient branding value; possible support to the Yellow River Delta NNR in their application to update from a nature reserve to national park; reed management guidelines in the Liaohe River Estuary demonstration area not being needed, as the producers are state-owned enterprises that have operated at the site prior to the establishment of the NNR, as well as good cooperation with the water resources agency on replenishment of freshwater to the wetland ecosystem.	PMO
9.	The project should prepare and disseminate case studies, highlighting the additionality of the GEF funding for various activities implemented.	PMO
10.	The project should enhance stakeholder engagement, including (a) more proactive in engaging the agricultural sector, as many of the threats and potential conflicts involve agriculture and aquaculture practices, and (b) expanding collaboration with international NGO partners, facilitate increased cooperation across the EAAF, implement planned international learning exchanges	PMO
11.	The project should strengthen technical assistance regarding the implementation and monitoring and evaluation of the gender action plan, e.g., delivering regular training to the gender focal points at the demonstration sites and identifying opportunities for enhancing gender equality and women's empowerment. The project should also regular monitor and evaluate the implementation of the gender action plan, reporting progress towards achievement of the gender mainstreaming targets in the annual PIR report.	PMO, gender specialists
12.	The project should ensure that proper protocols are in place to ensure safe operation of the Flyway database, particularly with respect to images and other information uploaded by the general public.	PMO, CAS
13.	The project has an opportunity to collaborate with the GEF-7 project on "Transformational wildlife conservation management in China" (UNDP PIMS 6607), which has a strong focus on strengthen wildlife monitoring and decision-making technologies, including application of artificial intelligence (AI)-based processing of photographic images, to more efficiently process wildlife data collected from the field, development of data management applets for recording wildlife monitoring data, and introduction of blockchain-technology-based data management systems.	PMO
14.	The project has an opportunity to build capacity and promote use of the Ramsar Site Management Effectiveness Tracking Tool (R-METT), which was approved during the Ramsar COP 12 as a voluntary tool to support management and conservation of Ramsar sites. The R-METT is similar to the GEF-7 METT but it is more tailored to wetlands. The project should	PMO

No.	Recommendation	Responsibility
	consider a specific capacity building focus on the use of R-METT by the four demonstration sites – this may lead to broader uptake across the Ramsar sites in China.	
15.	The project should report co-financing mobilized during implementation, for example, but not limited to contributions from the Mangrove Conservation Foundation and the private sector companies BMW and NIO. Also, as a good practice, the project should request contracted service providers to indicate co-financing contributions in their proposals. Co-financing can be in the form of in-kind or grant/cash contributions.	PMO

Table 3: Recommendations in regard to progress towards achievement of project results

Indicator	End target	Comments, recommendations
Objective: To secure the conservation of globally threatened migratory waterbirds through the establishment of a robust, resilient and well-managed network of protected wetlands across the East Asian Australasian Flyway (EAAF) in China		
Indicator 4: Local population status of targeted globally threatened migratory waterbird species at the pilot sites based on annual peak counts	All Stable – as baseline or improved	No changes recommended to indicator or end target. Recommend reporting full sets of data available. Based on observations during the MTR mission, the sites have extensive data, in some cases extending back 20 to 30 years.
Outcome 1. Expanded and more representative PA system for migratory waterbird conservation with sustainable financing		
Indicator 5: Improved institutional capacity to administer the national and provincial PA System for migratory waterbird conservation and globally threatened species conservation, indicated by UNDP Capacity Development Scorecards	End of Project CD Scorecard targets a) NFGA: 85 b) Yunnan FB: 73 c) Zhaotong FGB: 74 d) Shanghai FB: 89 e) Shandong DNR: 69 f) Liaoning FGB: 68	No changes recommended to indicator or end target. Recommend orienting the capacity building activities during the second half of the project according to the findings of the midterm capacity development assessments.
Outcome 2. Flyway wetland conservation advanced through strengthened legislation, planning and sector mainstreaming		
Indicator 7: Migratory waterbird conservation needs integrated in the 14th Five-Year Plan (FYP) for key sectors, including: Natural Resources, Agriculture and Rural Affairs, Water Resources	Standards for strengthened migratory waterbird conservation included in 14th FYP for key sectors	Proposed change to Indicator 7: **Indicator 7**: In response to the NDRC-led China Flyway Conservation and Restoration Action Plan, programming guidance on migratory waterbird conservation priorities developed for key sectors, including but not limited to Natural Resources, Agriculture and Rural Affairs and Water Resources. Proposed change to the Indicator 7 end target: Programming guidance documents on migratory waterbird conservation priorities developed in collaboration with the key sectors.
Indicator 8: Number of sector-based technical guidelines on sustainable use of wetland resources piloted in project landscapes	Piloting completed and evaluated and sector-based technical guidelines on biodiversity-friendly rice farming, aquaculture / mariculture, capture fisheries, , ecological restoration of former oil production areas, and others (6 in total)	Proposed change to Indicator 8: **Indicator 8**: Number of sector-based technical guidelines and/or standard practices on sustainable use of wetland resources in project demonstration landscapes developed and/or updated. Proposed change to the Indicator 8 end target: Six (6) sector-based technical guidelines and/or standard practices developed and/or updated; including but not limited to biodiversity-friendly rice farming, aquaculture / mariculture, , ecotourism experiences, ecological restoration of former oil production areas, and others.

Indicator	End target	Comments, recommendations
Indicator 10: Threats to migratory waterbirds and other biodiversity reduced at project demonstration sites	DBNC NNR: 1. No. sheep in NNR: 50,000 2. Grassland condition in NNR: 40% cover and 18 cm height	Recommend changing the threat reduction end target for the Dashanbao NNR (DBNC). Preliminary recommendations for changes to the baseline and end target are presented below, based on feedback received from engaged specialists at the Southwest Forestry University. These figures and a specific work plan for implementation of the revised targets should be confirmed by the PMO in collaboration with the NNR. <u>Preliminary change to the DBNC baseline</u>: 1. Local grass species coverage: 71%. 2. Average height of the community of grasses: 13.9 cm. 3. Group aboveground biomass: 164.1 g/m^2. <u>Preliminary change to the DBNC end target</u>: 1. Local grass species coverage: 80% 2. Average height of the community of grasses: 20 cm. 3. Group aboveground biomass: 300 g/m^2.
Outcome 3. Increased management effectiveness over 305,505 ha of wetland PAs (marine and terrestrial sites)		
Indicator 12: Greenhouse gas emissions mitigated as a result of wetland restoration across the four project demonstration landscapes and other key EAAF wetland areas (Expected tCO2e).	16,999,522 tCO_2e (direct) 38,248,924 tCO_2e (indirect)	The target on greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions mitigated should focus on the four project demonstration landscapes, where more information is available on activities contributing to mitigation benefits. It is important to note that some of the interventions focused on enhancing biodiversity conservation may be considered an offset to certain mitigation benefits. One example of this is the eradication of the invasive grass species *Spartina alterniflora.* Estimations of mitigation benefits should take into account such actions. As mitigation was not the primary objective of this biodiversity focal area project, it would be difficult to validate an indirect target on GHG emissions reduction. For this reason, the MTR team recommends excluding the indirect target from the results framework. <u>Proposed change to Indicator 12</u>: **Indicator 12**: Greenhouse gas emissions mitigated as a result of wetland restoration and improved management practices across the four project demonstration landscapes (Expected tCO_2e). <u>Proposed change to the Indicator 12 end target</u>: The project has commissioned the Beijing Normal University (contract No. 18) to conduct an assessment on wetland carbon storage and emission reduction potential. The assessment will include use of the EX-ACT tool, as well as other methodologies. The MTR team recommends that this contract be amended with the task of estimating a revised end target on direct GHG emission reduction.

Indicator	End target	Comments, recommendations
Outcome 4. Threats to migratory waterbirds arising from unsustainable land uses reduced over 600,000 ha		
Indicator 13: Area of land outside PAs under which procedures / guidelines for addressing human-waterbird conflict are applied.	Piloting completed and evaluated and human-waterbird conflict guidelines finalized and adopted by local government for at least 20,000 ha in target landscapes	Proposed change to Indicator 13: **Indicator 13**: Area of land outside PAs under which procedures / guidelines for addressing human-waterbird conflicts are communicated to production sector stakeholders. Proposed change to the Indicator 13 end target: Human-waterbird conflict management guidelines communicated to production sector stakeholders (e.g., agriculture and fisheries associations, tourism associations, insurance companies), who are operating across at least 20,000 ha in the demonstration landscapes, through targeted awareness campaigns, field "roadshows", trainings, and other approaches.
Indicator 14: Area over which draft guidelines for sustainable use of flyway wetlands addressing biodiversity friendly rice farming, reed farming, aquaculture / mariculture, capture fisheries, and grazing of livestock have been applied outside the protected area system in order to reduce threats to migratory waterbirds	Guidelines applied to at least 600,000 ha of flyway wetlands outside the PA system	Proposed change to Indicator 14: **Indicator 14**: Area over which draft guidelines for sustainable use of flyway wetlands addressing biodiversity friendly rice farming, reed farming, aquaculture / mariculture, capture fisheries, and grazing of livestock have been promoted outside the protected area system in order to reduce threats to migratory waterbirds, Proposed change to the Indicator 14 end target: Training delivered to agricultural and fisheries extension offices (and other stakeholders) in the provinces and districts of the demonstration sites, where coverage of production landscapes (agricultural and inland/coastal fisheries) are at least 600,000 ha.
Outcome 5. Strong public support for wetland and migratory bird conservation – as indicated by improvements in KAP surveys		
Indicator 15: Improved awareness of the value of biodiversity conservation among key target groups including: a) National government decision makers, b) provincial and local government agencies, and c) local communities at project sites, indicated by Knowledge, Attitude and Practices (KAP) surveys conducted at the start and end of the project using the methodology in Annex 24 (to the Project Document).	75%	Recommend indicating separate end targets for each of the six stakeholder groups, rather than providing an average.

Abbreviations and Acronyms

Exchange Rate, CNY: USD (Source: https://www.oanda.com):

At project start (26 January 2021):	At midterm review (31 October 2023):
6.47633	7.30205

AFIP	Academy of Forestry Inventory and Planning
AWP	Annual Work Plan
BD	Biodiversity
CAS	Chinese Academy of Sciences
CDR	Combined delivery report
CNY	Chinese Yuan
CBPF	China Biodiversity Partnership Framework
CTA	Chief Technical Advisor
EAAF	East Asian-Australasian Flyway
ESIA	Environmental and social impact assessment
ESMP	Environmental and social management plan
EX-ACT	Ex Ante Carbon Balance Tool
GEF	Global Environment Facility
KAP	Knowledge, Attitudes and Practices
M&E	Monitoring & Evaluation
MCF	Mangrove Conservation Foundation
METT	Management Effectiveness Tracking Tool
MSL	Main Streams of Life
MTR	Midterm Review
NDRC	National Development and Reform Commission
NFGA	National Forestry and Grassland Administration
NIM	National implementation modality
NNR	National Nature Reserve
NP	National Park
PA	Protected area
PIR	Project Implementation Report
PMO	Project Management Office
PSC	Project Steering Committee
SDG	Sustainable Development Goal
SES	Social and Environmental Standards (UNDP)
SESA	Strategic environmental and social assessment
SESP	Social and environmental screening procedure
SMART	Specific, measurable, achievable, relevant and time-bound
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
UNEG	United Nations Evaluation Group
UNSDCF	United Nations Sustainable Development Cooperation Framework
USD	United States Dollar

1 Introduction

1.1 Objective

The objective of the MTR is to gain an independent analysis of the progress midway through the 6-year implementation timeframe. The MTR includes an analysis of the project design, an assessment of progress towards the achievement of the project objective and intended outcomes, an evaluation of the quality of implementation and adaptive management, and a breakdown of factors influencing the prospects that results will be sustained after project closure.

Project performance is based on the indicators of the project's results framework and relevant GEF tracking tools. Findings of this review will be incorporated as recommendations for enhanced implementation during the second half of the project's term.

1.2 Scope and Methodology

The MTR was an evidence-based assessment, relying on feedback from individuals who have been involved in the design, implementation, and supervision of the project, review of available documents, and findings obtained during the MTR mission. The overall approach and methodology of the evaluation follows the guidelines outlined in the UNDP Guidance for Conducting mid-term reviews of UNDP-supported, GEF-financed Projects[1].

In terms of **project design**, the MTR included an assessment of the relevance of the project strategy, and an analysis of the project results framework, specifically whether the indicators and targets were specific, measurable, achievable, relevant and time-bound (SMART). The review also looked at the extent to which gender issues were incorporated into the project design, and how social and environmental risks were assessed and associated safeguard instruments formulated. **Progress towards results** was reviewed by assessing the extent to which project outcomes have been achieved so far and the contribution to attaining the overall objective of the project. The review of **project implementation and adaptive management** looked at the overall effectiveness of project management, the quality of project execution by the Implementing Partner and support provided by UNDP, the cost-effectiveness of the project to date, the extent to which co-financing committed at CEO endorsement has been materialized, the quality of project monitoring and evaluation systems, the extent to which adaptive management measures have been reported, and how stakeholders have been engaged in project implementation. The review of the **sustainability** of the project was meant to set the stage for the terminal evaluation. Sustainability is generally considered to be the likelihood of continued benefits after the project ends, and consequently, the assessment of sustainability at the midterm considers the risks that are likely to affect the continuation of project outcomes.

The review was carried out over the period of October-November 2023, including preparatory activities, desk review, stakeholder interviews, field mission, and completion of the report.

As a data collection and analysis tool, an evaluation matrix (see **Annex 1**) was developed to guide the review process. Evidence gathered during the MTR was cross-checked between as many sources as practicable, to validate the findings. The desk review was a critical part of the review; the project management office (PMO) assisted in uploading project documentation into an online shared folder. The list of documents reviewed is included in **Annex 2**. The itinerary and summary of the MTR mission, held from 08 through 20 October 2023 are presented in **Annex 3**. The list of people interviewed is presented in **Annex 4**. The project results framework was used as an evaluation tool, in assessing achievement of project objective and outcomes (see **Annex 5**). Cofinancing that has materialized by project mid-term is outlined in the cofinancing table compiled in **Annex 6**.

1.3 Structure of the Report

The MTR report was prepared in accordance with the outline specified in the UNDP-GEF MTR guideline. The report starts out with a description of the project, indicating the duration, main stakeholders, and the immediate and development objectives. The findings of the evaluation are broken down into the following categories:

- Project Strategy
- Progress towards results
- Project implementation and adaptive management
- Sustainability

[1] Guidance for Conducting Mid-term Reviews of UNDP-Supported, GEF-Financed Projects, 2014, UNDP-GEF Directorate.

The report culminates with a summary of the conclusions reached and recommendations formulated to enhance implementation during the final period of the project implementation timeframe.

1.4 Rating Scales

Consistent with the UNDP-GEF MTR guidelines, certain aspects of the project are rated, applying the rating scales outlined in **Annex 7.**

Progress towards results and project implementation and adaptive management are rated according to a 6-point scale, ranging from highly satisfactory to highly unsatisfactory. Sustainability is evaluated across four risk dimensions, including financial risks, socio-economic risks, institutional framework and governance risks, and environmental risks. According to UNDP-GEF evaluation guidelines, all risk dimensions of sustainability are critical: i.e., the overall rating for sustainability cannot be higher than the lowest-rated dimension. Sustainability was rated according to a 4-point scale, including likely, moderately likely, moderately unlikely, and unlikely.

1.5 Ethics

The review was conducted in accordance with the UNEG Ethical Guidelines for Evaluators, and the MTR team members have signed the Evaluation Consultant Code of Conduct Agreement form (**Annex 8**).

1.6 Audit Trail

An audit trail will be prepared after comments to the draft MTR report are submitted to the MTR team. The audit trail will present a consolidation of the comments, along with responses made by the MTR team.

1.7 Limitations

The MTR was carried out according to the Terms of Reference (**Annex 9**) and UNDP guidelines for mid-term reviews of GEF-financed projects.

There were no significant limitations associated with language. An independent interpreter supported the MTR Team Leader during the MTR mission, and the national MTR Consultant reviewed documentation available only in Chinese.

Overall, the MTR team concludes that the information and feedback obtained sufficiently captured the progress made on the project, remaining barriers, and prospects for sustaining results after GEF funding ceases.

2 Project Description

2.1 Development Context

As outlined in the Project Document, the project was designed to support the improved management and sustainable use wetlands ecosystems within the EAAF in China, representing a large portion of the country's inland wetland systems and especially its long coastlines, in order to reduce threats to migratory waterbirds and benefit local communities. China's inland and coastal wetlands deliver a wealth of benefits in the form of ecosystem services. Intertidal flats, the narrow band of habitat between marine, freshwater and land environments, are characterized by regular tidal inundation, low slopes and muddy deposits. They provide ecosystem services such as food, shoreline stabilization, protection from storm events, maintenance of biodiversity and are often at the centre of social activities. China's dependence on wetland ecosystem services for water and flood control is very high. National efforts to determine the value of ecosystem services in China suggest they must be at least worth several times the national Gross Domestic Product (GDP). A study[2] published in 2020 reported that wetland ecosystem services provided by 35 national nature reserves in 11 coastal provinces/municipalities in the country have a total value of 331.68 USD y^{-1} x 10^8.

2.2 Problems the Project Sought to Address

Land reclamation and infrastructure development were identified in the Project Document as the two key factors leading to the sharp reduction in the area of coastal wetlands in China. Habitat loss and degradation are the most severe threats impacting the breeding, stopover and wintering grounds that together are needed to sustain the life cycles of migratory waterbird populations. Huge areas of the coastline and inland wetlands have been converted to various forms

[2] Xiaowei Li, et al. 2020. Valuation of wetland ecosystem services in national nature reserves in China's coastal zones. Sustainability 2020, 12(8), 3131. https://doi.org/10.3390/su12083131

of fish ponds or netted fish-raising compartments, further reducing the amount of open natural habitat for migratory birds, and the operations causing human disturbance and pollution of coastal waters. The environmental impacts of aquaculture also include the release of solid wastes, chemicals, and therapeutics as well as bacteria, pathogens and non-native species escapees.

With such dynamic changes to the landscape, changing climate, changing agricultural practices, extensive reforestation and massive global trade, China is particularly susceptible to the threat of invasive alien species (IAS). Such species already cause large financial losses and are a growing threat within PAs. Of particular concern to coastal migratory waterbirds is the spread of American cordgrasses: Smooth Cordgrass *Spartina alterniflora* and Common Cordgrass *Spartina anglica* have invaded vast expanses of China's coastal wetlands.

The project design describes how many bird species in China have been reduced by unsustainable levels of hunting and exploitation to very low population numbers. Continuing harvesting pressure, whether legal or illegal, remains a threat to surviving populations in some areas. The illegal hunting of birds, including many protected waterbirds, with traps, nets and deliberate use of poisoned bait continues to be a significant threat.

Climate change is expected to result in the redistribution of major ecological zones across China with associated adjustments in species distribution, migration patterns and seasonality. Sea level rise is forecasted to progressively threaten many coastal habitats, and coupled with the rapid development of the coastal zone, may result in "coastal squeeze", as intertidal habitats shift inland until they abut against hard infrastructure and eventually disappear.

The root causes and drivers of these threats were summarised as a combination of intense and rapid economic development and exploitation of wetland resources pursued by local governments and developers, combined with weak and inefficient mechanisms for the protection of important ecological and biological sites and resources.

While the government has made significant gains to reduce threats to wetland biodiversity including migratory waterbirds, the following barriers were identified in the project design as impeding those efforts.

Barrier 1: Absence of a strategic approach towards migratory waterbird conservation with inadequate representation of critical breeding, staging and wintering sites in the PA system, and insufficient sustainable financing for effective PA management and protection of waterbird habitats.

Barrier 2: Limited integration of flyway wetland conservation priorities into the policies, plans and operations of other sectors, and a lack of technical mechanisms and skills to support wetland-compatible co-management at landscape and site levels.

Barrier 3: Lack of awareness of the value of wetland ecosystem services and management needs, and limited knowledge and information exchange on waterbird population status and best practice management techniques for key flyway sites.

2.3 Project Description and Strategy

The GEF-supported project alternative was designed systematically address the barriers described above. The Project Objective is to secure the conservation of globally significant migratory waterbirds through the establishment of a robust, resilient and well-managed network of protected wetlands across the East Asian -Australasian Flyway (EAAF) in China. To achieve this objective, the project will deploy three complementary strategies (Project Components) that address strengthened PA system planning, policy and mainstreaming at national and sub-national level (across the breadth of the EAAF in China and within the four demonstration provinces; site-based management effectiveness at four model PAs for migratory species and their surrounding landscapes; and knowledge management, awareness, gender mainstreaming and monitoring and evaluation.

The results expected to be achieved through the six project outcomes are listed below.

Outcome 1: Expanded and more representative PA system for migratory waterbird conservation with sustainable financing.

- Legal gazettement of 18 new PAs (of any relevant type) for priority sites for migratory waterbirds across the breadth of the EAAF in China, meeting Key Biodiversity Area (KBA) criteria and totalling some 220,914 ha, supported by baseline inventories of biodiversity, PA Master Plans and Site Management Plans, nominations of new PAs as Ramsar Sites and EAAF Network Sites, and a flyway conservation strategy and business plan for the expanded PA network across the EAAF in China.
- Strengthened financial sustainability and resource allocation for the expanded national wetland PA system for migratory waterbird conservation based on the financial sustainability scorecard (Adapted GEF-6 Biodiversity-

1 Tracking Tool, Part III) in terms of an increase in Financial Scorecard score, and a decrease in wetland PA system financing gap (for basic management); establishment of a national donor alliance for migratory waterbird and wetland conservation with investment strategy.

Outcome 2: Flyway wetland conservation advanced through strengthened legislation, planning and sector mainstreaming.

- Migratory waterbird conservation needs integrated in the 14th Five-Year Plan (FYP) for key sectors – provisionally: Agriculture and Rural Affairs, Water Resources, (includes – fisheries, aquaculture, farming, oil extraction and production, coastal development).
- Sector specific guidelines finalized for biodiversity-friendly rice farming, reed farming, aquaculture / mariculture, capture fisheries, ecological restoration of ex-oil production areas, and grazing of livestock (6).
- State Council Circular on Strengthening the Conservation of Coastal Wetlands implemented with more emphasis on the conservation and restoration of wetland habitats of national priority for migratory waterbirds and supported by adoption of Provincial-level Circulars in the three coastal demonstration provinces (Liaoning, Shandong and Shanghai).
- Technical concept and implementation strategy developed, reviewed and adopted for a multi-sector coordination 'China flyway partnership network' for the breadth of the EAAF in China, including site and international level connections.
- National wetland conservation law and a national policy for management of wetlands of national importance adopted.
- Improved institutional capacity to administer the national and provincial PA System for migratory waterbird conservation and globally threatened species conservation, indicated by UNDP Capacity Development Scorecards for: Wetland Management Department of the National Forest and Grassland Administration (NFGA); Yunnan Forestry Bureau; Zhaotong Forestry and Grassland Bureau, Yunnan; Shanghai Forestry Bureau; Shandong Department of Natural Resources; and Liaoning Forestry and Grassland Bureau.

Outcome 3: Increased management effectiveness over 305,505 ha of wetland PAs (marine and terrestrial sites)

- Increased management effectiveness of targeted PAs covering approx. 305,505 ha indicate "sound" management (as measured by the GEF Management Effectiveness Tracking Tool (METT), covering Liaohe River Estuary NNR & PNR; Yellow River Delta NNR; Chongming Dongtan NNR and Dashanbao Black-necked Crane NNR.
- Threats to migratory waterbirds and other biodiversity reduced at project demonstration sites.
- Guideline / handbook for the development of PA management plans that takes into account climate change vulnerability assessment and adaptation planning, gender mainstreaming and social and environmental safeguards, and PA management plans updated in order to pilot test the guidelines / handbook.
- Climate change vulnerability assessments completed for the conservation targets (key species and habitats) at each site to inform the identification of adaptive management priorities.
- Site business plans completed that support site management plan priority actions.
- Updated Ramsar Information Sheets, EAAF Partnership Site Information Sheets and GIS maps completed.
- Local stakeholder coordination mechanisms strengthened for model PAs and landscapes.
- Increased management and technical capacity of model PA, local and provincial government agency staff based on training needs assessments and aligned to PA competency standards.

Outcome 4: Threats to migratory waterbirds arising from unsustainable land uses reduced over 600,000 ha.

- Piloting completed and evaluated and human-waterbird conflict guidelines finalized and adopted by local government for at least 20,000 ha outside PAs in target landscapes.
- Guidelines applied to at least 600,000 ha for sustainable use of flyway wetlands addressing biodiversity friendly rice farming, reed farming, aquaculture / mariculture, capture fisheries, and grazing of livestock have been applied outside the protected area system in order to reduce threats to migratory waterbirds.

- Targeted interventions completed within and outside the pilot sites to address specific threats, documented and disseminated.
- Wetland-compatible practices for agriculture, reed-farming, grazing, fishing and aquaculture activities demonstrated in the project model PAs and landscapes.
- Unsustainable economic pressures on wetlands reduced through diversification of livelihoods.
- Community support and engagement through targeted outreach and awareness raising campaigns and school education partnerships.

Outcome 5: Strong public support for wetland and migratory waterbird conservation – as indicated by improvements in KAP surveys.

- Improved awareness of the value of wetland and migratory waterbird conservation among key target groups including: a) national government decision makers, b) provincial and local government agencies, and c) local communities at project sites, indicated by Knowledge, Attitude and Practices (KAP) surveys conducted at the start and end of the project.

Outcome 6: Effective sharing of knowledge supports learning across the project, China and EAAF Partnership.

- Standardized results from migratory waterbird counts and wetland habitats available online for public access through a unified database and knowledge platform for migratory waterbirds and their habitats across the EAAF in China.
- At least 15 project best practices and lessons documented and disseminated.

The long-term Impacts of the project, namely improved protection and management of critical habitats for migratory waterbirds and improved conservation status of globally significant migratory waterbird populations in EAAF-China will be realized through the achievement of the project objective. The reduction of threats to wetland habitats and globally significant migratory waterbirds as well as benefits to project stakeholders (targeted number of direct beneficiaries: 8,500, of whom 4,150 are women); the area of terrestrial flyway wetland PAs created (c.17,700 ha) or under improved management for conservation and sustainable use (172,200 ha); the area of marine flyway wetland PAs created (c.203,214 ha) or under improved management for conservation and sustainable use (133,305 ha); and the local population status of targeted globally threatened migratory waterbird species at the pilot sites based on annual peak counts.

The project theory of change is schematically described in the diagram in **Figure 1**. The assumptions indicated on the theory of change diagram are described below.

- Assumption 0: A flyway site network approach will benefit the conservation status of migratory waterbird populations.
- Assumption 1: There is political support for expanding the PA System to strengthen migratory waterbird conservation and to support its sustainable and adequate financing.
- Assumption 2: The project is able to provide integral support to national and provincial planning and the development of the 14th Five Year Plan across relevant sectors.
- Assumption 3: Central, Provincial and Local Government agencies provide political support and adequate financing to sustain improvements in management effectiveness at targeted PAs.
- Assumption 4: Sector agencies and local land owners and users integrate the GEF alternative measures into their plans, procedures and practices.
- Assumption 5: Awareness campaigns targeted at specific stakeholder groups are able to achieve tangible change in
- terms of real conservation impacts, not just improved understanding.
- Assumption 6: Improved knowledge management will increase capacity for more effective conservation management and threat reduction.

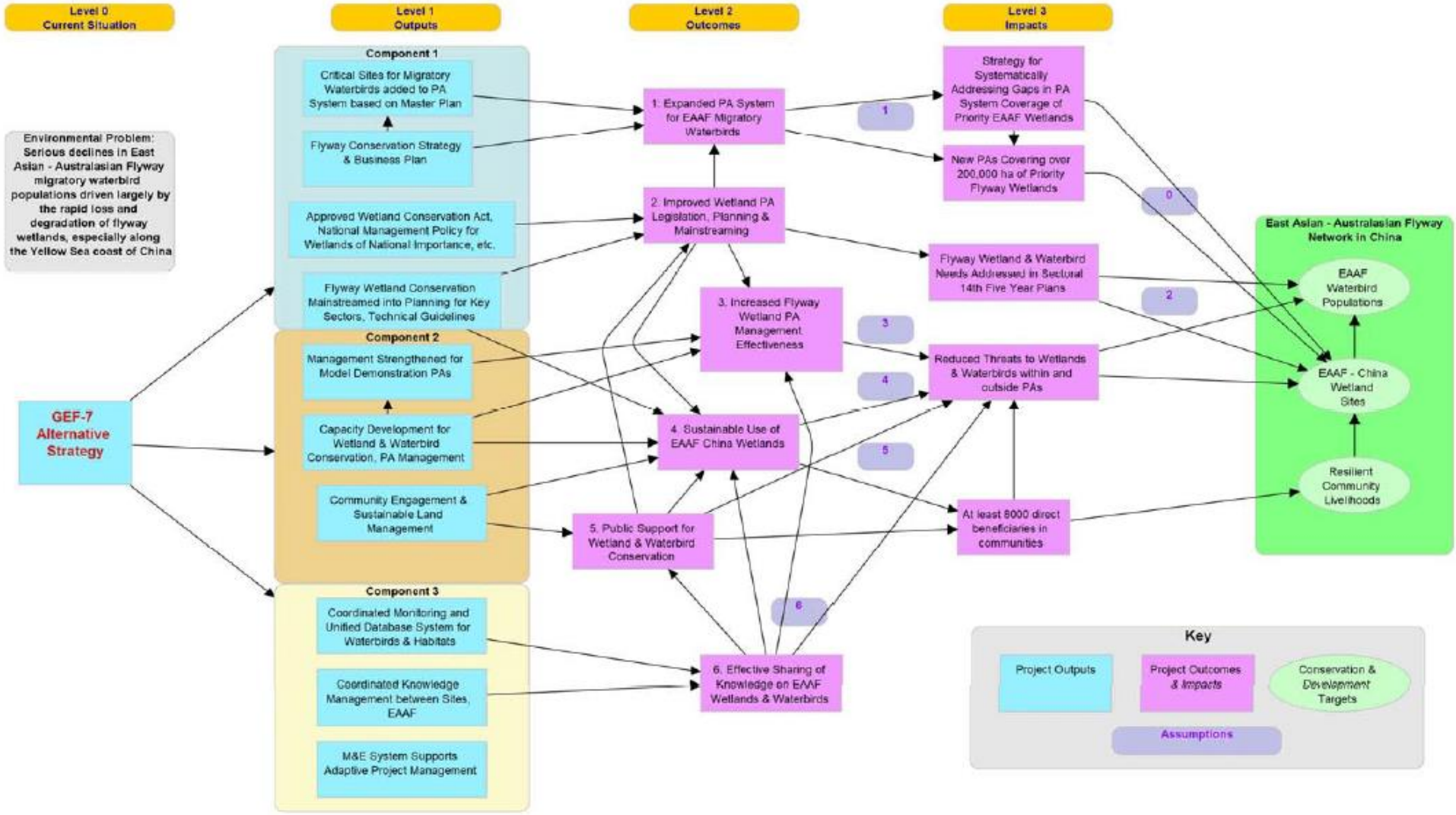

Figure 1: Project theory of change diagram (copied from ProDoc Figure 5B)

2.4 Implementation Arrangements

The project is being implemented through a national implementation modality (NIM), with UNDP as the GEF Agency and the National Forestry and Grassland Administration (NFGA) as Implementing Partner (i.e., Executing Agency).

The project organization structure described in the Project Document is presented below in **Figure 2**.

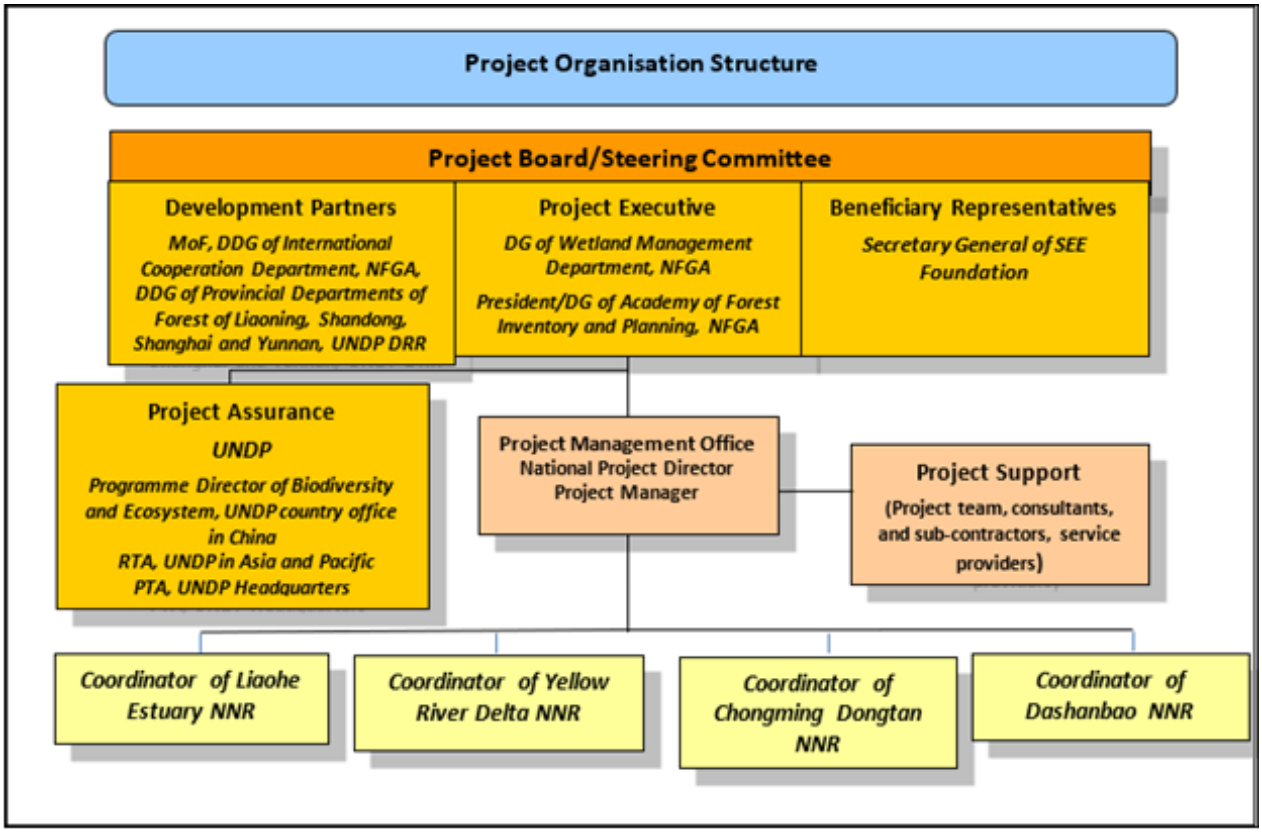

Figure 2: Project organization structure (copied from ProDoc Figure 7)

The Implementing Partner (NFGA) is the entity to which the UNDP Administrator has entrusted the implementation of UNDP assistance specified in this signed project document along with the assumption of full responsibility and accountability for the effective use of UNDP resources and the delivery of outputs, as set forth in the Project Document.

UNDP is accountable to the GEF for the implementation of this project. This includes oversight of project execution to ensure that the project is being carried out in accordance with agreed standards and provisions. UNDP is responsible for delivering GEF project cycle management services comprising project approval and start-up, project supervision and oversight, and project completion and evaluation. UNDP is also responsible for the Project Assurance role of the Project Steering Committee.

Taking the lessons learned from UNDP-GEF MSL Programme, the flow of funds was described in the Project Document as follows and illustrated below in Figure 3. GEF funds are received in a dedicated account at NFGA. The project funding flow managed by the Project Management Office (PMO) go directly to the four demonstration sites (NNRs), four provincial wetland management centers, sub-contractors & consultants, and for the direct procurement of services (such as travel and accommodation for workshops. The funding flow also indicates that no money flow goes from the provincial wetland authorities to the four demonstration NNRs; or from the four demonstration NNRs to the provincial wetland authorities.

Figure 3: Project flow of funds (copied from ProDoc Figure 8)

Review of project governance and management arrangements is discussed in Section 3.3.1 of this MTR report.

2.5 Project Timing and Milestones

Project Milestones:

Preparation Grant Approved (PIF approval date):	01 December 2018
Project Approved for Implementation:	02 December 2020
Start Date (project document signed by Government of China):	26 January 2021
Project Inception Workshop:	11 May 2021
Mid-term Review:	October-November 2023
Closing Date (Planned):	26 January 2027
Closing Date (Revised)	N/A

The Project Identification Form (PIF) was approved on 20 December 2018 for incorporation into the GEF Council Work Programme for the GEF-7 replenishment cycle. Following the project preparation phase, the project obtained approval for implementation by the GEF CEO on 02 December 2020. The official start date of the project is 26 January 2021, when the Government of China signed the project document. The 6-year duration project has a planned closing date of 26 January 2027.

2.6 Main Stakeholders

The main stakeholders for the project and their indicative roles and responsibilities are outlined in the project's stakeholder engagement plan (Annex 7 to the original Project Document). The summary of the stakeholder analysis presented in the plan is copied in **Table 4**..

Table 4: Summary of stakeholder analysis (from ProDoc Annex 7)

Key Stakeholders	Relevant Mandate	Roles in the project
Ministry of Finance	MoF has many responsibilities over public finance, taxation, the treasury, government properties, operations of government monopolies, and revenue-generating enterprises. The ministry is also vested with the power to provide loan guarantees for the governmental agencies, financial institutions, and state enterprises.	GEF Operational Focal Point (OFP). Coordination and implementation of GEF projects in China. The MoF was briefed on project development and will endorse the final Project Document.
National Development and Reform Commission (NDRC)	NDRC is the competent authority responsible for national macroeconomic policy and management, leading coordination among related sectors, reporting to State Council by consolidating related suggestions from ministries. NDRC is responsible for mainstreaming biodiversity conservation into socio-economic development plans and annual plans. NDRC examines and approves	NDRC will be a key partner in project mainstreaming efforts related to its lead role in the five-year planning process. Will provide inputs to align the project with PA system reform and system of NP pilots. It will also support mainstreaming of migratory waterbird and wetland conservation into the five-year planning process for relevant sectors.

Key Stakeholders	Relevant Mandate	Roles in the project
	major ecological rehabilitation programs/projects, and is responsible for promotion of the strategy of sustainable development through its lead role in the five-year planning process.	
National Forestry and Grassland Administration (NFGA)	The NFGA is an agency of the Ministry of Natural Resources. Responsible for forest, grasslands, desert, most of China's national parks, nature reserves, wildlife issues, wildlife trade (CITES), and wetland protection (Ramsar Convention). It also manages forest parks, wetland parks, and protected natural forest.	Executing Partner for the project. Advised on all aspects of project design, proposed management structures and alignment with government co-financing, coordination with other partners, and directly oversight PMO. Project execution will be led by the Wetland Management Department. The Nature Reserve Management Department is also highly relevant to this project and will be consulted on relevant matters.
Ministry of Natural Resources (MNR)	The Ministry of Natural Resources (MNR) was created on 17 March 2018, replacing the Ministry of Land & Resources, State Oceanic Administration. MNR is the competent authority responsible for spatial planning and sustainable use of lands and resources within national boundaries; it will also provide guidance to National Park (NP) spatial pattern planning as an important stakeholder. MNR now also includes responsibility for national ocean planning, legislation and management, supervision and management of the use of sea area and marine environment (functions held by the State Oceanic Administration).	The MNR was engaged in project development via NFGA as Executing Partner and through the engagement of other relevant sections/functions within the Ministry to ensure strengthened coordinated approach to coastal wetland conservation.
Ministry of Ecology and Environment (MEE)	Responsible for overall coordination of environmental issues, pollution control and CBD implementation and clearing-house, execution of CBPF. It is the agency that guides, coordinates and supervises ecological conservation. As the competent administrative ministry of the State Council for environmental protection.	Provide inputs to project development as they relate to the management of ecological threats and PA system reform. Lead Implementing Partner for the GEF-6 C-PAR Program and will advise on coordination with C-PAR.
Ministry of Water Resources	Responsible for ensuring rational development and utilization of water resources; responsible for coordination and guarantee of water use between everyday life, production and ecological environment.	Provide inputs to project development and implementation as they relate to the management of water resources, such as provision of water supply to wetland protected areas to meet ecological requirements and support wetland restoration
Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Affairs	Supervise over production of crops, livestock, fishery, and so on; Responsible for negotiation and implementation of fishery-related treaties; supervise over off-shore fisher and fishing port.	Provide inputs to project implementation as they relate to the management of relevant crops, livestock, and fishery including aquaculture. This is significant for the sustainable use of wetland areas both inside and around nature reserves.
United Nations Development Programme (UNDP)	UNDP works in about 170 countries and territories, helping to achieve the eradication of poverty, and the reduction of inequalities and exclusion. UNDP helps countries to develop policies, leadership skills, partnering abilities, institutional capabilities and build resilience in order to sustain development results.	UNDP is GEF Agency for the project, and is therefore responsible for oversight and monitoring project implementation and ensuring adherence to UNDP and GEF policies and procedures.
Provincial Departments of Finance	Responsible for public finance, taxation, the treasury, government properties, operations of government monopolies, and revenue-generating enterprises at provincial level.	Provided inputs to project design at provincial level for pilot sites. Coordination and provision of provincial co-financing of provincial level projects under the same framework, sustainable financing of protected area management.
Provincial Development and Reform Commissions	These provincial departments will be responsible for mainstreaming biodiversity conservation into socio-economic development plans and annual plans. They will	The departments will provide inputs to align the project with PA system reform and system of NP pilots. They will also support mainstreaming of

Key Stakeholders	Relevant Mandate	Roles in the project
	examine and approve major ecological rehabilitation programs/projects, and are responsible for promotion of the strategy of sustainable development through its lead role in the five-year planning process.	migratory waterbird and wetland conservation into the five-year planning process for relevant sectors.
Provincial Bureaus of Forestry and Grassland where the project model PAs are located	Responsible for planning, supervision and management of wetland protected areas within their jurisdiction.	Provided and will further provide inputs on context and needs at each site to inform design of detailed project activities and coordination project activities at provincial level during project implementation phase.
Provincial Departments of Natural Resources	The departments are responsible for spatial planning and sustainable use of lands and resources within their provincial boundaries; it will also provide guidance to National Park (NP) spatial pattern planning as an important stakeholder.	The departments will be engaged in project implementation through the engagement of relevant sections/functions within the departments to ensure strengthened coordinated approach to coastal wetland conservation.
Provincial Departments of Ecology and Environment	Responsible for overall coordination of environmental issues, pollution control. They are the agencies that guide, coordinate and supervise ecological conservation.	Provide inputs to project implementation as they relate to the management of ecological threats such as pollution control, and PA system reform.
Provincial Department of Water Resources	Responsible for ensuring rational development and utilization of water resources; responsible for coordination and guarantee of water use between everyday life, production and ecological environment within their jurisdictions.	Provide inputs to project implementation as they relate to the management of water resources, such as provision of water supply to wetland protected areas to meet ecological requirements and support wetland restoration
Provincial Departments of Agriculture and Rural Affairs	Supervise production of crops, livestock, fishery, and so on; and supervise over off-shore fisher and fishing port within their jurisdictions.	Provide inputs to project implementation as they relate to the management of relevant crops, livestock, and fishery including aquaculture. This is significant for the sustainable use of wetland areas both inside and around nature reserves.
Management Bureaus of individual demonstration PAs	Responsible for day-to-day conservation and management of PAs,	Advised on project design, needs and contexts at a site level. Responsible for site-level day-to-day project activities during the implementation phase.
Academic institutes, colleges, universities, and primary and middle schools	Universities and research organizations such as Beijing Forestry University, Chinese Academy of Sciences focus on teaching, research and conservation knowledge development and policy recommendations Primary and middle schools in the areas of the four demonstration PAs focus on study including study on environment project and biodiversity conservation	Responsible for field surveys, monitoring, data collection and database development, these including Beijing Forestry University, Chinese Academy of Sciences. Provided technical expertise on hydrological, botanical and zoological aspects and data to support detailed project design and knowledge development. Teachers and students of the primary and middle schools in the Yellow River Delta PA will participate in development of education textbooks on biodiversity conservation
EAAF Partnership Secretariat	Provides Secretariat and coordination for the EAAF Partnership.	Partner in delivery of some activities, and in replication and upscaling across EAAF Partnership sites, especially outside China. Potential co-financer. Will provide inputs on upscaling and partnership with EAAF Partnership.
NGOs	Have their focuses and special interests on migratory birds and/or wetland protection.	Potential to provide technical expertise and bring in international experience, networking and platform for communication. Possible co-implementers for some activities such as training, communication and public awareness under projects. Were consulted during project design, including to identify lessons learned and findings from past and ongoing initiatives. e.g., Alashan SEE Foundation, Qiaonyu Foundation, Heren Foundation, Lao Niu Foundation, Shanshui Nature Conservation Center, China Coastal Waterbird Census Group, Spoon-billed Sandpiper in China, ICF, Wetlands International, WWF.

Key Stakeholders	Relevant Mandate	Roles in the project
Relevant private enterprises and national farms	Development and operation of eco-tourism enterprises, mudflat resources harvesting or aquaculture enterprises, database or website technical service provision enterprises, oil-exploitation enterprises who are occupying wetlands, national farms who are engaged in agriculture and positively and/or negatively affect waterbirds.	Mainly private companies, e.g., eco-tourism enterprises, mudflat resources harvesting or aquaculture enterprises, database or website technical service providers, may become co-implementing agency or project co-contractors of some project activities; they may be involved in marine aquatic product certification, eco-tourism, habitat restoration technologies R&D and demonstration, and information sharing on waterbirds and their habitats; e.g., Oriental Scape Group, technical service provider for Shidi.org.cn, and eco-environmental control companies. Oil-exploitation enterprises who will give ways to the waterbirds. The national farms will carrying out their activities in water-bird friendly manners. Opportunities for partnership and co-financing will be explored in discussions during the PPG phase.
Relevant private enterprises	Development and operation of eco-tourism enterprises, mudflat resources harvesting or aquaculture enterprises, database or website technical service provision enterprises, oil-exploitation enterprises who are occupying wetlands	Mainly private companies, e.g., eco-tourism enterprises, mudflat resources harvesting or aquaculture enterprises, database or website technical service providers, may become co-implementing agency or project co-contractors of some project activities; they may be involved in marine aquatic product certification, eco-tourism, habitat restoration technologies R&D and demonstration, and information sharing on waterbirds and their habitats; e.g., Oriental Scape Group, technical service provider for Shidi.org.cn, and eco-environmental control companies. Oil-exploitation enterprises who will give support for wetland restoration and waterbird conservation. Opportunities for partnership and co-financing will be explored in discussions during the PPG phase.
Local communities	Users of some wetland resources, living with the wetland and the migratory birds in a harmonious way	Local communities at the four demonstration sites, primary resource users of nature reserves and surrounding areas. Direct participants and beneficiaries of the project. Local communities in and surrounding all the demonstration sites were consulted during the PPG phase to get their inputs in design of project activities and confirm support for project. They will be directly engaged during the project implementation, monitoring and evaluation, especially they will be involved in detailed design, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of the proposed community-level activities.
Ethnic minorities	Users of some wetland resources, living with the wetland and the migratory birds in a harmonious way	Local communities at the Dashanbao Black-necked Crane National Nature Reserve include Yi Minority Group and Miao Minority Group. Yi and Miao people in the Dashanbao NNR will be widely engaged in designing, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of the project, especially in the proposed community related activities.

3 Findings

3.1 Project Strategy

3.1.1 Project Design

The project was approved under the GEF-7 replenishment cycle and aligned to the following biodiversity (BD) focal area elements:

- **BD-1-1**: Mainstream biodiversity across sectors as well as landscapes and seascapes through biodiversity mainstreaming in priority sectors.
- **BD-2-7:** Address direct drivers to protect habitats and species and Improve financial sustainability, effective management, and ecosystem coverage of the global protected area estate.

The project design was very much country-driven, formulated in line with the 13th Five-year Plan (2016-2020), which incorporated the principle of ecological civilization across the development priorities in the country. The design was also consistent with the priorities outlined in the National Biodiversity Strategy and Action Plan (NBSAP 2011-2030), which includes inland wetland regions for migratory birds among the priority areas for protection of biodiversity.

The project design was also aligned with the Outcome 2 of the UNDP Country Program Document (CPD): "More people enjoy a cleaner, healthier and safer environment as a result of improved environmental protection and sustainable green growth."

Lessons learned and experiences from other projects and programs in China were taken into account in the design of the project. These include the China Biodiversity Partnership and Framework for Action (CBPF) and the projects under the GEF-5 Main Streams of Life (MSL) Program.

This project is expected to primarily contribute towards SDG 14 (Life below water) - Conserve and sustainably use the oceans, seas and marine resources; and SDG 15 (Life on land): Sustainably manage forests, combat desertification, halt and reverse land degradation, halt biodiversity loss, supporting activities that address multiple targets. Secondary contributions are envisaged towards SDG 1: No poverty, 3: Good health, 5: Gender equality, and 13: Urgent action on climate change.

3.1.2 Results Framework

As part of this mid-term review, the project results framework for the project was assessed against "SMART" criteria, to evaluate whether the indicators and targets were sufficiently specific, measurable, achievable, relevant, and timebound. With respect to the timebound criterion, all targets are assumed compliant, as they are set as end-of-project performance metrics.

Project Objective:

There are seven indicators at the project objective level, as described below in **Table 5.**

Table 5: SMART analysis of project results framework

Indicator	Baseline	End-of-Project target	MTR SMART analysis					Comments / analysis
			S	M	A	R	T	
Objective: To secure the conservation of globally threatened migratory waterbirds through the establishment of a robust, resilient and well-managed network of protected wetlands across the East Asian Australasian Flyway (EAAF) in China								
Mandatory Indicator 1: Number of direct project beneficiaries (% women), consisting of: a) Targeted communities in demonstration landscapes / PAs: Liaohe River Estuary, Yellow River Delta, Chongming Dongtan & Dashanbao b) Central, provincial, local government and PA staff receiving training (GEF Core Indicator 11)	0	a) 8,000 (50%) b) 500 (30%)	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	SMART compliant.
Mandatory Indicator 2: Area of terrestrial protected areas (PAs) created or under improved management for	0	1.1: 19,900 1.2: 172,200	Y	Y	Q	Y	Y	Achievability of establishing new PA's questionable.

Indicator	Baseline	End-of-Project target	MTR SMART analysis					Comments / analysis
			S	M	A	R	T	
conservation and sustainable use (ha): 1.1. Terrestrial PAs newly created for EAAF-China 1.2. Terrestrial PAs under improved management effectiveness (Yellow River Delta NNR, Dashanbao NNR) (GEF Core Indicator 1) See Annex 11B to ProDoc for baseline METTs.								
Mandatory Indicator 3: Area of marine protected areas created or under improved management for conservation and sustainable use (ha): 2.1. Marine PAs newly created for EAAF-China 2.2. Marine PAs under improved management effectiveness (Liaohe River Estuary NNR & PNR, Chongming Dongtan NNR) (GEF Core Indicator 2) See Annex 11B to ProDoc for baseline METTs.	0	2.1: 185,074 2.2: 133,305	Y	Y	Q	Y	Y	Achievability of establishing new PA's questionable.
Indicator 4: Local population status of targeted globally threatened migratory waterbird species at the pilot sites based on annual peak counts: a) Liaohe River Estuary NR Saunders Gull VU (Breeding) Red-crowned Crane EN (Breeding, Stopover) Siberian Crane CR (Stopover) Far Eastern Curlew EN (Stopover) Great Knot EN (Stopover) b) Yellow River Delta NR Saunders Gull VU (Breeding) Oriental Stork EN (Breeding) Red-crowned Crane EN (Wintering) Siberian Crane CR (Stopover) Far Eastern Curlew EN (Stopover) Great Knot EN (Stopover) c) Chongming Dongtan NR Saunders Gull VU (Breeding) Hooded Crane VU (Wintering) Black-faced Spoonbill EN (Stopover) Far Eastern Curlew EN (Stopover) Great Knot EN (Stopover) d) Dashanbao Black-necked Crane NR Black-necked Crane EN (Wintering)	Baseline year is 2018. a) Liaohe River Estuary NR Saunders Gull 10,823 Red-crowned Crane 6/211 Siberian Crane 110 Far Eastern Curlew 21,880 Great Knot 65,804 b) Yellow River Delta NR Saunders Gull 3,866 Oriental Stork 108 Red-crowned Crane 52 Siberian Crane 1,390 Far Eastern Curlew 2,773 Great Knot 2,721 c) Chongming Dongtan NR Saunders Gull 116 Hooded Crane 82 Black-faced Spoonbill 54 Far Eastern Curlew 8 Great Knot 282 d) Dashanbao Black-necked Crane NR Black-necked Crane 991	All Stable – as baseline or improved	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	SMART compliant.
Outcome 1: Expanded and more representative PA system for migratory waterbird conservation with sustainable financing								
Indicator 5: Improved institutional capacity to administer the national and provincial PA System for migratory waterbird conservation and globally threatened species	Baseline CD Scores a) NFGA: 55 b) Yunnan FB: 45 c) Zhaotong FGB: 47 d) Shanghai FB: 72 e) Shandong DNR: 53 f) Liaoning FGB: 51	End of Project CD Scorecard targets a) NFGA: 85 b) Yunnan FB: 73 c) Zhaotong FGB: 74 d) Shanghai FB: 89 e) Shandong DNR: 69	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	SMART compliant.

Indicator	Baseline	End-of-Project target	MTR SMART analysis					Comments / analysis
			S	M	A	R	T	
conservation, indicated by UNDP Capacity Development Scorecards (see Annex 19 for NFGA, and Annex 20 to the ProDoc for provincial/local agencies) for: a) Wetland Management Department of the National Forest and Grassland Administration (NFGA) b) Yunnan Forestry Bureau c) Zhaotong Forestry and Grassland Bureau, Yunnan d) Shanghai Forestry Bureau e) Shandong Department of Natural Resources f) Liaoning Forestry and Grassland Bureau		f) Liaoning FGB: 68						
Indicator 6: Strengthened financial sustainability and resource allocation for the expanded national wetland PA system for migratory waterbird conservation based on the financial sustainability scorecard (Adapted GEF-6 Biodiversity-1 Tracking Tool, Part III – Annex 23B: a) Increase in Financial Scorecard score b) Decrease in wetland PA system financing gap (basic management)	The national wetland PA system is centrally financed with little diversification of funding sources. a) Baseline Financial Scorecard score of 36% b) Wetland PA system annual financing gap of USD 709,549,332 for basic management costs	a) 30% increase over baseline Financial Scorecard score b) Wetland PA system financing gap reduced by at least 20% over baseline	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	SMART compliant.
Outcome 2: Flyway wetland conservation advanced through strengthened legislation, planning and sector mainstreaming								
Indicator 7: Migratory waterbird conservation needs integrated in the 14th Five-Year Plan (FYP) for key sectors, including: Natural Resources, Agriculture and Rural Affairs, Water Resources	The National Wetland Conservation and Rehabilitation Systems Plan approved in 2016 provides a framework for mainstreaming wetland protection, and all 31 provinces have developed implementation plans accordingly. Under the Ministry of Land Resources' Wetland Land Use Classification (National Standard GB/T21010-2017), wetlands will be officially included in the third national land survey starting in 2019, enabling local govts to include wetland ecosystems in their redlining processes. (source: MSL TE Report).	Standards for strengthened migratory waterbird conservation included in 14th FYP for key sectors	Q	Y	Q	Y	Y	Intervening in the FYP of other sectors (apart from NFGA) is challenging, given the compartmentalized arrangements. The term "standards" not clearly defined.
Indicator 8: Number of sector-based technical guidelines on sustainable use of wetland resources piloted in project landscapes	MSL National Wetland Project completed a Guideline on conducting fishing, aquaculture farming in wetland PAs and surrounding areas; and a Guideline on pollution control for lakes, rivers, pools and ponds in China (source – MSL TE Report). However, sector practices are largely uninformed regarding sustainable use of	Piloting completed and evaluated and sector-based technical guidelines finalized for biodiversity-friendly rice farming, reed farming, aquaculture / mariculture, capture fisheries, and grazing of livestock, and ecological restoration of former oil production areas (6)	Y	Y	Q	Q	Y	Guidelines and standard practices exist for some types of sustainable resource use. May have been more relevant to also focus on reviewing and updating existing guidelines and standard practices. Piloting of new technical guidelines challenging due to barriers with respect to

Indicator	Baseline	End-of-Project target	MTR SMART analysis					Comments / analysis
			S	M	A	R	T	
	wetland resources and result in negative impacts for migratory waterbirds and other biodiversity							engaging with other sectors, as a result of compartmentalization.
Outcome 3: Increased management effectiveness over 305,505 ha of wetland PAs (marine and terrestrial sites)								
Indicator 9: Increased management effectiveness of targeted PAs covering approx. 305,505 ha indicate "sound" management (as measured by the GEF Management Effectiveness Tracking Tool (METT) – see Annex 11A to ProDoc): a) Liaohe River Estuary NNR & PNR b) Yellow River Delta NNR c) Chongming Dongtan NNR d) Dashanbao Black-necked Crane NNR [Contributes towards GEF Core Indicators 1 and 2]	METT baseline scores: a) 49 b) 52 c) 61 d) 37	METT target scores: a) 81 b) 78 c) 84 d) 76	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	SMART compliant
Indicator 10: Threats to migratory waterbirds and other biodiversity reduced at project demonstration sites. (see Table A of METT forms in Annex 11A for details)	**LRE NNR/PNR** 1.Saunders Gull breeding habitat: 600 ha 2.Permitted presence of public on tidal flats in NR: 100 days/year **YRD NNR** 1.Area of Spartina: 4,000 ha 2.River water delivered to wetlands: 40,000,000 m3 **CD NNR** 1.Area of Spartina: 529.4 ha 2.Solid waste removed from tidal flats: 20t **DBNC NNR** 1.No. sheep in NNR: 50,000 2.Grassland condition in NNR: 0% cover and 0cm height	**LRE NNR/PNR** 1.Saunders Gull breeding habitat: 800 ha 2.Permitted presence of public on tidal flats in NR: 60 days/year **YRD NNR** 1. Area of Spartina stabilized at: 4,000 ha 2.River water delivered to wetlands: 80,000,000 m3 **CD NNR** 1.Area of Spartina: 477 ha 2.Solid waste removed from tidal flats: 30t **DBNC NNR** 1.No. sheep in NNR: 25,000 2.Grassland condition in NNR: 90% cover and 40cm height	Y	Y	Y	Q	Y	Local experts recommend more relevant targets for Dashanbao (DBNC) NNR, as indicated in Table 3 of this MTR report.
Indicator 11: Area of wetlands restored across the four project demonstration landscapes and other key EAAF wetland areas (ha): (GEF Core Indicator 3.4)	Annual national rate of wetland restoration is approximately 40,000 ha, to be increased under central government policy	60,000 ha	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	SMART compliant
Indicator 12: Greenhouse gas emissions mitigated as a result of wetland restoration across the four project demonstration landscapes and other key EAAF wetland areas (Expected tCO2e): (GEF Core Indicator 6.1)	0	16,999,522 tCO2e (direct) 38,248,924 tCO2e (indirect)	Q	Q	Q	Y	Y	Focusing on the four demonstration landscapes would be more achievable. Also, as mitigation was not the primary objective of this biodiversity focal area project, it would be difficult to validate an indirect target on GHG emissions mitigation.
Outcome 4. Threats to migratory waterbirds arising from unsustainable land uses reduced over 600,000 ha								

Indicator	Baseline	End-of-Project target	MTR SMART analysis					Comments / analysis
			S	M	A	R	T	
Indicator 13: Area of land outside PAs under which procedures / guidelines for addressing human-waterbird conflict are applied	Human-waterbird conflict can be intense within and around wetland nature reserves, causing economic losses to farmers, fishermen and aquaculture businesses. Eco-compensation may be paid in such cases (eg at Dashanbao) but not always (eg around Yellow River Delta NNR). There is no overall systematic approach towards dealing with such conflict, although various local approaches are being applied.	Piloting completed and evaluated and human-waterbird conflict guidelines finalized and adopted by local government for at least 20,000 ha in target landscapes	Y	Y	Q	Y	Y	It may be more achievable to deliver training and increase awareness among key stakeholder groups, e.g., agriculture and fisheries associations, tourism associations, insurance companies.
Indicator 14: Area over which draft guidelines for sustainable use of flyway wetlands addressing biodiversity friendly rice farming, reed farming, aquaculture / mariculture, capture fisheries, and grazing of livestock have been applied outside the protected area system in order to reduce threats to migratory waterbirds	Examples of sustainable use of wetlands exist from previous projects including the GEF 5 Main Streams of Life Programme, but these have not been codified and upscaled over larger areas, and do not specifically target flyway wetlands of importance to migratory waterbirds	Guidelines applied to at least 600,000 ha of flyway wetlands outside the PA system	Y	Y	Q	Y	Y	It may be more achievable to deliver training and increase awareness among key stakeholder groups, e.g., agriculture and fisheries extension offices. These stakeholders would, in turn, be capacitated to affect change through their regular interaction with production sector resource users.
Outcome 5: Strong public support for wetland and migratory bird conservation – as indicated by improvements in KAP surveys								
Indicator 15: Improved awareness of the value of biodiversity conservation among key target groups including: a) National government decision makers, b) provincial and local government agencies, and c) local communities at project sites, indicated by Knowledge, Attitude and Practices (KAP) surveys conducted at the start and end of the project using the methodology in Annex 24	Old: Baseline KAP status to be established in year 1 New: 65%	Old: Project Completion KAP Target to be established in year 1 New: 75%	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	SMART compliant
Outcome 6: Effective sharing of knowledge supports learning across the project, China and EAAF Partnership								
Indicator 16: Standardized results from monitoring of migratory waterbird counts and wetland habitats available online for public access for EAAF China PA network sites	Waterbird and wetland habitat monitoring methods vary between sites and organizations, data are dispersed and not harmonized, and often difficult to access	Standardized results from migratory waterbird counts and wetland habitats available online for public access through a unified database and knowledge platform for migratory waterbirds and their habitats across the EAAF in China	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	SMART compliant
Indicator 17: Number of project best practices and lessons documented and disseminated	0	15	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	SMART compliant
SMART: Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Relevant, Time-Bound Green: SMART criteria compliant (Y); Yellow: observation (Q) noted regarding SMART criteria; Red: not (N) compliant with SMART criteria								

3.1.3 Gender Mainstreaming

The project was assigned to UNDP Gender Marker 2. A gender analysis was conducted during the project preparation phase, which informed the development of the project gender action plan, also prepared during project preparation. These are annexed to the Project Document. Although the project is assigned to a UNDP Gender Marker 2 categorization, there is no dedicated output focusing on strengthening gender equality and women's empowerment. Among the seventeen (17) indicators in the project results framework, only one (direct beneficiaries – Indicator 1) is disaggregated by gender. The gender action plan includes a separate set of dedicated indicators and targets.

3.1.4 Social and Environmental Safeguards

Social and environmental risks were assessed during the project preparation phase using the UNDP Social and Environmental Screening Procedure (SESP). The completed SESP report was annexed to the Project Document. Among the twelve risks identified in the SESP, three were rated as High and, therefore, the overall risk categorization for the project was High. The high-rated risks were as follows:

Risk #7 (High): Risk of the ongoing COVID19 pandemic and any new human disease outbreaks impacting project implementation.

Risk #8 (High): Impacts of exchange rate fluctuations on the budget available to support implementation plans, and global economic recession impacting delivery of cofinancing commitments for project implementation.

Risk 12 (High): New PAs may be established without taking full account of environmental and social risks associated with the specific locations.

In accordance with UNDP's social and environmental standards (SES), a comprehensive Environmental and Social Management Framework (ESMF) was developed during the project preparation phase and annexed to the Project Document. The ESMF forms the basis upon which Environmental and Social Management Plan(s) will be developed during project implementation, so as to ensure full compliance with the requirements of the UNDP SES.

The ESMF sets out the additional safeguards measures that apply to the project during the inception phase, including but not limited to: (i) completion of an Environmental and Social Impact Assessment (ESIA) to further assess potential risks and impacts due to project activities, with an ESIA report; and (ii) the development of an Environmental and Social Management Plan (ESMP) including identified management measures as required based on the ESIA. The description in the Project Document mentions that the development of the ESIA and ESMP will involve public consultation and public disclosure, in line with UNDP's Information Disclosure Policy, and SES. Free and Prior Informed Consent (FPIC) will be applied for all activities involving ethnic minorities, including but not limited to the implementation of the ESMF.

The narrative description of Output 2.1 (National and provincial policy and regulations for wetland conservation strengthened, including an adopted national Wetland Conservation Act and National Management Policy for Wetlands of National Importance) in the Project Document mentions that a high-level strategic assessment approach should be considered, to integrate social and environmental considerations into the proposed policies and plans. The UNDP SES was referenced for guidance on strategic environmental and social assessment (SESA) procedures.

3.2 Progress towards Results

3.2.1 Progress towards Objective and Outcomes Analysis

Objective: To secure the conservation of globally threatened migratory waterbirds through the establishment of a robust, resilient and well-managed network of protected wetlands across the East Asian Australasian Flyway (EAAF) in China	
Progress towards achieving the project objective is rated as:	**Satisfactory**

A rating of **satisfactory** is applied for progress made towards achieving the project objective through midterm as summarized below in **Table 6** and in **Annex 5**.

Table 6: Progress towards results, project objective

Indicator	Baseline	Mid-term status	End-of-Project target	MTR Assessment
Date:	**2018-2019**	**Oct-Nov 2023**	**Jan 2027**	
Mandatory Indicator 1: Number of direct project beneficiaries (% women), consisting of: a) Targeted communities in demonstration landscapes / PAs: Liaohe River Estuary, Yellow River Delta, Chongming Dongtan & Dashanbao b) Central, provincial, local government and PA staff receiving training (GEF Core Indicator 11)	0	a) 8,002 (57%) b) 811 (32%)	a) 8,000 (50%) b) 500 (30%)	**Achieved**
Mandatory Indicator 2: Area of terrestrial protected areas (PAs) created or under improved management for conservation and sustainable use (ha): 1.1. Terrestrial PAs newly created for EAAF-China 1.2. Terrestrial PAs under improved management effectiveness (Yellow River Delta NNR, Dashanbao NNR) (GEF Core Indicator 1) See Annex 11B to ProDoc for baseline METTs	0	1.1: 0 1.2: 172,200	1.1: 19,900 1.2: 172,200	**Partially on target**
Mandatory Indicator 3: Area of marine protected areas created or under improved management for conservation and sustainable use (ha): 2.1. Marine PAs newly created for EAAF-China 2.2. Marine PAs under improved management effectiveness (Liaohe River Estuary NNR & PNR, Chongming Dongtan NNR) (GEF Core Indicator 2) See Annex 11B to ProDoc for baseline METTs.	0	2.1: 0 2.2: 133,305	2.1: 185,074 2.2: 133,305	**Partially on target**
Indicator 4: Local population status of targeted globally threatened migratory waterbird species at the pilot sites based on annual peak counts: a) Liaohe River Estuary NR Saunders Gull VU (Breeding)	Baseline year is 2018. **a) Liaohe River Estuary NR** Saunders Gull 10,823 Red-crowned Crane 6/211 Siberian Crane 110 Far Eastern Curlew 21,880 Great Knot 65,804 **b) Yellow River Delta NR**	Status report dated Dec 2022 **a) Liaohe River Estuary NR** Saunders Gull 18,056 Red-crowned Crane 588 Siberian Crane 709 Far Eastern Curlew 4,469 Great Knot 52,400	All Stable – as baseline or improved	**On target**

Indicator	Baseline	Mid-term status	End-of-Project target	MTR Assessment
Date:	2018-2019	Oct-Nov 2023	Jan 2027	
Red-crowned Crane EN (Breeding, Stopover) Siberian Crane CR (Stopover) Far Eastern Curlew EN (Stopover) Great Knot EN (Stopover) b) Yellow River Delta NR Saunders Gull VU (Breeding) Oriental Stork EN (Breeding) Red-crowned Crane EN (Wintering) Siberian Crane CR (Stopover) Far Eastern Curlew EN (Stopover) Great Knot EN (Stopover) c) Chongming Dongtan NR Saunders Gull VU (Breeding) Hooded Crane VU (Wintering) Black-faced Spoonbill EN (Stopover) Far Eastern Curlew EN (Stopover) Great Knot EN (Stopover) d) Dashanbao Black-necked Crane NR Black-necked Crane EN (Wintering)	Saunders Gull 3,866 Oriental Stork 108 Red-crowned Crane 52 Siberian Crane 1,390 Far Eastern Curlew 2,773 Great Knot 2,721 **c) Chongming Dongtan NR** Saunders Gull 116 Hooded Crane 82 Black-faced Spoonbill 54 Far Eastern Curlew 8 Great Knot 282 **d) Dashanbao Black-necked Crane NR** Black-necked Crane 991	**b) Yellow River Delta NR** Saunders Gull 5,980 Oriental Stork 497 Red-crowned Crane 497 Siberian Crane 562 Far Eastern Curlew 7,098 Great Knot 664 **c) Chongming Dongtan NR** Saunders Gull 17 Hooded Crane 92 Black-faced Spoonbill 48 Far Eastern Curlew 83 Great Knot 4 **d) Dashanbao Black-necked Crane NR** Black-necked Crane 1,926 (including 98 fledglings)		

The project has made substantive progress towards achievement of the objective, including exceeding the target on direct beneficiaries by midterm, through delivery of extensive training. A comprehensive, nationwide gap analysis was completed by the Chinese Academy of Sciences on coastal and terrestrial wetland conservation. This analysis provides valuable guidance for strategic expansion of the wetland PA system. New PA's have not been reported through June 2023 (uncertain whether the end of project target can be achieved by closure). The analysis did not reflect climate change, which was identified as a threat to migratory birds and the habitats they depend upon.

The management effectiveness of the four demonstration PA's improved through midterm, through capacity building, management planning, and implementation of targeted interventions. Environmental status improvements have also been reported at the demonstration sites, i.e., generally stable or increasing populations of endangered and threatened migratory waterbird species.

The project has contributed to the UNDP Country Programme Document for China (2021-2025), in line with the United Nations Sustainable Development Cooperation Framework (UNSDCF), specifically in relation to UNSDCF Outcome 3: People in China and the region benefit from a healthier and more resilient environment.

Component 1: Flyway PA network planning, expansion, financial sustainability and mainstreaming

Outcome 1: Expanded and more representative PA system for migratory waterbird conservation with sustainable financing	
Progress towards achieving Outcome 1 is rated as:	**Satisfactory**

Progress towards achievement of Outcome 1 is rated as **satisfactory** as outlined below in **Table 7** and in **Annex 5**.

Table 7: Progress towards results, Outcome 1

Indicator	Baseline	Mid-term status	End-of-Project target	MTR Assessment
Date:	2018-2019	Oct-Nov 2023	Jan 2027	
Indicator 5: Improved institutional capacity to administer the national and provincial PA System for migratory waterbird conservation and globally threatened species conservation, indicated by UNDP Capacity Development Scorecards (see Annex 19 for NFGA, and	Baseline CD Scores a) NFGA: 55 b) Yunnan FB: 45 c) Zhaotong FGB: 47 d) Shanghai FB: 72 e) Shandong DNR: 53 f) Liaoning FGB: 51	Assessed in 2023 a) NFGA: 72.5 b) Yunnan FB: 60.5 c) Zhaotong FGB: 62 d) Shanghai FB: 81 e) Shandong DNR: 64.5 f) Liaoning FGB: 64.5	End of Project CD Scorecard targets a) NFGA: 85 b) Yunnan FB: 73 c) Zhaotong FGB: 74 d) Shanghai FB: 89 e) Shandong DNR: 69 f) Liaoning FGB: 68	**On target**

Indicator	Baseline	Mid-term status	End-of-Project target	MTR Assessment
Date:	**2018-2019**	**Oct-Nov 2023**	**Jan 2027**	
Annex 20 to the ProDoc for provincial/local agencies) for: a) Wetland Management Department of the National Forest and Grassland Administration (NFGA) b) Yunnan Forestry Bureau c) Zhaotong Forestry and Grassland Bureau, Yunnan d) Shanghai Forestry Bureau e) Shandong Department of Natural Resources f) Liaoning Forestry and Grassland Bureau				
Indicator 6: Strengthened financial sustainability and resource allocation for the expanded national wetland PA system for migratory waterbird conservation based on the financial sustainability scorecard (Adapted GEF-6 Biodiversity-1 Tracking Tool, Part III – Annex 23B: a) Increase in Financial Scorecard score b) Decrease in wetland PA system financing gap (basic management)	The national wetland PA system is centrally financed with little diversification of funding sources. a) Baseline Financial Scorecard score of 36% b) Wetland PA system annual financing gap of USD 709,549,332 for basic management costs.	a) 12% increase over baseline Financial Scorecard score b) Wetland PA system financing gap reduced by at least 67.2% over baseline	a) 30% increase over baseline Financial Scorecard score b) Wetland PA system financing gap reduced by at least 20% over baseline	**On target**

During the first half of the project the PMO completed a PA management capacity gap analysis and developed and delivered training packages accordingly. Institutional capacities of the selected partners, including NFGA and the site level management entities, show improvements through the midterm assessment of the capacity development scorecards.

The financial sustainability for the wetland PA system and migratory waterbird conservation has also improved through project midterm, based on an updated assessment of the baseline financial scorecard score and the wetland PA system financing gap. The MTR team observed evidence of significant capital investments at the demonstration sites; however, shortcomings in operational financing were widely noted.

Outcome 2: Flyway wetland conservation advanced through strengthened legislation, planning and sector mainstreaming	
Progress towards achieving Outcome 2 is rated as:	**Moderately satisfactory**

Progress towards achievement of Outcome 2 is rated as **moderately satisfactory** as outlined below in Table 8 and in **Annex 5**.

Table 8: Progress towards results, Outcome 2

Indicator	Baseline	Mid-term status	End-of-Project target	MTR Assessment
Date:	**2018-2019**	**Oct-Nov 2023**	**Jan 2027**	
Indicator 7: Migratory waterbird conservation needs integrated in the 14th Five-Year Plan (FYP) for key sectors, including: Natural Resources, Agriculture and Rural Affairs, Water Resources	The National Wetland Conservation and Rehabilitation Systems Plan approved in 2016 provides a framework for mainstreaming wetland protection, and all 31 provinces have developed implementation plans accordingly. Under the Ministry of Land Resources' Wetland Land Use Classification (National Standard GB/T21010-2017), wetlands will be	Advances in legislative framework, including the enactment of the Wetlands Conservation Act in 2022, as well as the NDRC-led China Flyway Conservation and Restoration Plan (2023-2030) under development. However, standards for strengthened migratory waterbird conservation not being developed for inclusion in the 14th FYP for key sectors.	Standards for strengthened migratory waterbird conservation included in 14th FYP for key sectors	**Partially on target**

Indicator	Baseline	Mid-term status	End-of-Project target	MTR Assessment
Date:	2018-2019	Oct-Nov 2023	Jan 2027	
	officially included in the third national land survey starting in 2019, enabling local govts to include wetland ecosystems in their redlining processes. (source: MSL TE Report).			
Indicator 8: Number of sector-based technical guidelines on sustainable use of wetland resources piloted in project landscapes	MSL National Wetland Project completed a Guideline on conducting fishing, aquaculture farming in wetland PAs and surrounding areas; and a Guideline on pollution control for lakes, rivers, pools and ponds in China (source – MSL TE Report). However, sector practices are largely uninformed regarding sustainable use of wetland resources and result in negative impacts for migratory waterbirds and other biodiversity	Technical guidelines drafted by midterm include "Protection and Restoration of Small and Micro Wetlands" and "Mangrove Ecological Restoration & Monitoring". Others under development, but not the full set of six (6) as planned. Planning for piloting the technical guidelines has not yet been worked out.	Piloting completed and evaluated and sector-based technical guidelines finalized for biodiversity-friendly rice farming, reed farming, aquaculture / mariculture, capture fisheries, and grazing of livestock, and ecological restoration of former oil production areas (6)	**Partially on target**

The enactment of the Wetlands Conservation Law, which the project provided technical assistance with, underpins the legislative framework on protection of wetland ecosystems in the country. The China Flyway Conservation and Restoration Action Plan (2023-2030), jointly being developed by the NDRC and NFGA, with technical assistance from the project, ensures that governmental commitment and financing will continue in the coming years. The establishment of the China Flyway Conservation Network (CFCN), a technical task force, helps ensure state-of-the-art approaches and innovation are introduced.

The project has not focused on integrating migratory waterbird conservation into the 14th 5-year plans of the agriculture and rural affairs and water resources sectors, as designed. However, the Wetlands Conservation Law and the China Flyway Conservation and Restoration Action Plan are cross-sectoral, applicable to all relevant sectors.

The project has made some progress on developing technical guidelines on sustainable use of wetland resources, including grassland sustainable use (Dashanbao NNR) and waterbird friendly rice farming (Liaohe River Estuary NNR). Other earmarked guidelines, on reed farming, aquaculture/mariculture, capture fisheries, livestock grazing, and ecological restoration of former oil production areas, have not been initiated. The project may be better positioned to review existing guidelines and practices in these sectors, rather than the development of new guidelines.

Component 2: Site-based demonstrations of adaptive habitat management and rehabilitation for migratory waterbird conservation

Outcome 3: Increased management effectiveness over 305,505 ha of wetland PAs (marine and terrestrial sites)	
Progress towards achieving Outcome 3 is rated as:	**Satisfactory**

Progress towards achievement of Outcome 3 is rated as **satisfactory**, as outlined below in **Table 9**Error! Reference source not found. and in **Annex 5**.

Table 9: Progress towards results, Outcome 3

Indicator	Baseline	Mid-term status	End-of-Project target	MTR Assessment
Date:	**2018-2019**	**Oct-Nov 2023**	**Jan 2027**	
Indicator 9: Increased management effectiveness of targeted PAs covering approx. 305,505 ha indicate "sound" management (as measured by the GEF Management Effectiveness Tracking Tool (METT) – see Annex 11A to ProDoc): a) Liaohe River Estuary NNR & PNR b) Yellow River Delta NNR c) Chongming Dongtan NNR d) Dashanbao Black-necked Crane NNR [Contributes towards GEF Core Indicators 1 and 2]	METT baseline scores: a) 49 b) 52 c) 61 d) 37	METT target scores: a) 68 b) 69 c) 77 d) 64	METT target scores: a) 81 b) 78 c) 84 d) 76	**On target**
Indicator 10: Threats to migratory waterbirds and other biodiversity reduced at project demonstration sites. (see Table A of METT forms in Annex 11A for details)	**LRE NNR/PNR** 1.Saunders Gull breeding habitat: 600 ha 2.Permitted presence of public on tidal flats in NR: 100 days/year **YRD NNR** 1.Area of Spartina: 4,000 ha 2.River water delivered to wetlands: 40,000,000 m3 **CD NNR** 1.Area of Spartina: 529.4 ha 2.Solid waste removed from tidal flats: 20t **DBNC NNR** 1.No. sheep in NNR: 50,000 2.Grassland condition in NNR: 0% cover and 0cm height	**LRE NNR/PNR** 1.Saunders Gull breeding habitat: 900 ha 2.Permitted presence of public on tidal flats in NR: 80 days/year **YRD NNR** 1. Area of Spartina stabilized at: 0 ha 2.River water delivered to wetlands: 175,000,000 m3 **CD NNR** 1.Area of Spartina: 79 ha 2.Solid waste removed from tidal flats: 1,090 t **DBNC NNR** 1.No. sheep in NNR: 10,000 2.Grassland condition in NNR: 30% cover and 5cm height	**LRE NNR/PNR** 1.Saunders Gull breeding habitat: 800 ha 2.Permitted presence of public on tidal flats in NR: 60 days/year **YRD NNR** 1. Area of Spartina stabilized at: 4,000 ha 2.River water delivered to wetlands: 80,000,000 m3 **CD NNR** 1.Area of Spartina: 477 ha 2.Solid waste removed from tidal flats: 30t **DBNC NNR** 1.No. sheep in NNR: 25,000 2.Grassland condition in NNR: 90% cover and 40cm height	**On target**
Indicator 11: Area of wetlands restored across the four project demonstration landscapes and other key EAAF wetland areas (ha): (GEF Core Indicator 3.4)	Annual national rate of wetland restoration is approximately 40,000 ha, to be increased under central government policy	30,915 ha in 3 of the demonstration sites	60,000 ha	**On target**
Indicator 12: Greenhouse gas emissions mitigated as a result of wetland restoration across the four project demonstration landscapes and other key EAAF wetland areas (Expected tCO2e): (GEF Core Indicator 6.1)	0	Beijing Normal University contracted to estimate GHG emission reductions. Estimations not yet ready at the time of the MTR.	16,999,522 tCO2e (direct) 38,248,924 tCO2e (indirect)	**Unable to assess**

The project has been particularly successful at engaging with the four demonstration sites, facilitating improved management effectiveness of these PA's, delivering training, preparing management plans and financing strategic, science-based interventions. Moreover, engagement in these project activities and participating in project-sponsored training have contributed to the development of professional capacities of PA staff.

Restoration achievements have been largely associated with the removal of the invasive alien species *Spartina alterniflora* (a saltmarsh cordgrass). The Spartina eradication interventions have been financed by governmental programs. The project has provided support with demonstrations of innovative restoration techniques, assessment on

the durability of the restoration interventions, applying ecological flow principles in the replenishment of freshwater resources, etc.

The project has commissioned the Beijing Normal University to estimate greenhouse gas emissions mitigated through restoration and improved management practices at the demonstration sites and other key PA's within the EAAF. There has been no assessment of midterm progress towards achievement of the targeted mitigation benefits.

Outcome 4: Threats to migratory waterbirds arising from unsustainable land uses reduced over 600,000 ha	
Progress towards achieving Outcome 4 is rated as:	**Moderately satisfactory**

Progress towards achievement of Outcome 4 is rated as **moderately satisfactory**, as outlined below in **Table 10** and in **Annex 5**.

Table 10: Progress towards results, Outcome 4

Indicator	Baseline	Mid-term status	End-of-Project target	MTR Assessment
Date:	**2018-2019**	**Oct-Nov 2023**	**Jan 2027**	
Indicator 13: Area of land outside PAs under which procedures / guidelines for addressing human-waterbird conflict are applied	Human-waterbird conflict can be intense within and around wetland nature reserves, causing economic losses to farmers, fishermen and aquaculture businesses. Eco-compensation may be paid in such cases (eg at Dashanbao) but not always (eg around Yellow River Delta NNR). There is no overall systematic approach towards dealing with such conflict, although various local approaches are being applied.	Two guidelines being drafted (waterbird friendly rice farming and sustainable use of grassland) and a 20-ha pilot being implemented for the waterbird friendly rice farming. The potential economic consequences of human-wildlife conflicts are unclear, and it is uncertain how the 20,000-ha end target may be achieved.	Piloting completed and evaluated and human-waterbird conflict guidelines finalized and adopted by local government for at least 20,000 ha in target landscapes.	**Partially on target**
Indicator 14: Area over which draft guidelines for sustainable use of flyway wetlands addressing biodiversity friendly rice farming, reed farming, aquaculture / mariculture, capture fisheries, and grazing of livestock have been applied outside the protected area system in order to reduce threats to migratory waterbirds	Examples of sustainable use of wetlands exist from previous projects including the GEF 5 Main Streams of Life Programme, but these have not been codified and upscaled over larger areas, and do not specifically target flyway wetlands of importance to migratory waterbirds	As mentioned under Indicator 8, there has been some progress on the development of technical guidelines. It is uncertain how the guidelines will be applied across at least 600,000 ha.	Guidelines applied to at least 600,000 ha of flyway wetlands outside the PA system	**Not on target**

There has been limited progress towards achievement of the envisaged results under this outcome. Waterbird friendly rice farming is being piloted at the Liaohe River Estuary NNR, as mentioned above under Outcome 2, and scaling up of these practices is planned in the second half of the project. Achieving the target of adopting waterbird conflict guidelines across at least 20,000 ha seems questionable.

There has been no substantive progress towards the application of sustainable use guidelines across 600,000 ha, the other target under this outcome.

Component 3: Knowledge management, awareness, gender mainstreaming and M&E

Outcome 5: Strong public support for wetland and migratory bird conservation – as indicated by improvements in KAP surveys	
Progress towards achieving Outcome 5 is rated as:	**Satisfactory**

Progress towards achievement of Outcome 5 is not rated as outlined below in **Table 11** and in **Annex 5**.

Table 11: Progress towards results, Outcome 5

Indicator	Baseline	Mid-term status	End-of-Project target	MTR Assessment
Date:	**2018-2019**	**Oct-Nov 2023**	**Jan 2027**	
Indicator 15: Improved awareness of the value of biodiversity conservation among key target groups including: a) National government decision makers, b) provincial and local government agencies, and c) local communities at project sites, indicated by Knowledge, Attitude and Practices (KAP) surveys conducted at the start and end of the project using the methodology in Annex 24	Old: Baseline KAP status to be established in year 1 New: 65%	The average midterm KAP survey results: 74% for project provinces and 61% for non-project provinces.	Old: Project Completion KAP Target to be established in year 1 New: 75%	**On target**

The baseline KAP survey was completed in the first year of project implementation, and the project has delivered a number of trainings, awareness campaigns and environmental education activities to address gaps identified. The midterm KAP survey results were made available to the MTR team after the mission. Based on review of the midterm assessment results, the project is on target to achieve the intended end of project metrics.

Outcome 6: Effective sharing of knowledge supports learning across the project, China and EAAF Partnership	
Progress towards achieving Outcome 6 is rated as:	**Satisfactory**

Progress towards the achievement of Outcome 6 is rated as **satisfactory**, as outlined below in **Table 12** and in **Annex 5**.

Table 12: Progress towards results, Outcome 6

Indicator	Baseline	Mid-term status	End-of-Project target	MTR Assessment
Date:	**2018-2019**	**Oct-Nov 2023**	**Jan 2027**	
Indicator 16: Standardized results from monitoring of migratory waterbird counts and wetland habitats available online for public access for EAAF China PA network sites	Waterbird and wetland habitat monitoring methods vary between sites and organizations, data are dispersed and not harmonized, and often difficult to access	Database and knowledge platform under development.	Standardized results from migratory waterbird counts and wetland habitats available online for public access through a unified database and knowledge platform for migratory waterbirds and their habitats across the EAAF in China	**On target**
Indicator 17: Number of project best practices and lessons documented and disseminated	0	6	15	**On target**

Standardized monitoring protocols and a database on waterbirds and their habitats along the EAAF in China are being developed by the Chinese Academy of Sciences. Extensive data has been collected on images and descriptions of more than 1,300 waterbird species. The database is also planned to have a public-access section, where interested people can view and upload information.

The project has participated in a number of national conferences and workshops, as well as the Ramsar COP14. Knowledge products have also been developed and disseminated, including "Ten successful stories of waterbird protection in China", distributed during the Ramsar COP14, as well as a research report for the Yellow River Delta NNR, a gender mainstreaming story of women working as crane guardians at the Dashanbao NNR, as well as the reed shoes production and training in Chongming Dongtan, Shanghai Municipality, and child friendly picture books on plateau wetland education in Yunnan Province.

3.2.2 Remaining Barriers to Achieving the Project Objective

Achieving the intended expansion of the PA system within the EAAF. Establishment of new PA's or expanded PA's has proven a substantive challenge, as a result of more responsibilities devolved to local governments. There are opportunities associated with the national park program, e.g., the planned upgrade of the Yellow River Delta NNR to a national park that would involve a 70,000 ha expansion. The project should explore adaptive management measures, including supporting pilot implementation of other area-based conservation measures (OECMs), representing an innovative approach that has not yet been extensively applied in China.

Expanding stakeholder engagement with production sectors for achievement of the intended results associated with sustainable resource use in wetland ecosystems. The project has mostly engaged with stakeholders mandated to manage protected areas. Reducing threats to wetland ecosystems require broader stakeholder engagement, particularly with production sector stakeholders, including agriculture, fisheries, tourism, energy, and infrastructure development.

3.3 Project Implementation and Adaptive Management

Project Implementation and Adaptive Management is rated as: Moderately Satisfactory

3.3.1 Management Arrangements

The project is being implemented under national implementation modality (NIM), with UNDP as the GEF Agency and the National Forestry and Grassland Administration (NFGA) as Implementing Partner (i.e., Executing Agency).

Steering Committee:

There have been three project steering committee (PSC) meetings by midterm: May 2021, March 2022 and March 2023. For enhancing collaboration, the key management officials of local forest and grassland management bureaus in each demonstration sites participated PSC meetings as formal members, which has strengthened the operationalization the project and leveraged more available resources to facilitate the effective implementation of the project. The meetings have been convened at the project demonstration sites on a rotational basis, a practice that the MTR team considers good practice.

Membership of the PSC was confirmed during the project inception workshop and documented in the inception report. There were a few changes compared to the arrangements described in the Project Document, e.g., the international NGO partners (EAAF Partnership, Wetlands International, International Crane Foundation, WWF, and SEE Foundation) are each listed as observers. The Project Document description had the SEE Foundation as one of the PSC members.

Risk Management:

A rating of moderately satisfactory is applied because of the lack of approved safeguard instruments in place by midterm. The project is rated as high risk in terms of social and environmental aspects. Development of safeguard instruments, including the SESA, ESIA and ESMP was initiated in the first half of the project, but not yet completed.

Project Management Office (PMO):

The PMO is set up at the Academy of Forestry Inventory and Planning (AFIP), an entity of the NFGA based in Beijing. The project management and advisory teams are qualified and dedicated, reporting was found to be thorough and with candor.

3.3.2 Work Planning

The inception workshop was not held in May 2021, following the official start of the project in January of that year.

The COVID-19 pandemic presented challenges to work planning. The project did a good job implementing adaptive management measures in response to travel and physical gathering restrictions that extended until the end of 2022.

The project work plans have closely followed the indicative set of activities outlined in the Project Document.

The project results framework was presented during the inception workshop. The only update to the results framework has been the establishment of midterm and end of project targets for Indicator 15, following completion of the baseline knowledge, attitudes and practices (KAP) survey.

3.3.3 Finance and Cofinance

Financial Expenditures:

Total expenditures against the GEF project grant reported in the UNDP combined delivery reports (CDRs) through 30 September 2023 were USD 2,839,912, which is 32% of the USD 8,932,420 GEF project grant (see **Table 13)**.

Table 13: Project expenditures and indicative budget breakdown

Outcome	Actual expenditures				Indicative ProDoc budget
	2021	2022	2023*	Total	
Activity 0	(3,610)	13,871	(247)	10,014	0
Component 1	145,114	184,134	232,517	561,765	1,300,000
Component 2	219,920	780,134	665,062	1,665,116	6,000,000
Component 3	77,033	185,470	158,430	420,932	1,212,000
Sub-total	**438,458**	**1,163,609**	**1,055,761**	**2,657,828**	**8,512,000**
Project Management	76,294	63,891	41,900	182,084	420,420
TOTAL expenditures:	**514,751**	**1,227,500**	**1,097,661**	**2,839,912**	**8,932,420**
Annual budget:	580,465	1,901,320	2,246,171		**N/A**
Delivery:	89%	65%			

Figures in USD — Balance: 6,092,508

Source of budget figures: approved Project Document — % spent: 32%

Source of expenditures: Combined Delivery Reports (CDR), provided by UNDP

Source of annual budgets: Two-year work plans

*2023 expenditures reported through September (preliminary CDR)

Activity 0: Unrealized loss, unrealized gain, realized foreign exchange losses

The estimated budget in Quarter 4 of 2023 is USD 732,799. If this amount is incurred by the end of the year, then the delivery for 2023 would be approximately 81% and the total amount spent in the first three years of the project would increase to USD 3,572,711, or 40% of the GEF project grant.

Spending across the project components has been generally consistent with the budget breakdown outlined in the Project Document.

Project management costs through 30 September 2023 are USD 182,084, or 7% of the sub-total of the technical components, exceeding the 5% GEF threshold for project management costs. The project will need to review project management costs during the second half of implementation, to ensure the 5% threshold is met.

Asset purchases:

The project maintains an asset register and has documented purchase of assets that were not envisaged at the time of project design, e.g., the vehicle purchased for the Dashanbao demonstration site – which was justified and approved by the GEF and UNDP.

Currency Fluctuations:

Most of the project costs are in incurred in Chinese Yuan (CNY), and, therefore, currency fluctuations are important factors. In fact, potential adverse currency fluctuations were indicated as a high risk in the project design.

The CNY:USD exchange rate[3] at the project start date on 26 January 2021 was 6.47633 and the rate at project midterm (31 October 2023) was 7.30205, representing a 12.75% devaluation in CNY over this time period. This devaluation has, in fact, been favorable for the project, as most expenditures are in CNY and the budget is prepared in USD.

Financial Audits:

An independent audit was commissioned by the UNDP for the calendar years 2021 and 2022. There were no audit findings reported in the 2021 audit report. There was one observation indicated in the audit report, noting that the Implementing Partner had mistakenly recorded an expense in the Q3 FACE form that was earlier reported in the Q2 form. The MTR team was informed that this mistake was corrected by the Implementing Partner.

The PMO has instituted a spot check process for the four demonstration sites (good practice), to ensure financial accounting and controls are managed effectively.

[3] Exchange rates taken from Oanda FX data services: https://www.oanda.com

Cofinancing:

The cumulative total of cofinancing confirmed at CEO endorsement was USD 87,054,532, including USD 70,000,000 in contributions from the recipient country government, USD 16,854,532 from five international NGOs, and USD 1,000,000 from the UNDP.

By project mid-term (October 2023), materialized cofinancing was reported at USD 42,067,326, which is 48% of the USD 87,054,532 confirmed at project entry (see **Annex 5**).

The reported cofinancing not include contributions that were mobilized from other co-financing partners during implementation, including the Mangrove Conservation Foundation (MCF) and private sector automotive companies NIO and BMW. Initiated through introductions made by UNDP Country Office staff, BMW and NIO have pledged cofinancing to the Yellow River Delta NNR. BMW has committed to provide three vehicles to the reserve, as well as support for the cost of printing information brochures. NIO has pledged to provide two electric vehicles to the reserve and also agreed to deliver cash support for a migratory bird forum later in 2023.

The PMO requests cofinancing partners to provide information on the reported cofinancing on an annual basis.

UNDP has reported that 50%, i.e., USD 100,000 of the committed cofinancing was materialized by midterm. There were no details available regarding the details of the reported contributions.

3.3.4 Project-level Monitoring and Evaluation Systems

The monitoring and evaluation (M&E) plan was prepared using the standard UNDP-GEF template. The estimated cost for implementation of the M&E plan, as recorded in the Project Document USD 244,796, which is 2.75% of the GEF project grant, consistent with the current UNDP-GEF guidance calls for the M&E budget to be 3% of the GEF grant for projects between USD 5-10 million.

The PMO includes an M&E Officer, responsible for ensuring the effective implementation of the M&E plan and contributing to project reporting.

The project results framework is the main M&E tool for assessing project performance. Overall, the results framework is robust, providing representative performance metrics. Section 3.1.2 of this MTR report provides an evaluation of the results framework.

There is a separate set of indicators and targets in the gender action plan. There were no reports available on progress towards achievement of the gender mainstreaming targets.

There have been some adaptive management measures proposed at the demonstration site level. A few of these measures noted by the MTR team include the following: challenges in implementing rotational grazing practices at the Dashanbao NNR due to complex land tenure issues; extensive progress and experience by the Chongming-Dongtan NNR on Spartina control and suggestion to allocate the GEF funding elsewhere; the indicative activity involving ecolabelling of a local rice variety in Chongming-Dongtan not being needed, as the local name recognition has sufficient branding value; possible support to the Yellow River Delta NNR in their application to update from a nature reserve to national park; reed management guidelines in the Liaohe River Estuary demonstration area not being needed, as the producers are state-owned enterprises that have operated at the site prior to the establishment of the NNR, as well as good cooperation with the water resources agency on replenishment of freshwater to the wetland ecosystem. It would be advisable to develop a system of documenting the justification for such adaptive management measures.

There were some benefits to local women through specific activities implemented dedicatedly for women during the implementation of the project, such as training for women in Chongming Dongtan, Shanghai Municipal to produce reed shoes, as well as female patrols for the crane hired in Dashanbao NNR, Yunnan province. Those activities not only enhanced the professional knowledges for local women, but also expanded opportunities of alternative sources for promoting incomes. Women had high enthusiasm to continue those activities.

Tracking tools:

Project baseline METT scores for the protected areas at the four demonstration sites were made in 2019 and annexed to the Project Document. Mid-term assessments were made in 2023. The METT assessments were found to be prepared in detail, with helpful narrative comments for most entries in the scorecard.

3.3.5 Stakeholder Engagement and Partnerships

The project has done a good job at engaging stakeholders at the national level, particularly within the NFGA, and across the four demonstration sites. Arranging cross-learning exchanges among the demonstration sites has been particularly welcoming by the local NNR management and staff (good practice).

Commissioning project activities through competitive bidding, with more than 50 contracts initiated in the first half of the project, has resulted in the engagement of numerous institutes, NGOs and other service providers. The engagement of these partners with the demonstration sites has helped introduce emerging approaches and science-based approaches to the management of the reserves.

There has also been engagement of private sector companies, including contracted partners (e.g., the rice-crab farming pilot in the Liaohe River Estuary landscape) and cofinancing partners (e.g., NIO and BMW).

There is room for improvement in the engagement with production sector stakeholders, including agriculture, fisheries, tourism, insurance, energy, and infrastructure development.

3.3.6 Reporting

The quality of project reports was found to be high. The annual project implementation reports (PIRs) are detailed and progress and issues are reported with candor.

Based on review of PSC meeting minutes, project progress and important issues have been effectively communicated to the PSC members. The PSC meetings, however, have been convened in months preceding the June-September reporting period for the PIRs: May 2021, March 2022 and March 2023. It would seem more appropriate to hold the PSC meetings shortly after the PIRs are completed; convening virtual PSC meetings in addition to the annual meetings should also be considered.

3.3.7 Communications and Knowledge Management

Internal communication has been regular and effective. The PMO and UNDP Country and Regional Offices are in regular contact. The PMO provides frequent updates to the Project Director (AFIP) and entities within the NFGA. Communication between the PMO and the demonstration sites is also regular. The Project Manager, Chief Technical Advisor and PMO staff provide the sites with guidance remotely and through site visits.

The project has produced several knowledge products, supported environmental education and public awareness campaigns, participated in national and international seminars and conferences, including the 14th Conference of the Parties (COP 14) of the Ramsar Convention, and had extensive media coverage.

3.4 Sustainability

Sustainability is generally considered to be the likelihood of continued benefits after the GEF funding ends. Under GEF criteria each sustainability dimension is critical, i.e., the overall ranking cannot be higher than the lowest one among the four assessed risk dimensions.

Overall:
Likelihood that benefits will continue to be delivered after project closure: Likely

There are a number of factors enhancing the prospects that results achieved on the project will be sustained after GEF funding ceases. Overall, the likelihood that benefits will continue to be delivered after project closure is rated as **likely**. The following sections include considerations across the four sustainability risk dimensions, including financial, socioeconomic, institutional and governance, and environmental.

3.4.1 Financial Risks to Sustainability

Financial Risks:
Likelihood that benefits will continue to be delivered after project closure: Likely

With respect to the financial aspects, the Government of China has consistently invested heavily into conservation, albeit more for infrastructure than operation. Additional funding is likely in relation to the recently enacted Wetlands Conservation Act and the China Flyway Conservation and Restoration Action Plan.

A rating of **likely** is applied for this sustainability dimension.

3.4.2 Socioeconomic Risks to Sustainability

Socioeconomic Risks:
Likelihood that benefits will continue to be delivered after project closure: Likely

The focus on promoting improved practices and increased awareness in production landscapes outside the protected areas is an important contribution towards enhancing socioeconomic sustainability. Development of knowledge products and lessons learned, e.g., successful stories in waterbird protection in China, child-friendly picture books, and scientific research reports also are important contributions to the sustainability of the project results achieved.

A rating of **likely** is applied for this sustainability dimension.

3.4.3 Institutional Framework and Governance Risks to Sustainability

Institutional Framework and Governance Risks:
Likelihood that benefits will continue to be delivered after project closure: Likely

The Wetlands Conservation Act and the China Flyway Conservation and Restoration Action Plan strengthen institutional framework and governance of wetland conservation across China.

A rating of **likely** is applied for this sustainability dimension.

3.4.4 Environmental Risks to Sustainability

Risks:
Likelihood that benefits will continue to be delivered after project closure: Likely

The GEF funding is contributing to strengthened conservation and management of globally significant biodiversity. Significant improvements in the effectiveness of protected area management have been made.

There are also externalities that affect sustainability, e.g., unpredictable impacts of climate change. The proposed expansion of the protected areas within the EAAF is envisaged to address threats associated with climate change, e.g., enable migratory waterbirds to better adapt to climate change and variability.

A rating of **likely** is applied for this sustainability dimension.

4 Conclusions and Recommendations

4.1 Conclusions

The project has ramped up delivery over the past year following the phasing out of pandemic related restrictions on travel and physical gatherings. Some of the activities at the demonstration sites were hindered due to the pandemic related constraints. Notwithstanding these hindrances, the project has been successful in facilitating cooperation with governmental agencies, NGOs and private sector enterprises on advancing conservation of wetland ecosystems in key sites along the EAAF. The project should work on further optimizing the interventions at the demonstration sites.

Rated as a high-risk project in terms of social and environmental risks, the project is running without the safeguards instruments prescribed in the project design, namely the strategic environmental and social assessment (SESA), environmental and social impact assessment (ESIA) and environmental and social management framework (ESMF). While the project works on developing these instruments, there are advances being made to issues that would benefit from having appropriate safeguards in place. For instance, the SESA was meant to tie into the development of the NDRC-led Flyway Conservation Action Plan; the Yellow River Delta National Nature Reserve (NNR) has submitted an application to upgrade to a nation park, which would entail a 70,000-ha expansion of the protected area; land tenure issues and invasive species need to be considered in the development of the restoration plan for the Dashanbao NNR; and proper protocols are required for ensuring protection of personal data on the Flyway database that is being developed.

The project has an ambitious target of adding 200,000 ha of newly created protected areas (PA's) within the EAAF. With the massive increase in the PA system over the past 10-20 years in the country, this was a reasonably achievable metric at the project design phase. In recent years, however, it has become more and more difficult to establish new PA's, largely because of responsibilities devolved to local government units. Based on the 2023 project implementation report (PIR), which reflects progress through June, there has been no new PA's established to date. According to discussions during the MTR mission with provincial level officials, it is possible that the project has not fully captured PA expansion over the past few years, including with respect to the establishment of wetland parks.

The gap analysis on protection of wetland ecosystems provides an important scientific guidance for expanding the PA system, particularly within the EAAF; however, the analysis did not address climate change, one of the primary threats to waterbird habitat and migration patterns identified in the project design. The analysis also does not directly reflect key biodiversity areas (KBAs), which is the standard the GEF applies for funding newly created PA's.

Effective conservation of wetlands, the primary habitats within the EAAF, requires collaboration across sectors, including agriculture, fisheries, water resources, tourism, energy, development, etc. While the project aims to strengthening protection within and outside protected aeras, the primary partners at the demonstration sites are the PA management entities. The PA management entities do have some cooperative arrangements with other sectors, but affecting broad, sector-level adoption of various guidelines has proven to be a substantial challenge for the project, which is reflected in the progress reported on those indicators focused on improving practices outside PA's by key production sectors.

The project has engaged approximately 50 public sector institutes and non-governmental organizations in the execution of activities. Engagement of these partners has been made through competitive procurement processes, resulting in good value for money and recruitment of qualified service providers. In some cases, the timeframe allocated in the service contracts seems too short, not allowing sufficient time for completion of the tasks and limiting the interaction with the beneficiaries prior to handover. A few examples of such contracts include but are not limited to the development of the Flyway database, operationalization of the Yellow River Delta NNR database, estimation of greenhouse gas emission benefits, restoration planning at the Dashanbao NNR, and scaling up the migratory bird friendly rice-crab farming near the Liaohe River Estuary NNR.

The GEF financing has provided important added value to conservation and sustainable management of key habitats within the EAAF. However, the additionality of the GEF funding is unclear in some cases due to the high levels of parallel government funding, albeit which is primarily focused on infrastructure related investments. A couple examples include the ecological flow assessments at the Yellow River Delta NNR; the service provider conducting this work has provided long-standing technical assistance to the NNR. The restoration of the Saunders gull habitat at the Liaohe River Estuary NNR has deployed the same technique that the NNR made several years ago.

The EAAF extends across 18 countries, with many of the important sites located in China. The project is well positioned to strengthen regional collaboration and knowledge transfer. The project is collaborating with international non-governmental organizations, including Wetlands International, WWF, International Crane Foundation, as well as the EAAF Partnership; however, there is room for improvement in terms of facilitating South-South and North-South cooperation. Budget allocated in the project budget in the Project Document for international learning exchanges, for example, has not yet been utilized by midterm. The restrictions related to the COVD-19 pandemic is part of the reason for this. The administrative procedures associated with arranging international travel for Chinese officials are also a factor in this regard.

The project has made concerted efforts to ensure women participation in project activities, including trainings. There is room for improvement in the implementation of the gender action plan, including delivery of regular training for the gender focal points designated at the demonstration sites and monitoring and evaluating progress towards achievement of the gender mainstreaming indicators.

Good practices noted during the MTR include the following: convening PSC meetings at the location of the demonstration sites on a rotational basis; including the international NGO cofinancing partners as observers to the PSC meetings; initiating financial spot checks of the demonstration site partners; and arranging cross-learning exchanges among the demonstration sites. Meanwhile, the project mobilized various types of private sectors, NGOs and schools, to jointly implemented relevant activities, which disseminated a series of good practices, skills and modalities to relevant interested stakeholders through knowledge products developed under the project. The project also encouraged women to utilize available resources to seek alternative and waterbird-friendly manners to enhances incomes, such as reed shoes production, crane patrols, which improved their skills and extended their visions.

4.2 Recommendations

The MTR recommendations are presented below.

No.	Recommendation	Responsibility
1.	The project should complete the prescribed safeguards instruments, including the SESA, ESIA and ESMP without further delay and integrate these into the implementation of the project.	PMO, UNDP

No.	Recommendation	Responsibility
2.	The project should reassess the reported establishment of new protected areas within the EAAF, e.g., capturing wetland parks and other relevant PA's, and develop a system for obtaining regular updates from the EAAF provincial partners.	PMO
3.	As an addendum to the CAS gap analysis, the project should prepare a scientific expert opinion on how the gaps in wetland ecosystem protection would also address the threat of climate change on waterbird habitat, e.g., providing expanded coverage of protected areas would enable migratory waterbirds to better adapt to climate change and variability. The addendum should also describe how KBAs are reflected in the identified gaps of unprotected wetland ecosystems.	PMO, CAS
4.	The project should adjust and clarify some of the indicators and targets in the project results framework, as described below in **Table 3**. No changes to midterm targets are recommended, rather the focus is on achievement of the end targets by project closure.	PMO
5.	As an adaptive management measure, the project should deliver technical assistance to provincial forestry and grassland bureaus and/or nature reserve management entities on applying PA's for inclusion as approved EAAF sites. This activity should be made in collaboration with the EAAF Partnership.	PMO
6.	As an adaptive management measure, the project should provide technical assistance to an existing pilot implementation of an OECM or a newly initiated pilot of an OECM within the EAAF.	PMO
7.	The project should extend some of the ongoing contracts and ensure sufficient time is allocated in upcoming contracts in second half of project. Examples of ongoing contracts to consider extending include, but are not limited to, the following: development of the Flyway database; operationalization of the Yellow River Delta NNR database; estimation of greenhouse gas (GHG) mitigation benefits; restoration planning at the Dashanbao NNR; scaling up of the migratory bird friendly rice-crab farming in Liaohe River Estuary NNR.	PMO
8.	The project should systematically document adaptive management measures implemented, providing justification for changes from indicative activities in the project document and on the allocation of funds. Some examples of adaptive management measures noted by the MTR team include the following: challenges in implementing rotational grazing practices at the Dashanbao NNR due to complex land tenure issues; extensive progress and experience by the Chongming-Dongtan NNR on Spartina control and suggestion to allocate the GEF funding elsewhere; the indicative activity involving ecolabelling of a local rice variety in Chongming-Dongtan not being needed, as the local name recognition has sufficient branding value; possible support to the Yellow River Delta NNR in their application to update from a nature reserve to national park; reed management guidelines in the Liaohe River Estuary demonstration area not being needed, as the producers are state-owned enterprises that have operated at the site prior to the establishment of the NNR, as well as good cooperation with the water resources agency on replenishment of freshwater to the wetland ecosystem.	PMO
9.	The project should prepare and disseminate case studies, highlighting the additionality of the GEF funding for various activities implemented.	PMO
10.	The project should enhance stakeholder engagement, including (a) more proactive in engaging the agricultural sector, as many of the threats and potential conflicts involve agriculture and aquaculture practices, and (b) expanding collaboration with international NGO partners, facilitate increased cooperation across the EAAF, implement planned international learning exchanges.	PMO
11.	The project should strengthen technical assistance regarding the implementation and monitoring and evaluation of the gender action plan, e.g., delivering regular training to the gender focal points at the demonstration sites and identifying opportunities for enhancing gender equality and women's empowerment. The project should also regular monitor and evaluate the implementation of the gender action plan, reporting progress towards achievement of the gender mainstreaming targets in the annual PIR report.	PMO, gender specialists
12.	The project should ensure that proper protocols are in place to ensure safe operation of the Flyway database, particularly with respect to images and other information uploaded by the general public.	PMO, CAS

No.	Recommendation	Responsibility
13.	The project has an opportunity to collaborate with the GEF-7 project on "Transformational wildlife conservation management in China" (UNDP PIMS 6607), which has a strong focus on strengthen wildlife monitoring and decision-making technologies, including application of artificial intelligence (AI)-based processing of photographic images, to more efficiently process wildlife data collected from the field, development of data management applets for recording wildlife monitoring data, and introduction of blockchain-technology-based data management systems.	PMO
14.	The project has an opportunity to build capacity and promote use of the Ramsar Site Management Effectiveness Tracking Tool (R-METT), which was approved during the Ramsar COP 12 as a voluntary tool to support management and conservation of Ramsar sites. The R-METT is similar to the GEF-7 METT but it is more tailored to wetlands. The project should consider a specific capacity building focus on the use of R-METT by the four demonstration sites – this may lead to broader uptake across the Ramsar sites in China.	PMO
15.	The project should report co-financing mobilized during implementation, for example, but not limited to contributions from the Mangrove Conservation Foundation and the private sector companies BMW and NIO. Also, as a good practice, the project should request contracted service providers to indicate co-financing contributions in their proposals. Co-financing can be in the form of in-kind or grant/cash contributions.	PMO

Annex 1: Evaluation matrix

Evaluation theme	Questions	Sources	Methodology
Project Strategy			
Project Design:	To what extent is the project suited to local and national development priorities and policies?	National development strategies, sector plans, medium term development plan, project document	Desk review, interviews
Project Design:	To what extent is the project in line with GEF programming directions?	GEF focal area strategies, project design, PIR reports	Desk review, interviews
Project Design:	To what extent are the objectives and design of the project supporting environment and development priorities?	UNDP CPD, multilateral environmental agreements, etc.	Desk review, interviews
Project Design:	Does the project design remain relevant in generating global environmental benefits?	GEF strategies, national and subnational development plans, PIF, project document, CEO endorsement request, reviews, PIRs	Desk review, interviews
Results Framework:	Does the results framework fulfil SMART criteria and sufficiently captures the added value of the project?	Project results framework, tracking tools, inception report, PIRs	Desk review, interviews
Results Frameworks:	What changes could be made (if any) to the design of the project in order to improve the achievement of the project's expected results?	SMART analysis of results framework, current national and local development strategies	Desk review, interviews
Mainstreaming:	How are broader development objectives are represented in the project design?	Project document, social and environmental social screening procedure, gender action plan, work plans for community activities, training records, monitoring reports of community activities, project steering committee meeting minutes, stakeholder feedback during MTR mission	Desk review, interviews, field visits
Progress towards Results			
Progress towards Outcomes Analysis:	Has the project been effective in achieving the expected outcomes and objective?	PIRs, self-assessment reports by PMU, annual reports, monitoring reports, output level deliverables, midterm tracking tool, stakeholder feedback during MTR mission	Desk review, interviews, field visits
Progress towards results:	To what extent has the project increased institutional capacity to sustainably manage the project landscape?	Progress reports, national and local development strategies, capacity development scorecards, etc.	Desk review, interviews, field visits.
Progress towards results:	How has the project been able to influence monitoring and evaluation associated with biodiversity conservation and management?	Progress reports, national and local development strategies, budget allocations, increased level of awareness	Desk review, interviews, field visits
Risk management:	What were the risks involved and to what extent were they managed?	Project document, risk log, progress reports	Desk review, interviews, field visits
Lessons learned:	What lessons have been learned from the project regarding achievement of outcomes?	Progress reports, lessons learned reports, back-to-office reports	Desk review, interviews
Remaining Barriers to Achieving the Project Objective:	How are the project outputs addressing key barriers?	PIRs, annual reports, project steering committee meeting minutes, stakeholder feedback during MTR mission	Desk review, interviews, field visits
Project Implementation & Adaptive Management			
Management Arrangements, GEF Partner Agency:	How were lessons learned on other projects incorporated into project implementation?	PIRs, project steering committee meeting minutes, audit reports, feedback obtained during MTR mission	Desk review, interviews
Management Arrangements, Executing Agency/Implementing Partner:	How effective has adaptive management been, e.g., in response to recommendations raised by project steering committee?	PIRs, project steering committee meetings, feedback obtained during MTR mission	Desk reviews, interviews

Evaluation theme	Questions	Sources	Methodology
Work Planning:	Are milestones within annual work plans consistent with indicators in results framework?	Project document, multi-year work plan, annual work plans, PIRs, financial expenditure reports, feedback obtained during MTR mission	Desk review, interviews
Finance and Cofinance:	How efficient has financial delivery been?	Financial expenditure reports, combined delivery reports, audit reports, project steering committee meeting minutes, PIRs, midterm cofinancing report, feedback obtained during MTR mission	Desk review, interviews
Cost-effectiveness:	How cost-effective have the project interventions been?	Analysis of progress towards results, financial delivery	Desk review, interviews, field visits
Project-level Monitoring and Evaluation Systems:	How timely has implementation of adaptive management measures been?	PIRs, midterm tracking tools, monitoring reports, annual progress reports, self-assessment reports by PMU, project steering committee meeting minutes, feedback obtained during MTR mission	Desk review, interviews, field visits
Stakeholder Engagement:	How inclusive and proactive has stakeholder involvement been?	Stakeholder involvement plan in the project document, meeting minutes, records of exchange visits, stakeholder feedback obtained during MTR mission	Desk review, interviews, field visits
Grievance Redress:	How effectively has the project managed and responded to grievances？	Updated versions of the SESP, PIR reports, stakeholder meetings	Desk review, interviews, field visits
Partnership Arrangements:	How effective have partnership arrangements been?	Partnership agreements, contracts, project steering committee meeting minutes, progress reports, cofinancing realized	Desk review, interviews, field visits
Local Capacity Utilized:	Has the project efficiently utilized local capacity in implementation?	Contracts, financial expenditure records, progress reports	Desk review, interviews, field visits
Reporting:	Adaptive management measures implemented in response to recommendations recorded in PIRs.	PIRs, annual progress reports, midterm tracking tools, output level project deliverables, feedback obtained during MTR mission	Desk review, interviews
Communication:	Project information is effectively managed and disseminated.	Internet and social media, press releases, media reports, statistics on awareness campaigns, evidence of changes in behaviour, feedback obtained during MTR mission	Desk review, interviews, field visits
Sustainability			
Risk Management:	How timely has delivery of project outputs been?	Project document, risk logs, PIRs, project steering committee meeting minutes, feedback during MTR mission	Desk review, interviews
Lessons Learned:	What lessons can be drawn regarding sustainability of project results, and what changes could be made (if any) to the design of the project in order to improve sustainability of project results?	Progress reports, monitoring and evaluation reports, feedback from stakeholders, current national and local development strategies and sector plans	Desk review, interviews, field visits
Financial Risks to Sustainability:	How has the project addressed financial and economic sustainability? Are recurrent costs sustainable after project closure? What evidence is available that demonstrates budget allocations have been or will be made to sustain project results?	Budget allocations, progress reports, government publications	Desk review, interviews, field visits
Socioeconomic Risks to Sustainability:	What incentives are in place or under development to sustain socioeconomic benefits? What evidence is available that demonstrates capacities and resilience of local communities have been strengthened?	Project outputs realized, progress reports	Desk review, interviews, field visits

Evaluation theme	Questions	Sources	Methodology
Institutional Framework and Governance Risks to Sustainability:	How have management plans and other approaches promoted by the project been integrated into institutional frameworks? What is the operating status of multi-stakeholder governance platforms? What is the level of ownership of approaches promoted by the project? What policies are in place that enhance the likelihood that project results will be sustained?	Tracking tool, training records, evidence of policy reform, governance platform records	Desk review, interviews, field visits
Environmental Risks to Sustainability:	What evidence is available that demonstrate reduction of key threats to biodiversity and ecosystems? Have any new environmental threats emerged?	Tracking tool, budget allocations, training record, statistics on awareness campaigns	Desk review, interviews, field visits
Progress towards Impact			
Environmental stress reduction	What evidence is available that demonstrates progress towards environmental stress reduction?	Delivered outputs, progress reports, feedback from stakeholders, monitoring and evaluation reports	Desk review, interviews, field visits
Environmental status change	What evidence is available that demonstrates progress towards environmental status change?	Delivered outputs, progress reports, feedback from stakeholders, monitoring and evaluation reports	Desk review, interviews, field visits
Community well-being	What evidence is available that demonstrates progress towards improving community well-being?	Delivered outputs, progress reports, feedback from stakeholders, monitoring and evaluation reports	Desk review, interviews, field visits
Policies	What evidence is available that demonstrates progress towards changes in policies?	Delivered outputs, progress reports, feedback from stakeholders, monitoring and evaluation reports	Desk review, interviews, field visits
Governance mechanisms	What evidence is available that demonstrates progress towards changes in governance mechanisms?	Delivered outputs, progress reports, feedback from stakeholders, monitoring and evaluation reports	Desk review, interviews, field visits
Capacities	What evidence is available that demonstrates progress towards changes in capacities?	Delivered outputs, progress reports, feedback from stakeholders, monitoring and evaluation reports	Desk review, interviews, field visits
Unintended consequences	What unintended consequences have occurred? How to address those consequences to reduce the impact?	Delivered outputs, progress reports, feedback from stakeholders, monitoring and evaluation reports	Desk review, interviews, field visits

Annex 2: List of documents reviewed

1. Project Identification Form (PIF)
2. Project Document (including full set of annexes and tracking tools)
3. GEF CEO Endorsement Request (including comments-responses matrix)
4. Project inception report(s)
5. Updated versions of the UNDP Social and Environmental Screening Procedure (SESP), and the current versions of the Environmental and Social Management Plan (ESMP), Environmental and Social Impact Assessment (ESIA), Strategic Environmental and Social Assessment (SESA).
6. Annual work plans for each year of implementation
7. Annual financial project reports (combined delivery reports - CDR), broken down by components and project management
8. Cofinancing records
9. Project Implementation Reports (PIR's) for each year of project implementation
10. Quarterly Progress Reports (QPRs) and Annual Progress Reports (APRs)
11. Finalized GEF focal area Tracking Tools at CEO endorsement
12. GEF core indicator worksheet: baseline and midterm assessments
13. METT (baseline and midterm assessments)
14. Project deliverables (report, technical studies, etc.)
15. Project Steering Committee meetings minutes
16. Audit reports
17. Asset register
18. Communication products
19. Oversight mission reports
20. Monitoring reports by the project
21. UNDP China Country Programme Document
22. Knowledge, Attitudes and Practices (KAP) Baseline Survey Report
23. Tables of KAP mid-term survey results
24. Draft of Interim Measures for the Management of Payment and Utilization of Wetland Restoration Fees of China
25. Draft of Management Approach for Wetlands of International Importance - Beijing Forestry University
26. Dashanbao Wetlands of International Importance Restoration Program in Yunnan Province
27. Research report on the diagnosis of the ecosystem of Dashanbao and the selection of restoration options in Yunnan Province
28. Report on the assessment of pasture degradation in the Dashanbao Protected Area
29. Dashanbao Black-necked Crane National Nature Reserve Smart Construction Program in Yunnan Province
30. Research report on Gap Analysis of High Ecological Value Wetland Conservation and Recommendation of Conservation Pathways
31. Technical guidelines on Mangrove Monitoring
32. Technical regulation for assessing the effectiveness of mangrove ecological restoration
33. Guidelines for the preparation of a special plan for the conservation of mangrove wetlands
34. Assessment of the ecological status of important wetlands in the Yellow River Basin and recommendations for the protection
35. Report on the Assessment of the Ecological Characteristics and Ecosystem Service Value of the Liaohe Wetlands
36. Report on National Wetland Conservation Rate Measurement
37. Report on the proposed amendments to the Wetland Protection Act
38. Gap analysis report on the conservation of coastal and inland wetlands of high ecological value
39. Journal of the special issue on China's wetlands
40. Study on conservation and restoration models for small and micro-wetlands
41. Top 10 cases of waterbird conservation in China
42. Booklets of two stories: "The Little Crane Chongchong" and "Little Drops, Let's Go!"
43. Notice of the issuance of the Guidelines for Programming the Restoration of Critical Wetlands
44. Outcome Links of Wetlands Protection Act Interpretation Web Course Series
45. Presentations made by each demonstration site of the projects.

Annex 3: Summary of MTR mission

The MTR team conducted a field mission from 10-18 October 2023 to interview local stakeholders and beneficiaries and observe activities being implemented on the ground at the demonstration sites. Photographs taken during the mission are presented after this narrative summary, from the visits to the Dashanbao Nature Reserve in Yunnan Province, Chongming Dongtan Nature Reserve in the Shanghai Municipality, Yellow River Delta Nature Reserve in Shandong province, and Liaohe River Estuary Nature Reserve in Liaoning province.

Overall, each demonstration site attaches great importance to the protection of migratory bird habitats, and leaders of various provincial and municipal forestry and grassland management bureaus, as PSC members of the project, participate in coordinating specific work. The management departments of the local protected areas have set up project activity coordinators, responsible for the implementation, supervision, and progress feedback of various work to PMO. The project team communicates smoothly with each of the demonstration sites. The project has supported the purchase of small-scale field monitoring equipment, which has been welcomed by the local staff. The overall monitoring capacity and management level of each project site have been improved.

Significant progress has been made in various interventions at the demonstration sites, but at the same time, there also have been some changes planned during the second half of the project, as adaptive management measures to the indicative activities outlined in the Project Document.

The **Dashanbao Nature Reserve** in Yunnan Province is the only inland demonstration site among the four. This reserve is mainly protecting the black-necked crane(*Grus nigricollis*) as a migratory bird species. To provide sufficient winter food for the black-necked crane, the management department has mobilized local villagers to reserve some potatoes in the field during the potato harvest period, and hired villagers as crane guardians to improve the level of field monitoring. At the same time, these engagements have increased farmers' income, reduced women's labor, and has effectively alleviated the conflicts between villagers and the black-necked crane, and explored alternative livelihood models. The project has also strengthened the field monitoring data platform at the reserve. At present, the main risks faced by the Dashanbao Nature Reserve for the protection of black necked cranes are the invasive grass species leading to a decrease in the composition and quality of grasslands, as well as the erosion across the grassland ecosystem, reducing vegetation coverage, all of which could reduce food sources for black necked cranes. Livestock grazing is no longer the main threat factor to the integrity of the grasslands. For this reason, the project has proposed to revise the target under Indicator No. 10 in the project results framework (Threats to migratory waterbirds and other biodiversity reduced at project demonstration sites).

The **Chongming Dongtan Nature Reserve** in the Shanghai Municipality is a coastal wetland type demonstration site. The main threats are the invasive species (*Spartina alterniflora*), reduced upstream sediment transport, rising sea levels, and an increase in marine litter, which reduces the quality of bird habitats and poses a threat to migratory birds. The project has worked with the protected area in strengthening field monitoring, in collaboration with NGOs and private enterprises. During the project execution period, 1096 tons of marine litter were cleared, bird science popularization base exhibitions and infrastructure improvements were carried out, and village center renovation projects were carried out, creating conditions for the training and production of reed handicrafts and other promotional activities. Due to the high attention paid by the Shanghai Municipal Government to the management of *Spartina alterniflora*, special government funds have been allocated and local governance technical norms have been introduced. To improve the additionality and effectiveness of the use of funds for this project, the Chongming Dongtan Nature Reserve in Shanghai suggests adjusting the original work of management content of *Spartina alterniflora* to addressing threats related to marine litter and increasing wetland protection education and publicity, in order to raise public awareness. At the same time, regarding the local rice ecological labeling work mentioned in the original project activity, the Reserve Management Bureau believes that this is not in line with the actual situation and is prone to conflicts of interest with well-known local brands, making it difficult to achieve the end of target of the project Therefore, it is recommended to adjust the ecological labeling task to training course development to enhance professional skills.

The **Yellow River Delta Nature Reserve** in Shandong province is also a coastal wetland type demonstration site. One of the main focuses of the project is on improving the management capacity of the reserve. In addition to developing a management plan for the reserve, the project has supported ecological flow assessments and the associated adjustments to how the reserve is replenishing freshwater across the wetland ecosystem. The project has also support pilot interventions on innovative wetland restoration techniques, including microtopography for improved growth of Suaeda salsa in the tidal flats in the reserve. To enhance the management capacity of the reserve, considering that the Yellow River Delta Reserve is applying for a national park, it is recommended that the project support the process of upgrading to a national park. The exact type of support has not yet been worked out. Sponsoring an international learning exchange may be one option.

The **Liaohe River Estuary Nature Reserve** in Liaoning Province is a coastal wetland type demonstration site. Project activities have included: recruiting patrol personnel in surrounding communities in the reserve to enhance villagers' awareness of protection; collaborating with local primary schools to carry out thematic education and promotional activities, and develop textbooks on the protection of migratory bird habitats; supporting restoration of Saunders's gull habitat; cooperating with a local private sector crab breeding enterprise on implementing a waterbird friendly rice-crab farming pilot with different ratios of open water surfaces, and developing associated monitoring technical guidance. This rice-crab farming approach not only reduces the use of fertilizers and pesticides and protects the environment, but also enhances the economic benefits of local rice growers and provides a rich source of food for water birds. This has certain reference significance for exploring alternative livelihoods, promoting sustainable development models for water bird protection and economic development in the local area. It will be important to document the economic benefits of this hybrid approach, to better enable scaling up.

Three of the demonstration sites have also actively participated in the application for the World Migratory Bird Habitat UNESCO World Natural Heritage Site. The three reserves (Chongming Dongtan NNR, Yellow River Delta NNR, and Liaohe River Estuary NNR) are among 11 nature reserves applying to join two existing reserves, thus extending the geographic reach along the Yellow Sea-Bohai Gulf region. This highlights how the project achievements contribute to increased protection of migratory birds across this important region of the EAAF.

Dashanbao landscape, Yunnan Province

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<tr><td>  </td><td>  </td></tr>
<tr><td>Grassland erosion. 12 Oct 2023.
Photo taken by J. Lenoci</td><td>Vehicle purchased by the project. 11 Oct 2023.
Photo taken by Liu Shuo.</td></tr>
<tr><td>  </td><td>  </td></tr>
<tr><td>Interview with Dashanbao stakeholders. 11 Oct 2023.
Photo taken by J. Lenoci</td><td>Interview with crane guardian. 12 Oct 2023</td></tr>
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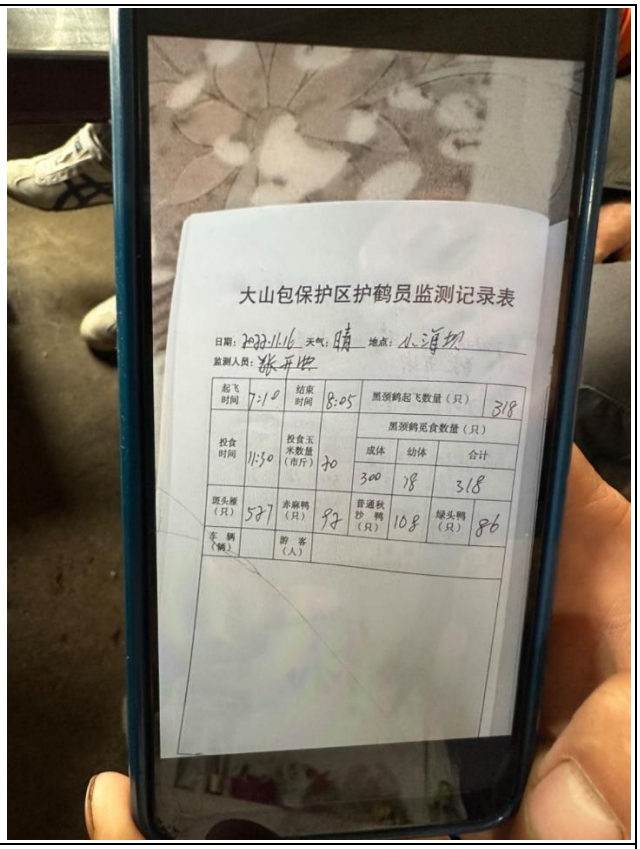
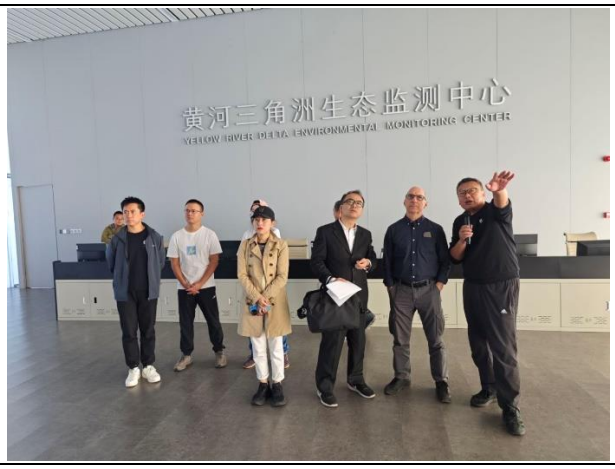
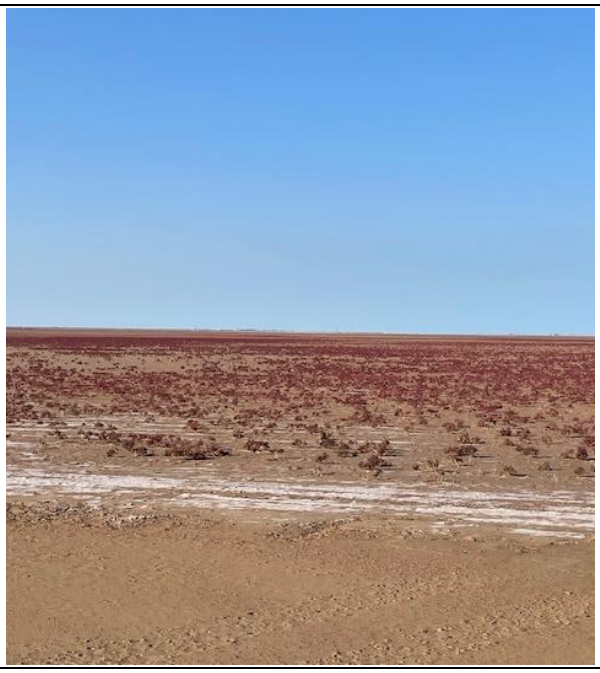
	
Rescued black-necked crane. 12 Oct 2023. Photo taken by J. Lenoci	Black-necked crane monitoring record. 12 Oct 2023 Photo taken by Liu Shuo.

<u>Chongming-Dongtan landscape, Shanghai Municipality</u>:

	
Tidal flat post Spartina restoration. 14 Oct 2023. Photo taken by J. Lenoci	Research facility at the nature reserve. 14 Oct 2023 Photo taken by Liu Shuo.

	
Interview with Shanghai stakeholders. 13 Oct 2023.	World Migratory Bird Day Celebration at the nature reserve. 14 Oct 2023. Photo taken by Liu Shuo.

Yellow River Delta NNR, Shandong Province

	
Interview with Yellow River stakeholders. 15 Oct 2023.	Visit to the Yellow River Delta NNR environmental monitoring center. 16 Oct 2023.
	
Microtopography restoration pilot site. 16 Oct 2023. Photo taken by J. Lenoci	River water pumps used to replenish coastal wetlands. 16 Oct 2023 Photo taken by J. Lenoci.

Liaohe River Estuary landscape, Liaoning Province:

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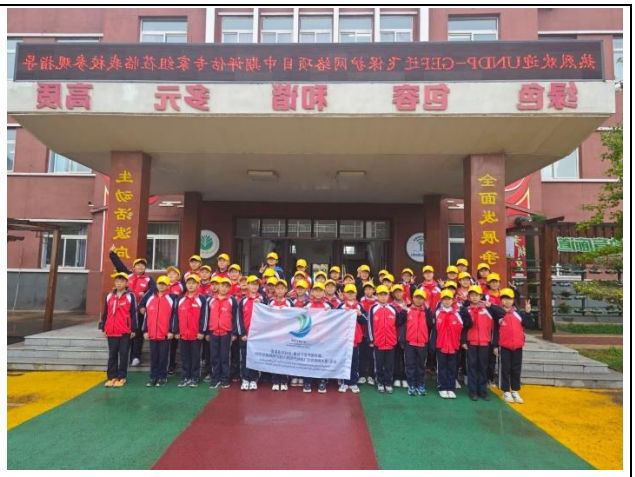
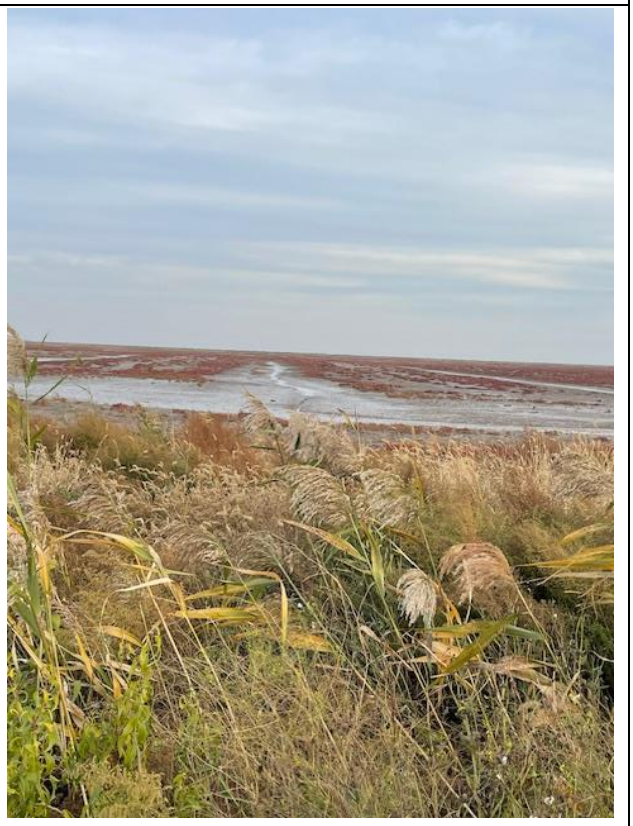
<tr><td>  </td><td>  </td></tr>
<tr><td>Interview with Liaohe River stakeholders.
17 Oct 2023.</td><td>Primary school students participating in environmental education.
18 Oct 2023. Photo taken by Liu Shuo.</td></tr>
<tr><td>  </td><td>  </td></tr>
<tr><td>Waterbird friendly rice-crab farming pilot site.
18 Oct 2023. Photo taken by J. Lenoci</td><td>Tidal flat restoration, former site of aquculture operations.
18 Oct 2023. Photo taken by J. Lenoci.</td></tr>
</table>

Annex 4: List of persons interviewed

Date	Crew	Gender	Organization	Title
8 October	Dong Zhi	Male	Wetland Division, National Forestry and Grassland Bureau of China,Beijing	Inspector II
	Zhou Rui	Male	Wetland Management Division, National Forestry and Grassland Bureau of China,Beijing	Research Officer II
	Zheng Sixian	Male	Wetlands International Division, State Forestry and Grassland Administration of China,Beijing	Research Officer IV
	Yuan Jun	Male	National Forestry and Grassland Administration Planning Institute of China,Beijing	Division chief
	Yu Xiubo	Male	Institute of Geography Sciences and Nature Resources Research, Chinese Academy of Sciences,Beijing	Researcher (Project Chief Technical Advisor (CTA))
	Zhang Mingxiang	Male	Beijing Forestry University,Beijing	Professor (Project National Policy and Legislation Expert)
9 October	Ma Chaode	Male	United Nations Development Programme China Office,Beijing	Program Director
	Zhao Xinhua	Female	United Nations Development Programme China Office,Beijing	Safe guard officer
	Xia Shaoxia	Female	Institute of Geography Sciences and Nature Resources Research, Chinese Academy of Sciences	Associate professor
	Yu Qian	Female	International Crane Foundation	Representative in China
	Zeng Qing	Female	East Asia-Australia Migratory Bird Migration Route Research Center, Beijing Forestry University, China	Coordinator
10 October	Zhang Yun	Male	Southwest Forestry University, Yunnan province	Professor
	Zhang yong	Male	Southwest Forestry University, Yunnan province	Associate professor
	Quan Haiyan	Female	Zai Di Nature Education Center, Yunnan province	Person in charge
11 October	Wu Heqi	Male	Kunming Institute of Zoology, Chinese Academy of Sciences, Yunnan province	Associate researcher
	Yu Maokun	Male	Yunnan Wetland Management Center	Director-General
	Geng Daifu	Male	Dashanbao Black-necked Crane National Nature Reserve Management Bureau, Yunnan province	Chief of Ecotourism Section
12 October	Huang Qin	Male	Dashanbao Black-necked Crane National Nature Reserve Management Bureau, Yunnan province	Director-General
	Pan Yukun	Male	Dashanbao Black-necked Crane National Nature Reserve Management Bureau, Yunnan province	Deputy Director-General（GEF Project Coordinator）
	Meng sha	Female	Dashanbao Black-necked Crane National Nature Reserve Management Bureau, Yunnan province	Staff member（Gender Focal Point for the GEF Project）
	Feng Biyan	Female	Farmer in the Dashanbao Reserve, Yunnan province	Patrol for crane
	Shao Congxue	Male	Farmer in the Dashanbao Reserve, Yunnan province	Patrol for crane
	Chen Guanghui	Female	Farmer in the Dashanbao Reserve, Yunnan province	Patrol for crane
13 October	Niu Dongliang	Male	Shanghai Chongming Dongtan National Nature Reserve Administration Center	Director-General（GEF Project Coordinator）

Date	Crew	Gender	Organization	Title
	Xie Mingyao	Female	Project Center of Eastern Sea of Alxa Society of Entrepreneurs & Ecology (SEE) Conservation Association	Regional representative
	Yao Wang	Male	Project Center of Eastern Sea of Alxa Society of Entrepreneurs & Ecology (SEE) Conservation Association	Regional representative
	Xie Da	Male	Shenzhen Mangrove Wetland Protection Foundation	Project manager
14 October	Gu Xiaojun	Male	Administration of Greening and Urban Landscape of Shanghai Municipal (Shanghai Forestry Bureau)	Deputy Director-General
	Liu Yuyi	Female	Administration of Greening and Urban Landscape of Shanghai Municipal (Shanghai Forestry Bureau)	Deputy Division Chief
	Shi Xuelian	Female	World Wildlife Fund	Project manager
	Shi Yi	Female	Shanghai Chongyun Culture Communication Co.	Person in charge
	Huang Peipei	Female	Shanghai Chongyun Culture Communication Co.	Partner
15 October	Liu Yunqiang	Male	Department of Natural Resources Forest and Grass Resources and Wetland Protection Supervision, Shandong Province	Division chief
	Liu Chang	Male	Beijing Information Science and Technology University	Professor
	Lv Juanzhang	Male	Yellow River Delta National Nature Reserve Management Committee, Shandong Province	Union President/Researcher
	Wang Andong	Male	Yellow River Delta National Nature Reserve Management Committee, Shandong Province	Senior engineer/Deputy director of Research Center (GEF Project Coordinator)
16 October	Duan Houlang	Male	Institute of Geographic Sciences and Natural Resources Research, Chinese Academy of Sciences	Associate professor
	Xie Tian	Male	Beijing Normal University	Associate professor
	Li Mingrui	Male	Yellow River Delta Bird Museum, Shandong Province	Director
	Yang Yuqing	Female	Yellow River Delta Bird Museum, Shandong Province	Docent
	Li Min	Female	Yellow River Delta Bird Museum, Shandong Province	Docent
	Yu Hailing	Female	Yellow River Delta National Nature Reserve scientific research center, Shandong Province	Senior engineer（Gender Focal Point for the GEF Project）
	Zhang Shuyan	Male	Yellow River Delta national nature reserve Yellow River estuary management station, Shandong Province	Vice stationmaster/Senior engineer
	Zhou Yingfeng	Male	Dawen Flow management station of Yellow River Delta National Nature Reserve, Shandong Province	Vice stationmaster
17 October	Zhang Muchun	Male	Forestry and Grassland Bureau, Liaoning Province	Researcher I
	Yang Chunming	Male	Wetland Management Center, Liaoning Province	Deputy director
	Zhang Hailai	Male	Panjin Forestry and wetland protection Administration, Liaoning Province	Deputy Director-General（GEF Project Coordinator）

Date	Crew	Gender	Organization	Title
	Liu Ye	Male	Panjin Forestry and wetland protection Administration, Liaoning Province	Section chief
	Sun Zhongzheng	Male	Panjin photosynthesis crab industry Co., Liaoning Province	Project leader, Development of Waterfowl Friendly Rice Farming Patterns
	Guo Li	Female	Panjin forestry and wetland protection and management center, Liaoning Province	Chief of Office
18 October	Huang Jie	Female	Forestry and wetland protection and management Center, Panjin City, Liaoning Province	Section Chief（Gender Focal Point for the GEF Project）
	Liu Zhi	Male	Xinglongtai No.1 Primary School	Principal
	Xia Qiu	Female	Xinglongtai No.1 Primary School	Teaching Director
	Wang Deyan	Female	Farmer near the Liaohe Natural Reserve, Liaoning Province	Participant of rice-crab field
	Che Rongrong	Female	Farmer near the Liaohe Natural Reserve, Liaoning Province	Participant of rice-crab field
	Chen Yanhong	Female	Farmer near the Liaohe Natural Reserve, Liaoning Province	Participant of rice-crab field
	Chen Yanfang	Female	Farmer near the Liaohe Natural Reserve, Liaoning Province	Participant of rice-crab field
	Wang Jinshuang	Male	Panjin forestry and wetland protection and management center	Station master
19 October	Hao Zhiming	Male	National Forestry and Grassland Administration Planning Institute	Project manager
	Zhang Xiaohong	Female	Wetlands International	Project manager
20 October	Sun Ying	Female	National Forestry and Grassland Administration Planning Institute	Project Finance Officer
26 October	Solene Le Doze	Female	UNDP Regional Bureau for Asia and the Pacific	Regional Technical Advisor

Annex 5: Progress towards results matrix

Indicator	Baseline	Midterm target	End of Project target	Midterm self-assessment (PIR 2023 entries)	MTR assessment
Objective: To secure the conservation of globally threatened migratory waterbirds through the establishment of a robust, resilient and well-managed network of protected wetlands across the East Asian Australasian Flyway (EAAF) in China					
Mandatory Indicator 1: Number of direct project beneficiaries (% women), consisting of: a) Targeted communities in demonstration landscapes / PAs: Liaohe River Estuary, Yellow River Delta, Chongming Dongtan & Dashanbao b) Central, provincial, local government and PA staff receiving training (GEF Core Indicator 11)	0 ha	a) 4,000 (50%) b) 250 (30%)	a) 8,000 (50%) b) 500 (30%)	Achieved Percentage to target: 100% a) Targeted communities in demonstration landscapes / PAs: 8,007 (52% women) From July 2022 to June 2023, 12 educational and community engagement activities were organized, and 1,710 (56% women) people benefited from those activities directly. The cumulated number: 6,297 (First PIR) 1,710 (Second PIR) Total: 8,007 (52%) b) Government and PA staff receiving training: 811 (32%) From July – Dec 2022, three training sessions were organized in demo nstration sites, covering bird & wetland monitoring and natural education. These sessions benefited 151 people (31% were female) In 2023, 7 training sessions were organized, benefiting 586 (31% women). Details are as follows: In Feb 2023, the Black-necked Crane training was organized in Dashanbao covering 49 people (13 women, 27%) In March 2023, a national wetland park construction and management training workshop was held in Hangzhou, reaching 133 persons (36 women, 27%). In May 2023, EAAF Waterbird in China monitoring and data management training workshop was organized in Liaohe River Estuary and Yellow River Delta, with 40 participants (8 women, 20%) In May 2023, a media training workshop and Natural Notebook campaign were held in the Yellow River Delta, reaching 99 people (49 women, 50%). In May 2023, training and capacity-building activities on Wetland Conservation Law at the provincial level were organized in the Yellow River Delta, with 123 participants (21 women, 17%). In June 2023, the Natural Notebook campaign was organized in Dashanbao, and 52 persons participated (26 women, 50%). In July 2023, the national training workshop on wetland conservation and restoration projects was organized in Beijing, benefiting 90 professional forestry personnel (31 women, 34%). The cumulated number: 74 (First PIR) 737 (Second PIR) Total: 811 (32%)	Achieved

Indicator	Baseline	Midterm target	End of Project target	Midterm self-assessment (PIR 2023 entries)	MTR assessment
Mandatory Indicator 2: Area of terrestrial protected areas (PAs) created or under improved management for conservation and sustainable use (ha): 1.1. Terrestrial PAs newly created for EAAF-China 1.2. Terrestrial PAs under improved management effectiveness (Yellow River Delta NNR, Dashanbao NNR) (GEF Core Indicator 1) See Annex 11B to ProDoc for baseline METTs.	0	1.1: 0 1.2: 172,200	1.1: 19,900 1.2: 172,200	On track Percentage to target: 40% Expected completion date: 2026 Area of terrestrial protected areas (PAs) created or under improved management for conservation and sustainable use (ha): 1.1 Area of terrestrial PAs newly created for EAAF-China: 0 Led by the project, the gap analysis of coastal and terrestrial wetland conservation in China was conducted, and conservation gaps and priorities were identified. According to the analysis results, there are 1,336 unprotected wetlands in China, within this, 112 wetlands of high ecological value take up 8.38% , with an area of 487,200 hectares, which accounts for 13.51% of the total area of unprotected wetlands. Those wetlands are all located in ecological corridors, most of which are important wintering, stopover, and breeding sites for waterbirds, adjacent to existing nature reserves with the potential of being integrated as protected areas. The research suggests protecting the wetlands through setting up ecological red lines, appointing important wetlands, strengthening patrol and management, and piloting the Other Effective Conservation Measures (OECM) model, the research results has been proposed to NFGA, and was used as basic information and evidence to further develop the “China Flyway Conservation and Restoration Action Plan (2023-2030)”, which was jointly incepted and developed with National Development and Reform Commission (NDRC) in 2023. 1.2 Area of terrestrial PAs under improved management effectiveness: 172,200 (Yellow River Delta NNR:153,000; Dashanbao NNR: 19,200) The management effectiveness in the Yellow River Delta NNR and Dashanbao NNR was improved, through technical support from one national and two provincial PA governance specialists, who contributed to the development of a PA Management Plan, thematic training sessions, and experience exchange activities, etc. The METT will be reviewed and updated before the MTR (Refer to Indicator 9).	Partially on target
Mandatory Indicator 3: Area of marine protected areas created or under improved management for conservation and sustainable use (ha): 2.1. Marine PAs newly created for EAAF-China 2.2. Marine PAs under improved management effectiveness (Liaohe River Estuary NNR & PNR, Chongming Dongtan NNR) (GEF Core Indicator 2) See Annex 11B to ProDoc for baseline METTs.	0	2.1: 0 2.2: 133,305	2.1: 185,074 2.2: 133,305	On track Percentage to target: 40% Expected completion date: 2026 Area of marine protected areas created or under improved management for conservation and sustainable use (ha): 2.1. Area of Marine PAs newly created for EAAF-China: 0 This Indicator corresponds to Indicator 2, Refer to the updates in above. Indicators 2&3 are same, only in different project sites.	Partially on target

Indicator	Baseline	Midterm target	End of Project target	Midterm self-assessment (PIR 2023 entries)	MTR assessment
				2.2. Area of marine PAs under improved management effectiveness: 133,305 (Liao River Estuary NNR & PNR: 109,150; Chongming Dongtan: 24,155) The management effectiveness in the Liaohe River Estuary NNR & PNR, Chongming Dongtan NNR was improved, through technical support from one national and two provincial PA governance specialists, who contributed to the development of a PA Management Plan, thematic training sessions, and experience exchange activities, etc. The METT will be reviewed and updated before the MTR (Refer to Indicator 9).	
Indicator 4: Local population status of targeted globally threatened migratory waterbird species at the pilot sites based on annual peak counts: 3) Liaohe River Estuary NR • Saunders Gull VU (Breeding) • Red-crowned Crane EN (Breeding, Stopover) • Siberian Crane CR (Stopover) • Far Eastern Curlew EN (Stopover) • Great Knot EN (Stopover) b) Yellow River Delta NR • Saunders Gull VU (Breeding) • Oriental Stork EN (Breeding) • Red-crowned Crane EN (Wintering) • Siberian Crane CR (Stopover) • Far Eastern Curlew EN (Stopover) • Great Knot EN (Stopover) c) Chongming Dongtan NR • Saunders Gull VU (Breeding) • Hooded Crane VU (Wintering) • Black-faced Spoonbill EN (Stopover) • Far Eastern Curlew EN (Stopover) • Great Knot EN (Stopover) d) Dashanbao Black-necked Crane NR • Black-necked Crane EN (Wintering)	Baseline year is 2018. 3) Liaohe River Estuary NR • Saunders Gull 10,823 • Red-crowned Crane 6/211 • Siberian Crane 110 • Far Eastern Curlew 21,880 • Great Knot 65,804 b) Yellow River Delta NR • Saunders Gull 3,866 • Oriental Stork 108 • Red-crowned Crane 52 • Siberian Crane 1,390 • Far Eastern Curlew 2,773 • Great Knot 2,721 c) Chongming Dongtan NR • Saunders Gull 116 • Hooded Crane 82 • Black-faced Spoonbill 54 • Far Eastern Curlew 8 • Great Knot 282 d) Dashanbao Black-necked Crane NR • Black-necked Crane 991	All Stable – as baseline or improved	All Stable – as baseline or improved	On track Percentage to target: 80% Expected completion date: 2026 Local population of targeted globally threatened migratory waterbird species in all four project site are stable, and some species, such as Saunders Gull in Liaohe River Estuary NR, Red-crowned Crane in Yellow River Delta and Far Eastern Curlew in Chongming Dongtan and Black-necked Crane in Dashanbao NR were increased significantly. Local population status of targeted globally threatened migratory waterbird species at the pilot sites based on annual peak counts: 3) Liaohe River Estuary NR • Saunders Gull 18,056 • Red-crowned Crane 588 • Siberian Crane 709 • Far Eastern Curlew 4,469 • Great Knot 52,400 b) Yellow River Delta NR • Saunders Gull 5,980 • Oriental Stork 497 • Red-crowned Crane 497 • Siberian Crane 562 • Far Eastern Curlew 7,098 • Great Knot 664 c) Chongming Dongtan NR • Saunders Gull 17 • Hooded Crane 92 • Black-faced Spoonbill 48 • Far Eastern Curlew 83 • Great Knot 4 d) Dashanbao Black-necked Crane NR • Black-necked Crane 1,926 (including 98 fledglings)	On target

Indicator	Baseline	Midterm target	End of Project target	Midterm self-assessment (PIR 2023 entries)	MTR assessment
				The waterbird monitoring specialist led the EAAF China Waterbird Monitoring Status Analysis, the 2022 monitoring report and 2023 monitoring protocol were completed in Dec 2022 and used as a guideline for further improvement of waterbird monitoring actions along EAAF-China. With the support of waterbird monitoring specialists, Liaohe River Estuary NR and Yellow River Delta NR have completed training in waterbird monitoring, and all four demonstration sites have organized synchronous surveys and various types of monitoring on indicator species, providing a reliable data source for this indicator. Notice: waterbirds, especially the waders, come in flocks and stay only a few days at the stopover wetlands. Therefore, it is possible that the synchronous surveys did not catch the large flocks, hence leading to the decrease in the counts of individuals.	
Outcome 1. Expanded and more representative PA system for migratory waterbird conservation with sustainable financing					
Indicator 5: Improved institutional capacity to administer the national and provincial PA System for migratory waterbird conservation and globally threatened species conservation, indicated by UNDP Capacity Development Scorecards (see Annex 19 for NFGA, and Annex 20 to the ProDoc for provincial/local agencies) for: a) Wetland Management Department of the National Forest and Grassland Administration (NFGA) b) Yunnan Forestry Bureau c) Zhaotong Forestry and Grassland Bureau, Yunnan d) Shanghai Forestry Bureau e) Shandong Department of Natural Resources f) Liaoning Forestry and Grassland Bureau	Baseline CD Scores a) NFGA: 55 b) Yunnan FB: 45 c) Zhaotong FGB: 47 d) Shanghai FB: 72 e) Shandong DNR: 53 f) Liaoning FGB: 51	Mid-term CD Scorecard targets a) NFGA: 70 b) Yunnan FB: 58 c) Zhaotong FGB: 59 d) Shanghai FB: 80 e) Shandong DNR: 60 f) Liaoning FGB: 59	End of Project CD Scorecard targets a) NFGA: 85 b) Yunnan FB: 73 c) Zhaotong FGB: 74 d) Shanghai FB: 89 e) Shandong DNR: 69 f) Liaoning FGB: 68	On track Percentage to target: 50% Assessed in 2023: a) NFGA: 72.5 b) Yunnan FB: 60.5 c) Zhaotong FGB: 62 d) Shanghai FB: 81 e) Shandong DNR: 64.5 f) Liaoning FGB: 64.5 The institutional capacity to administer the national and provincial PA System has been enhanced by project capacity-building efforts: 1) PMO has completed PA management capacity gap analysis and identified capacity-building priorities; 2) A training package is being developed which will be used as a guideline to build capacity on PA management in China.; 3) Until now, 811 persons (32% women) have benefited from project training sessions at different levels, which will contribute to improving the capacity development scorecards significantly. With support from the project capacity development specialist, the M&E Officer is tracking the process of the Capacity Development Scorecard, to ensure it is on track and measured before MTR.	On target
Indicator 6: Strengthened financial sustainability and resource allocation for the expanded national wetland PA system for migratory waterbird	The national wetland PA system is centrally financed with little	a) 10% increase over baseline Financial Scorecard score	a) 30% increase over baseline Financial Scorecard score	On track Percentage to target: 80%	On target

Indicator	Baseline	Midterm target	End of Project target	Midterm self-assessment (PIR 2023 entries)	MTR assessment
conservation based on the financial sustainability scorecard (Adapted GEF-6 Biodiversity-1 Tracking Tool, Part III – Annex 23B: a) Increase in Financial Scorecard score b) Decrease in wetland PA system financing gap (basic management)	diversification of funding sources. a) Baseline Financial Scorecard score of 36% b) Wetland PA system annual financing gap of USD 709,549,332 for basic management costs	b) Wetland PA system financing gap reduced by at least 10% over baseline	b) Wetland PA system financing gap reduced by at least 20% over baseline	Expected completion date: 2025 a) 12% increase over baseline Financial Scorecard score b) Wetland PA system financing gap reduced by 67.2% over the baseline One financial sustainability specialist has been recruited. A training session guideline for reviewing and updating the financial sustainability scorecard has been developed and a training session has been held. Consultations with PMO, NFGA, provincial forestry and grassland administrations, and cooperative partners have been held to collect data and review the status of each of the three levels on the investment and distribution of funding to wetland and waterbird conservation along EAAF. Through the above data collection, consultation, and discussion, the Financial Sustainability scorecard has been measured and rated. The results were summarized as below. 1) The financial sustainability scorecard increased by 12%, exceeding the Mid-term target by 10%. 2) The annual financing gap reduced by 67.2%, exceeding the Mid-term target by 10%. The successful achievement of the mid-term target was mainly due to the improvement of legal environment (especially The Wetland Conservation Law of the People's Republic of China enacted on December 24, 2021), financial regulations, regulatory, institutional arrangement, business planning, tools for cost-effective management for the financial sustainability of the wetland PA system in China and for revenue generation by wetland PAs since 2019, as well as the strengthened implementation of existing laws and regulations on wetland protection financing by the PAs.	
Outcome 2. Flyway wetland conservation advanced through strengthened legislation, planning and sector mainstreaming					
Indicator 7: Migratory waterbird conservation needs integrated in the 14th Five-Year Plan (FYP) for key sectors, including: Natural Resources, Agriculture and Rural Affairs, Water Resources	The National Wetland Conservation and Rehabilitation Systems Plan approved in 2016 provides a framework for mainstreaming wetland protection, and all 31 provinces have developed implementation plans accordingly. Under the Ministry of Land Resources' Wetland	Proposals for strengthened migratory waterbird conservation in line with the National Wetland Conservation and Rehabilitation Systems Plan submitted to responsible government agencies for inclusion in the upcoming 14th FYP	Standards for strengthened migratory waterbird conservation included in 14th FYP for key sectors	On track Percentage to target: 60% Expected completion date: 2026 The National Wetland Conservation Plan (2022-2030) has been issued by National Forestry and Grassland Administration and Ministry of Natural Resources on 13th Oct, 2022. The migratory waterbird conservation actions were integrated into the plan, with special emphasis on the importance of EAAF in the China's Coastal Zones protection and management. Moreover, the plan has strengthened the international cooperation involving wetlands such as the Global Environment Facility	Partially on target

Indicator	Baseline	Midterm target	End of Project target	Midterm self-assessment (PIR 2023 entries)	MTR assessment
	Land Use Classification (National Standard GB/T21010-2017), wetlands will be officially included in the third national land survey starting in 2019, enabling local govts to include wetland ecosystems in their redlining processes. (source: MSL TE Report).			(GEF) to provide replicable experience in wetland and biodiversity conservation for the rest of the world. Furthermore, the project has carried out a significant amount of work in promoting the mainstreaming of waterbird and wetland conservation in China, including the establishment of The China Flyway Conservation Network (CFCN) initiative, promotion of Wetland Conservation Law, development of The China Flyway Conservation and Restoration Action Plan (2023-2030) and development of provincial wetland conservation regulations. 1. The China Flyway Conservation Network (CFCN) has been established, and the technical task force with 21 expert members along EAAF was created to provide technical support for CFCNand guidance on waterbird and habitat conservation and restoration. 2. Under the leadership of National Development and Reform Commission (NDRC) and the support of NFGA , the project has started to draft The China Flyway Conservation and Restoration Action Plan (2023-2030). The formulation and future implementation of this policy is a significant milestone for the protection of waterbirds and their habitats in China. It shows that the Chinese government is leveraging flyway conservation to the legal management level, providing comprehensive and robust protection for waterbirds and their habitats. 3. The project has supported NFGA to develop three “Supporting Policies for the Wetland Conservation Law”, including “Guideline of Restoration Plan for Important Wetlands”, “Interim Measures for the Payment and Use of Wetland Restoration Fees” and “Guideline for Formulation of mangrove Wetlands Conservation Special Plans”. The development of above three guidelines has provided strong assurance for the effective implementation of Wetland Conservation Law. For instance, the Guideline of Restoration Plan for Important Wetlands has been issued on December 2, 2022 jointly by six ministries, including the National Forestry and Grassland Administration, the Ministry of Natural Resources, the Ministry of Ecology and Environment, Ministry of Housing and Urban-Rural Development, Ministry of Water Resources, and Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Affairs. 4. Ten well-designed online courses (over 60 mins) on the Wetland Conservation Law were completed and published on the WeChat account of China Forestry and Grassland Education and Training Network. It is recorded that on February 15, 2023, over 30,000 people have taken these online courses. It will help the public, especially the practitioners working in the forestry and grassland sectors, to learn and get a thorough understanding of the law.	

Indicator	Baseline	Midterm target	End of Project target	Midterm self-assessment (PIR 2023 entries)	MTR assessment
				5. With financial and technical support from the project, the Wetland Conservation Regulation and Wetland Bank pilot mechanism have been developed in Shanghai. 6. The drafted Guideline of Wetlands of International Importance Management was completed based on the situation analysis of protection & management of wetlands of international importance in China, desk review of international experience and best practices, on-site research, and call for inputs from responsible governmental departments and other key stakeholders. The guideline will help to regulate the management of wetlands of international importance in China and enhance China's ability to fulfill its obligations under the Ramsar Convention. 7. In the Yellow River Basin, situation analysis and conservation recommendations on the Ecological Status of Important Wetlands have been conducted and proposed to NFGA for policy advocacy.	
Indicator 8: Number of sector-based technical guidelines on sustainable use of wetland resources piloted in project landscapes	MSL National Wetland Project completed a Guideline on conducting fishing, aquaculture farming in wetland PAs and surrounding areas; and a Guideline on pollution control for lakes, rivers, pools and ponds in China (source – MSL TE Report). However, sector practices are largely uninformed regarding sustainable use of wetland resources and result in negative impacts for migratory waterbirds and other biodiversity	MSL national project guidelines reviewed and sector-based technical guidelines drafted through a stakeholder consultation process at pilot sites, and pilots initiated on: biodiversity friendly rice farming, reed farming, aquaculture / mariculture, capture fisheries, grazing of livestock, and ecological restoration of former oil production areas (6)	Piloting completed and evaluated and sector-based technical guidelines finalized for biodiversity-friendly rice farming, reed farming, aquaculture / mariculture, capture fisheries, and grazing of livestock, and ecological restoration of former oil production areas (6)	On track Percentage to target: 33% Expected completion date: 2025 2 of 6 sector-based technical guidelines have been drafted to date. Until now, the project has developed technical guidelines on “Protection and Restoration of Small and Micro Wetlands” and “Mangrove Ecological Restoration & Monitoring” . Two more technical guidelines are being developed, including: Grassland sustainable use guideline: The evaluation of the status of grasslands in Dashanbao has been completed and a restoration plan has been raised. A pilot restoration will start in Dashanbao and will be evaluated afterward, which will provide basic information and evidence for further development of grassland sustainable use guidelines. The pilot of the rotational grazing system in Dashanbao will be designed and monitored, providing another potential for guideline development. The waterbird-friendly rice farming project has been well developed in Liaohe river estuary PA, and the pilot project has been incepted, including the overall design, site selection, monitoring of waterbirds and benthos, monitoring, and evaluation. The pilot results will provide information for drafting the Guidelines for Waterbird-friendly Rice Farming. The project will also contribute to local economic development and women’s rights and well-being.	Partially on target
Outcome 3. Increased management effectiveness over 305,505 ha of wetland PAs (marine and terrestrial sites)					

Indicator	Baseline	Midterm target	End of Project target	Midterm self-assessment (PIR 2023 entries)	MTR assessment
Indicator 9: Increased management effectiveness of targeted PAs covering 52pprox.. 305,505 ha indicate "sound" management (as measured by the GEF Management Effectiveness Tracking Tool (METT) – see Annex 11A to ProDoc): a) Liaohe River Estuary NNR & PNR b) Yellow River Delta NNR c) Chongming Dongtan NNR d) Dashanbao Black-necked Crane NNR [Contributes towards GEF Core Indicators 1 and 2]	METT baseline scores: a) 49 b) 52 c) 61 d) 37	Mid-term target scores: a) 68 b) 67 c) 74 d) 64	METT target scores: a) 81 b) 78 c) 84 d) 76	On track Percentage to target: 55% Expected completion date: 2026 The METT results met the MTR target, as shown in below. a) Liaohe River Estuary NNR & PNR: 68 b) Yellow River Delta NNR: 69 c) Chongming Dongtan NNR: 77 d) Dashanbao Black-necked Crane NNR:64 With guidance of PA governance specialists and participation of stakeholders, the four project demonstration sites reviewed the management status and effectiveness, and completed the Management Effectiveness Tracking Tool (METT), the scores were addressed as above. To achieve this target, the four PA management plans were developed in Dec 2022. The plan summarized resource status, current problems, conservation needed, and prioritized management actions. Other key progress and achievements in four demonstration sites are summarized below: c) Liaohe River Estuary NNR & PNR: To strengthen the conservation and management of NR and the surrounding area, patrol officers were recruited to manage NR and prevent some improper and disturbing human activities during the waterbird breeding season. For example, flying drones are prohibited. The patrol activities have improved PA management. To strengthen natural education and awareness raising of waterbird and habitat conservation, PA has organized training activities on intangible cultural heritage paper-cutting, advocacy campaigns on Wetland Conservation Law, and RAMSAR COP14 . These communication activities have improved wetland and bird conservation and management for the public, schoolchildren, and community members. To conduct habitat management and restoration, a pilot project of water control and vegetation management of the breeding site of Saunders' Gull has been launched. With the technical support of local research institutions, the natural vegetation rehabilitation of the breeding site of Saunders' Gull was conducted in wintering season to improve habitat quality and benefit Saunders' Gull. In addition, technical pilots for the restoration and recreation of high-tide roost sites for shorebirds will be subcontracted. It will improve shorebird habitat quality and area and benefit waterbird habitat management. b) Yellow River Delta NNR:	On target

Indicator	Baseline	Midterm target	End of Project target	Midterm self-assessment (PIR 2023 entries)	MTR assessment
				The bird monitoring database has been developed, including the database, a mobile APP, and a WeChat Mini Program of the Digital Museum of Bird Species. The database restored 110,000+ bird records, covering 371 species in the NNR. The main function of the WeChat Mini Program of the Digital Museum of Bird Species is species introduction and intelligent interaction. To strengthen Crane habitat management, a Crane habitat-creating pilot project was launched. Till now, 100 ha terrain modification of crane habitat was completed and planted food Scirpus triqueter for the crane, and the successful experience will contribute to the NBS model and knowledge exchange. To strengthen natural education and awareness raising, two communication activities were held to celebrate World Wildlife Day, including Bird-loving Week inside and outside of PA. To strengthen the capacity of wetland conservation and management, a series of training workshops were organized. • Training workshop on waterbird and habitat survey along the Yellow River basin was organized in Aug 2022. • Training workshop on the "Wetland Conservation Law" was organized in May 2023 • A media training workshop on Migratory Flyways was organized in May 2023. • A training workshop on waterbird population survey and monitoring was organized in May 2023. c) Chongming Dongtan NNR: To strengthen wetland conservation and management, the project of course design for marine garbage cleaning and related practices was launched. Till now, 660 people participated in solid waste cleaning in May 2023, and accumulated 1090t solid waste was cleaned. In Dec 2022, the first community bird-watching campaign was organized in Chongming Dongtan, mobilizing 26 birdwatching organizations, with over 100 community members participating. Another community engagement action is to develop reed-related handicrafts. Currently, the program is running smoothly, with local women's participation and training for them. To build the PA as the EAAF training center, PA has engaged with WWF China to develop the training module and conduct the training session. Currently, two modules have been developed. To strengthen the bird and habitat monitoring capacity and build PA as the monitoring center in the Yangtze River Delta, PA has collaborated with Fudan University to develop the Yangtze River Delta bird monitoring protocol and conducted the simultaneous waterbird survey training in Dec 2022. D) Dashanbao NNR:	

Indicator	Baseline	Midterm target	End of Project target	Midterm self-assessment (PIR 2023 entries)	MTR assessment
				By June 2023, intelligent monitoring and management system has been completed, covering resource management and conservation, ecological monitoring, forest fire prevention, land management, and ecological restoration. This will benefit wetland sustainable management and waterbird monitoring. In Dashanbao, ecological restoration technical protocol for grassland degradation was drafted, and the pilot experience will be summarized, contributing to sustainable use of grassland in Dashanbao. Hydrology and water management assessment have been completed by Yunnan University, aimed to assess the water resources, water supply, and demand, and further provide wetland water management guidelines. Currently, the draft report and guidelines have been completed. To strengthen the Black-necked Crane Conservation Network in Yunnan, PMO worked with Yunnan Provincial Forestry and Grassland Administration, with technical support from Kunming Zoology Institute of CAS, and organized the technical training in Dashanbao in Feb 2023 . As required by Wetland Conservation Law, PMO supported Dashanabo to develop the internationally important wetland restoration plan. Currently, the plan has been drafted and will be used as guidance for wetland restoration and funding mobilization. To strengthen natural education and awareness raising, two natural education and training activities were held to celebrate World Wetland Day, so as to educate schoolchildren and community members and improve management effectiveness.	
Indicator 10: Threats to migratory waterbirds and other biodiversity reduced at project demonstration sites. (see Table A of METT forms in Annex 11A for details)	**LRE NNR/PNR** 1.Saunders Gull breeding habitat: 600 ha 2.Permitted presence of public on tidal flats in NR: 100 days/year **YRD NNR** 1.Area of Spartina: 4,000 ha 2.River water delivered to wetlands: 40,000,000 m3 **CD NNR** 1.Area of Spartina: 529.4 ha 2.Solid waste removed from tidal flats: 20t	**LRE NNR/PNR** 1.Saunders Gull breeding habitat: 700 ha 2.Permitted presence of public on tidal flats in NR: 80 days/year **YRD NNR** 1. Area of Spartina stabilized at: 4,000 ha 2.River water delivered to wetlands: 60,000,000 m3 **CD NNR** 1.Area of Spartina: 503 ha 2.Solid waste removed from tidal flats: 25t **DBNC NNR** 1.No. sheep in NNR: 35,000 2.Grassland condition in NNR: 40% cover and 20cm height	**LRE NNR/PNR** 1.Saunders Gull breeding habitat: 800 ha 2.Permitted presence of public on tidal flats in NR: 60 days/year **YRD NNR** 1. Area of Spartina stabilized at: 4,000 ha 2.River water delivered to wetlands: 80,000,000 m3 **CD NNR** 1.Area of Spartina: 477 ha 2.Solid waste removed from tidal flats: 30t **DBNC NNR** 1.No. sheep in NNR: 25,000 2.Grassland condition in NNR: 90% cover and 40cm height	On track (Partially Achieved) Percentage to target: 80% Expected completion date: 2024 Liaohe River Estuary (LRE) NNR/PNR: (Partially Achieved) 1. Saunders Gull breeding habitat: 900 ha 2. Permitted presence of public on tidal flats in NR: 80 days/year Yellow River Delta NNR (YRD) NNR: (Achieved) 1. Area of Spartina: 0 ha (Explanation: 8471 hectares were removed in 2021 and 2022, and Spartina will grow back with proper prevention methods) 2. River water delivered to wetlands: 175,000,000 m3 Chongming Dongtan (CD) NNR: (Achieved)	On target

Indicator	Baseline	Midterm target	End of Project target	Midterm self-assessment (PIR 2023 entries)	MTR assessment
	DBNC NNR 1.No. sheep in NNR: 50,000 2.Grassland condition in NNR: 0% cover and 0cm height			1. Area of Spartina: 79 ha 2. Solid waste removed from tidal flats: 1090 t Dashanbao (DBNC) NNR: (Partially Achieved) 1. No. sheep in NNR: 10,000 2. Grassland condition in NNR: 30% cover and 5cm height The above data came from each PA's monitoring report and other related documents.	
Indicator 11: Area of wetlands restored across the four project demonstration landscapes and other key EAAF wetland areas (ha): (GEF Core Indicator 3.4)	Annual national rate of wetland restoration is approximately 40,000 ha, to be increased under central government policy	20,000 ha	60,000 ha	On track Percentage to target: 50% Expected completion date: 2025 30,915 ha in 3 demonstration sites. YRD NNR: 28,481 ha (8,471 ha of wetlands were treated area of Spartina, and 20,010 ha of wetlands were restored with freshwater recharge). CD NNR: 1100 ha DBNC NNR: 1334 ha The above data came from PAs monitoring report and other related documents.	On target
Indicator 12: Greenhouse gas emissions mitigated as a result of wetland restoration across the four project demonstration landscapes and other key EAAF wetland areas (Expected tCO2e): (GEF Core Indicator 6.1)	0	1,650,000 (Direct)	16,999,522 tCO2e (direct) 38,248,924 tCO2e (indirect)	On track Percentage to target: 50% Expected completion date: 2025 Data will be measured, results will be available in December, 2023 before MTR. Impact assessment of EAAF key ecological restoration project on wetland carbon storage and carbon emission reduction has been kicked off. FAO EX-ACT Tool and other tools will be used and compared to carry out the impact assessment of ecological restoration projects on wetland carbon storage function, and to analyze the changes of wetland carbon sink. The assessment will propose ecological restoration models for the wetland carbon storage function.	Unable to assess
Outcome 4. Threats to migratory waterbirds arising from unsustainable land uses reduced over 600,000 ha					

Indicator	Baseline	Midterm target	End of Project target	Midterm self-assessment (PIR 2023 entries)	MTR assessment
Indicator 13: Area of land outside PAs under which procedures / guidelines for addressing human-waterbird conflict are applied	Human-waterbird conflict can be intense within and around wetland nature reserves, causing economic losses to farmers, fishermen and aquaculture businesses. Eco-compensation may be paid in such cases (eg at Dashanbao) but not always (eg around Yellow River Delta NNR). There is no overall systematic approach towards dealing with such conflict, although various local approaches are being applied.	Guidelines for addressing human-waterbird conflict drafted and pilots initiated to test conflict reduction over at least 20,000 ha in target landscapes	Piloting completed and evaluated and human-waterbird conflict guidelines finalized and adopted by local government for at least 20,000 ha in target landscapes	In progress Percentage to target: 20% Expected improving date: 2025 Two guidelines, including waterbird-friendly rice farming (pilot in 20 hectare, will replicate to 2,000 hectare) and sustainable use of grassland (2,000 hectare) for addressing human-waterbird conflict are being drafted now. Details are as below. The pilot project of waterbird-friendly rice farming in Liaohe River Estuary was launched, with the surrounding paddy field around Liaohe River Estuary as a demonstration site, aiming to reduce the impact of traditional agricultural production on migratory birds, and to draft technical guidelines for waterbird-friendly rice farming. It aims to prepare waterbird monitoring technical specifications, build waterbird-friendly rice and fish breeding fields, carry out waterbird-friendly investigation and monitoring, develop a waterbird-friendly green rice farming model, and to promote the sustainable livelihood of communities around the PA, so as to achieve a win-win situation between the protection of migratory waterbirds and the livelihoods of farmers around the reserve. Till now, the technical monitoring guideline for waterbirds has been completed. Waterbird population surveys in the experimental field have been conducted for three times, showing that the waterbird population is higher than that in the control paddy field. In Dashanbao, the ecological restoration technical protocol for grassland degradation was drafted, and innovative eco-compensation was explored. These results will be used as a basis to develop the sustainable use of black-necked cranes habitats, and address the human-Black necked Crane conflict.	Partially on target
Indicator 14: Area over which draft guidelines for sustainable use of flyway wetlands addressing biodiversity friendly rice farming, reed farming, aquaculture / mariculture, capture fisheries, and grazing of livestock have been applied outside the protected area system in order to reduce threats to migratory waterbirds	Examples of sustainable use of wetlands exist from previous projects including the GEF 5 Main Streams of Life Programme, but these have not been codified and upscaled over larger areas, and do not specifically target flyway wetlands of importance to migratory waterbirds	Guidelines drafted and tested across 200,000 ha of flyway wetlands outside the PA system	Guidelines applied to at least 600,000 ha of flyway wetlands outside the PA system	In progress Percentage to target: 20% Expected improving date: 2025 Refer to indicator 13 for more information. Currently, the guidelines related to aquaculture/mariculture, capture fisheries, and grazing of livestock are still being developed.	Not on target
Outcome 5. Strong public support for wetland and migratory bird conservation – as indicated by improvements in KAP surveys					

Indicator	Baseline	Midterm target	End of Project target	Midterm self-assessment (PIR 2023 entries)	MTR assessment
Indicator 15: Improved awareness of the value of biodiversity conservation among key target groups including: a) National government decision makers, b) provincial and local government agencies, and c) local communities at project sites, indicated by Knowledge, Attitude and Practices (KAP) surveys conducted at the start and end of the project using the methodology in Annex 24	Old: Baseline KAP status to be established in year 1 New: 65%	Old: Mid Term KAP Target to be established in year 1 New: 70%	Old: Project Completion KAP Target to be established in year 1 New: 75%	On track Percentage to target: 50% Expected completion date: 2026 KAP Scores will be measured, and results will be available in December, 2023. To understand the composition of birdwatchers in China, the project collaborated with the national NGO to conduct a survey on the number of birdwatching organizations and individuals in China. This survey aimed to provide a data foundation for the project's future actions on wetland and waterbird advocacy and education. Furthermore, from July 2022 to June 2023, 12 educational and community engagement activities were organized, and 1,710 (56% women) people benefited from those activities directly, including campaigns on loving birds in four demonstrations, education activities in schools. *In November 2023, the PMO provided the MTR team with the following midterm KAP survey results: The average midterm KAP survey results: 74% for project provinces and 61% for non-project provinces.	On target
Outcome 6. Effective sharing of knowledge supports learning across the project, China and EAAF Partnership					
Indicator 16: Standardized results from monitoring of migratory waterbird counts and wetland habitats available online for public access for EAAF China PA network sites	Waterbird and wetland habitat monitoring methods vary between sites and organizations, data are dispersed and not harmonized, and often difficult to access	Waterbird and wetland habitat monitoring and data sharing protocol developed and endorsed by NFGA for all EAAF PA network sites	Standardized results from migratory waterbird counts and wetland habitats available online for public access through a unified database and knowledge platform for migratory waterbirds and their habitats across the EAAF in China	On track Percentage to target: 50% Expected completion date: 2026 The standardization of monitoring and database system for waterbirds and their habitats along the EAAF in China project has been launched. The existing waterbird databases and waterbirds' survey or monitoring standards were reviewed, and the outline of waterbird survey and monitoring standards was preliminarily proposed. Photos and descriptions of more than 1300 species of waterbirds were collected. Information from 82 wetlands of international importance was collected and vectorized. The technical team has started to develop a database and the mobile phone smart application.	On target
Indicator 17: Number of project best practices and lessons documented and disseminated	0	7	15	On track Percentage to target: 40% Expected completion date: 2026	On target

Indicator	Baseline	Midterm target	End of Project target	Midterm self-assessment (PIR 2023 entries)	MTR assessment
				Until now, 6 project knowledge products have been developed and disseminated. With 4 of them delivered in this reporting period as below. 4. Project Annual Report 2022. The bilingual (Chinese and English) project annual report has been compiled by PMO with support from demonstration PAs, project specialists, NGO partners., etc.. Milestones, approaches, achievements, and strategic priorities were summarized in the report. 300 Chinese copies and 150 English copies were printed and disseminated, in addition to e-copies upon request. 2. In Ramsar COP14, PMO released a knowledge product of "Ten Successful Stories of Waterbird Protection in China." 5. Develop Child-friendly Picture Books on Plateau Wetland Education in the Yunnan Province. 4. A scientific research report for the Yellow River Delta PA has been developed.	

Annex 6: Cofinancing Table

Sources of Cofinancing[1]	Name of Cofinancer	Type of Cofinancing[2]	Investment Mobilized	Amount Confirmed at CEO Endorsement USD	Actual Amount Contributed at Stage of Midterm Review USD	Expected Amount by Project Closure[3] USD	Actual % of Expected Amount USD
Recipient Country Government	National Forest and Grassland Administration (NFGA)	In-kind	Recurrent expenditures	$4,680,000	$15,074,100	$4,680,000	3.22
		Grant	Investment mobilized	$65,320,000	$17,865,900	$65,320,000	0.27
Civil Society Organization	EAAF Partnership	In-kind	Recurrent expenditures	$3,000,000	$1,678,000	$3,000,000	0.56
Civil Society Organization	WWF	In-kind	Investment mobilized	$5,000,000	$3,000,000	$5,000,000	0.60
Civil Society Organization	International Crane Foundation	Grant	Investment mobilized	$1,000,000	$325,000	$1,000,000	0.33
		In-kind	Recurrent expenditures	$500,000	$1,144,000	$500,000	2.29
Civil Society Organization	Wetlands International[4]	In-kind	Investment mobilized	$1,544,532	$240,455	$1,544,532	0.15
Civil Society Organization	SEE Foundation	Grant	Investment mobilized	$5,800,000	$2,639,871	$5,800,000	0.46
GEF Agency	UNDP	In-kind	Recurrent expenditures	$200,000	$100,000	$200,000	0.50
Total				**$87,054,532**	**$42,067,326**	**$87,054,532**	**48%**

Notes:

1. Sources of Co-financing may include: Bilateral Aid Agency(ies), Foundation, GEF Partner Agency, Local Government, National Government, Civil Society Organization, Other Multi-lateral Agency(ies), Private Sector, Other
2. Type of Co-financing may include: Grant, Soft Loan, Hard Loan, Guarantee, In-Kind, Other
3. Expected amount by project closure includes actual materialized by midterm and expected cofinancing during the second half of the project.
4. Contribution from Wetlands International indicated in ProDoc reported as "1,400,000 Euros at UN official exchange rate as of 15 October 2019: 1 USD = 0.865 EUR

Annex 7: Rating Scales

Ratings for progress towards results:

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

Ratings for project implementation and adaptive management:

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

Ratings for sustainability (one overall rating):

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

Annex 8: Signed UNEG Code of Conduct Agreement Form

Evaluators:

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

<table>
<tr><td colspan="2">MTR Consultant Agreement Form

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

Name of Consultants: James Lenoci, Dr. Liu Shuo

We confirm that we have received and understood and will abide by the United Nations Code of Conduct for Evaluation.</td></tr>
<tr><td colspan="2">Signed on 25 September 2023</td></tr>
<tr><td> 
James Lenoci
International Consultant / Lead Midterm Reviewer</td><td> 
Dr. Liu Shuo
National Consultant</td></tr>
</table>

Annex 9: MTR Terms of Reference

Terms of Reference for ICs and RLAs through /GPN ExpRes

Services/Work Description:

In accordance with UNDP and GEF M&E policies and procedures, all full- and medium-sized UNDP-supported GEF-financed projects are required to undergo a Mid-term Review (MTR) in the middle of the project. This Terms of Reference (ToR) sets out the **expectations for the international MTR consultant** of the Strengthening the Protected Area Network for Migratory Bird Conservation Along the East Asian - Australasian Flyway (EAAF) in China Project.

The MTR will assess progress towards the achievement of the project objectives and outcomes as specified in the Project Document, and assess early signs of project success or failure with the goal of identifying the necessary changes to be made in order to set the project on-track to achieve its intended results. The MTR will also review the project's strategy and its risks to sustainability. The MTR process must follow the guidance outlined in the document. (here)

A team of two independent consultants will conduct the MTR - One international team leader (with experience and exposure to projects and evaluations in other regions globally) and One national consultant from China. **The team leader will be responsible for the overall design and writing of the MTR report.**

Project/Programme Title:

Strengthening the Protected Area Network for Migratory Bird Conservation Along the East Asian - Australasian Flyway (EAAF) in China Project

Consultancy Title: International Mid-term Review Consultant

Duty Station: The evaluation consultants are expected to conduct field missions in all project pilot sites, including Liaohe River Estuary National and Provincial Nature Reserve in Panjin City, Liaoning Province, Yellow River Delta National Nature Reserve in Dongying City, Shandong Province, Chongming Dongtan Birds National Nature Reserve in Shanghai City, Dashanbao Black-necked Crane National Nature Reserve in Zhaotong City, Yunnan Province, as well as Beijing and Kunming city (the specific project sites may be adjusted based on the finalized mission agenda).

Duration: About four months (mid-August to end of December)

Expected contract duration: 15 August 2023 – 31 December 2023

1. BACKGROUND

1. INTRODUCTION

This is the Terms of Reference (ToR) for -the Midterm Review (MTR) of the full-sized UNDP-supported GEF-financed project titled Strengthening the Protected Area Network for Migratory Bird Conservation Along the East Asian - Australasian Flyway (EAAF) in China (PIMS 6110) implemented through the National Forestry and Grassland Administration (NFGA), which is to be undertaken in late 2023. The project started on 26 January 2021 and is in its third year of implementation. This ToR sets out the expectations for this MTR. The MTR process must follow the guidance outlined in the document (here)

2. PROJECT BACKGROUND INFORMATION

The Flyway Project is implemented by the National Forestry and Grassland Administration with the United Nations Development Programme as the international implementing agency, and the project period is six years.

China constitutes a major portion of the globally significant East Asian-Australasian Flyway (EAAF) -one of the world's nine great migratory flyways and the one involving the most endangered species. However, land reclamation and infrastructure development are leading to the sharp reduction in the area of coastal wetlands in China. While the government has made significant efforts to reduce threats to wetland biodiversity including migratory waterbirds, these efforts have been impeded by a number of barriers, including absence of a strategic approach towards migratory waterbird conservation, limited integration of flyway wetland conservation priorities into the policies, and lack of awareness of the value of wetland ecosystem services and management needs.

Thus, the project aims to secure the conservation of globally significant migratory waterbirds through the establishment of a robust, resilient and well - managed network of protected wetlands across the East Asian - Australasian Flyway (EAAF) in China.

The project includes 3 components:
(1) Flyway PA network planning, expansion, financial sustainability and mainstreaming;
(2) Site-based demonstrations of adaptive habitat management and rehabilitation for migratory waterbird conservation,
(3) Knowledge management, awareness, gender mainstreaming and M&E. The project selects four pilot sites, including Liao River Estuary Landscape, Yellow River Delta Landscape, Chongming Dongtan Landscape and Local Site Network, and Dashanbao Landscape and Local Site Network. The results of these pilot interventions will be documented and inform the development of national technical guidelines on wetland sustainable use and management.

The total cost of the project is $95,986,952, including a GEF grant of $8,932,420 and co-financing of $87,054,532.

3. MTR PURPOSE

The MTR will assess progress towards the achievement of the project objectives and outcomes as specified in the Project Document, and assess early signs of project success or failure with the goal of identifying the necessary changes to be made in order to set the project on-track to achieve its intended results. The MTR will also review the project's strategy and its risks to sustainability.

4. MTR APPROACH & METHODOLOGY

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

The MTR team will review all relevant sources of information including documents prepared during the preparation phase (i.e. PIF, UNDP Initiation Plan, UNDP Social and Environmental Screening Procedure/SESP), the Project Document, project reports including annual PIRs, project budget revisions, national strategic and legal documents, and any other materials that the team considers useful for this evidence-based review. The MTR team will review the

baseline GEF focal area Core Indicators submitted to the GEF at CEO endorsement, and the midterm GEF focal area Core Indicators that must be completed before the MTR field mission begins.
The MTR team is expected to follow a collaborative and participatory approach[1] ensuring close engagement with the Project Team, government counterparts (the GEF Operational Focal Point), the UNDP Country Office(s), the Nature, Climate and Energy (NCE) Regional Technical Advisor, direct beneficiaries, and other key stakeholders.
Engagement of stakeholders is vital to a successful MTR. Stakeholder involvement should include interviews with stakeholders who have project responsibilities, including but not limited to the National Forestry and Grassland Administration (NFGA), Provincial Department of Finance, member agencies of Project Board/PSC, senior officials and task team/ component leaders, key experts and consultants in the subject area, project beneficiaries, academia, local government and CSOs, etc. Additionally, the evaluation consultants are expected to conduct field missions in all project pilot sites, including Liaohe River Estuary National and Provincial Nature Reserve in Panjin City, Liaoning Province, Yellow River Delta National Nature Reserve in Dongying City, Shandong Province, Chongming Dongtan Birds National Nature Reserve in Shanghai City, Dashanbao Black-necked Crane National Nature Reserve in Zhaotong City, Yunnan Province, as well as Beijing and Kunming city (the specific project sites may be adjusted based on the finalized mission agenda).

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

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

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

2. SCOPE OF WORK, RESPONSIBILITIES AND DESCRIPTION OF THE PROPOSED WORK

5. DETAILED SCOPE OF THE MTR

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

i. Project Strategy

Project design:

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

- Review the problem addressed by the project and the underlying assumptions. Review the effect of any incorrect assumptions or changes to the context to achieving the project results as outlined in the Project Document.
- Review the relevance of the project strategy and assess whether it provides the most effective route towards expected/intended results. Were lessons from other relevant projects properly incorporated into the project design?
- Review how the project addresses country priorities. Review country ownership. Was the project concept in line with the national sector development priorities and plans of the country (or of participating countries in the case of multi-country projects)?
- Review decision-making processes: were perspectives of those who would be affected by project decisions, those who could affect the outcomes, and those who could contribute information or other resources to the process, taken into account during project design processes?
- Review the extent to which relevant gender issues were raised in the project design. See Annex 9 of *Guidance For Conducting Midterm Reviews of UNDP-Supported, GEF-Financed Projects* for further guidelines.
    - Were relevant gender issues (e.g. the impact of the project on gender equality in the programme country, involvement of women's groups, engaging women in project activities) raised in the Project Document?
- If there are major areas of concern, recommend areas for improvement.

Results Framework/Logframe:

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

ii. Progress Towards Results

Progress Towards Outcomes Analysis:

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

Table. Progress Towards Results Matrix (Achievement of outcomes against End-of-project Targets)

Project Strategy	Indicator[2]	Baseline Level[3]	Level in 1st PIR (self-reported)	Midterm Target[4]	End-of-project Target	Midterm Level & Assessment[5]	Achievement Rating[6]
Objective:	Indicator (if applicable):						
Outcome 1:	Indicator 1:						
	Indicator 2:						
Outcome 2:	Indicator 3:						
	Indicator 4:						
	Etc.						
Etc.							

Indicator Assessment Key

Green= Achieved	Yellow= On target to be achieved	Red= Not on target to be achieved

In addition to the progress towards outcomes analysis:

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

iii. Project Implementation and Adaptive Management

Management Arrangements:

- Review overall effectiveness of project management as outlined in the Project Document. Have changes been made and are they effective? Are responsibilities and reporting lines clear? Is decision-making transparent and undertaken in a timely manner? Recommend areas for improvement.
- Review the quality of execution of the Executing Agency/Implementing Partner(s) and recommend areas for improvement.
- Review the quality of support provided by the GEF Partner Agency (UNDP) and recommend areas for improvement.

Work Planning:

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

Finance and co-finance:

- Consider the financial management of the project, with specific reference to the cost-effectiveness of interventions.
- Review the changes to fund allocations as a result of budget revisions and assess the appropriateness and relevance of such revisions.

[2] Populate with data from the Logframe and scorecards
[3] Populate with data from the Project Document

- Does the project have the appropriate financial controls, including reporting and planning, that allow management to make informed decisions regarding the budget and allow for timely flow of funds?
- Informed by the co-financing monitoring table to be filled out by the Commissioning Unit and project team, provide commentary on co-financing: is co-financing being used strategically to help the objectives of the project? Is the Project Team meeting with all co-financing partners regularly in order to align financing priorities and annual work plans?

Sources of Co-financing	Name of Co-financer	Type of Co-financing	Co-financing amount confirmed at CEO Endorsement (US$)	Actual Amount Contributed at stage of Midterm Review (US$)	Actual % of Expected Amount
		TOTAL			

- Include the separate GEF Co-Financing template (filled out by the Commissioning Unit and project team) which categorizes each co-financing amount as 'investment mobilized' or 'recurrent expenditures'. If the team is unable to access the Co-financing Template on the PIMS website, UNDP CO will share this template with the team.

Project-level Monitoring and Evaluation Systems:

- Review the monitoring tools currently being used: Do they provide the necessary information? Do they involve key partners? Are they aligned or mainstreamed with national systems? Do they use existing information? Are they efficient? Are they cost-effective? Are additional tools required? How could they be made more participatory and inclusive?
- Examine the financial management of the project monitoring and evaluation budget. Are sufficient resources being allocated to monitoring and evaluation? Are these resources being allocated effectively?

Stakeholder Engagement:

- Project management: Has the project developed and leveraged the necessary and appropriate partnerships with direct and tangential stakeholders?
- Participation and country-driven processes: Do local and national government stakeholders support the objectives of the project? Do they continue to have an active role in project decision-making that supports efficient and effective project implementation?
  Participation and public awareness: To what extent has stakeholder involvement and public awareness contributed to the progress towards achievement of project objectives?

Social and Environmental Standards (Safeguards)

- Validate the risks identified in the project's most current SESP, and those risks' ratings; are any revisions needed?

[4] If available
[5] Colour code this column only
[6] Use the 6 point Progress Towards Results Rating Scale: HS, S, MS, MU, U, HU

- Summarize and assess the revisions made since CEO Endorsement/Approval (if any) to:
  - The project's overall safeguards risk categorization.
  - The identified types of risks[7] (in the SESP).
  - The individual risk ratings (in the SESP) .
- Describe and assess progress made in the implementation of the project's social and environmental management measures as outlined in the SESP submitted at CEO Endorsement/Approval (and prepared during implementation, if any), including any revisions to those measures. Such management measures might include Environmental and Social Management Plans (ESMPs) or other management plans, though can also include aspects of a project's design; refer to Question 6 in the SESP template for a summary of the identified management measures.

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

Reporting:

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

Communications & Knowledge Management:

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

Gender

- Do the Executing Agency/Implementing Partner and/or UNDP and other partners have the capacity to deliver benefits to or involve women? If yes, how?
- What is the gender balance of project staff? What steps have been taken to ensure gender balance in project staff?
- What is the gender balance of the Project Board? What steps have been taken to ensure gender balance in the Project Board?

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

- Review the extent to which relevant gender issues were incorporated in monitoring systems. See Annex 9 of *Guidance For Conducting Midterm Reviews of UNDP-Supported, GEF-Financed Projects* for further guidelines.
- How does the project engage women and girls? Is the project likely to have the same positive and/or negative effects on women and men, girls and boys? Identify, if possible, legal, cultural, or religious constraints on women's participation in the project. What can the project do to enhance its gender benefits?

iv. Sustainability

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

Financial risks to sustainability:

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

Socio-economic risks to sustainability:

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

Institutional Framework and Governance risks to sustainability:

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

Environmental risks to sustainability:

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

Conclusions & Recommendations

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

Additionally, the MTR consultant/team is expected to make recommendations to the Project Team. Recommendations should be succinct suggestions for critical intervention that are specific, measurable, achievable, and relevant. A recommendation table should be put in the report's executive summary. See the *Guidance For Conducting Midterm Reviews of UNDP-Supported, GEF-Financed Projects* for guidance on a recommendation table.

The MTR team should make no more than 15 recommendations total.

Ratings

The MTR team will include its ratings of the project's results and brief descriptions of the associated achievements in a *MTR Ratings & Achievement Summary Table* in the Executive Summary of the MTR report. See Annex E for ratings scales. No rating on Project Strategy and no overall project rating is required.

Table. MTR Ratings & Achievement Summary Table for the Flyway Project

Measure	MTR Rating	Achievement Description
Project Strategy	N/A	
Progress Towards Results	Objective Achievement Rating: (rate 6 pt. scale)	
	Outcome 1 Achievement Rating: (rate 6 pt. scale)	
	Outcome 2 Achievement Rating: (rate 6 pt. scale)	
	Outcome 3 Achievement Rating: (rate 6 pt. scale)	
	Etc.	
Project Implementation & Adaptive Management	(rate 6 pt. scale)	
Sustainability	(rate 4 pt. scale)	

3. Expected Outputs and deliverables

6. TIMEFRAME

The total duration of the MTR will be **30** working days over a time period of about 4 months, and shall not exceed five months from when the consultant(s) are hired. The tentative MTR timeframe is as follows:

ACTIVITY	NUMBER OF WORKING DAYS	COMPLETIO DATE[8]
Document review and preparing MTR Inception Report (MTR Inception Report due no later than 2 weeks before the MTR mission)	*4 days*	August 15-September 27, 2023
Finalization of MTR Inception Report with comments incorporated		
MTR mission: stakeholder meetings, interviews, field visits	*13 days*	October 8-October 20, 202

[8] The numbers of working days are the actual working days, and the completion period is only indicative working period.

Presentation of initial findings- last day of the MTR mission	*1 day*	October 26, 2023
Preparing draft report (due within 3 weeks of the MTR mission)	*7 days*	October 27-November 10, 2023
Finalization of MTR report/ Incorporating audit trail from feedback on draft report (due within 1 week of receiving UNDP comments on the draft)	*5 days*	November 11 - December 15, 2023

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

7. MIDTERM REVIEW DELIVERABLES

#	Deliverable	Description	Timing	Responsibilities
1	**MTR Inception Report**	MTR team clarifies objectives and methods of Midterm Review	No later than 2 weeks before the MTR mission, due date: Sep. 27, 2023	MTR team submits to the Commissioning Unit and project management
2	**Presentation**	Initial Findings	End of MTR mission, due date: Oct. 26, 2023	MTR Team presents to project management and the Commissioning Unit
3	**Draft MTR Report**	Full draft report (using guidelines on content outlined in Annex B) with annexes	Within 3 weeks of the MTR mission, due date: Nov. 9, 2023	Sent to the Commissioning Unit, reviewed by RTA, Project Coordinating Unit, GEF OFP
4	**Final Report***	Revised report with audit trail detailing how all received comments have (and have not) been addressed in the final MTR report	Within 1 week of receiving UNDP comments on draft, due date: Dec. 1, 2023	Sent to the Commissioning Unit

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

4. Institutional arrangements/reporting lines

8. MTR ARRANGEMENTS

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

The Commissioning Unit will contract the consultants and ensure the timely provision of per diems and travel arrangements within China for the MTR team and will provide an updated stakeholder list with contact details (phone and email). The Project Team will be responsible for liaising with the MTR team to provide all relevant documents, set up stakeholder interviews, and arrange field visits.

If a data collection/field mission is not possible then remote interviews may be undertaken through telephone or online (Skype, Zoom etc.). International consultant can work remotely

with national consultant support in the field if it is not safe for them to operate and travel. No stakeholders, consultants or UNDP staff should be put in harm's way and safety is the key priority.

5. Experience and qualifications

9. TEAM COMPOSITION

A team of **two** independent consultants will conduct the MTR - One international team leader (with experience and exposure to projects and evaluations in other regions globally) and One national consultant from China.

The team leader will be responsible for the overall design and writing of the MTR report. The national consultant will work with the Project Team in developing the MTR itinerary and do the field visit to the sites, be responsible for collecting the necessary information to provide to the evaluation team.
In addition, an Interpreter will be supporting the MTR team and responsible for interpreting the interviews.

The consultants cannot have participated in the project preparation, formulation, and/or implementation (including the writing of the Project Document) and should not have a conflict of interest with project's related activities.

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

Qualifications for the Team Leader

Education

- At least, a Master's degree in ecology, biodiversity, wildlife conservation, migratory bird conservation, protected area management, environment science, natural resources management, or other closely related fields (10%)

Experience

- Minimum work experience in biodiversity management at least 10 years (15%);
- At least 5 years experience with result-based management evaluation methodologies in wildlife, waterbird conservation, protected areas, or wetlands management; experience working in China is an asset (20%);
- Project evaluation/ review experience with UN ; experience with UNDP-GEF project evaluations is an added value (15%);
- Demonstrated understanding of issues related to gender and biodiversity and ecosystem; experience in gender-sensitive evaluation and analysis (10%).
- Experience applying SMART indicators and reconstructing or validating baseline scenarios (5%);
- Competence in adaptive management, as applied to biodiversity and ecosystem (5%);
- Excellent communication skills (5%);
- Demonstrable analytical skills (5%);
- Experience with implementing evaluations remotely will be considered an asset (5%)

Language

- Fluency in written and spoken English (5%)

10. ETHICS

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

6. Payment Modality

11. PAYMENT SCHEDULE

- 20% payment upon satisfactory delivery of the final MTR Inception Report and approval by the Commissioning Unit. This deliverable is expected to be submitted before **September 27, 2023.**
- 40% payment upon satisfactory delivery of the draft MTR report to the Commissioning Unit. This deliverable is expected to be submitted before **November 10, 2023.**
- 40% payment upon satisfactory delivery of the final MTR report and approval by the Commissioning Unit and RTA (via signatures on the MTR Report Clearance Form) and delivery of completed MTR Audit Trail. This deliverable is expected to be submitted before **December 01, 2023.**

Criteria for issuing the final payment of 40%[9]:

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

The lump sum payment will only cover the consultancy fee. As for the living allowance, namely the DSA and Terminals, they will be calculated by: Beijing $230/day and elsewhere $160/day, with one terminal rate of $38. The payment for travel costs will be made according to actual travel information indicated in F10.

[9] The Commissioning Unit is obligated to issue payments to the MTR team as soon as the terms under the ToR are fulfilled. If there is an ongoing discussion regarding the quality and completeness of the final deliverables that cannot be resolved between the Commissioning Unit and the MTR team, the Regional M&E Advisor and Vertical Fund Directorate will be consulted. If needed, the Commissioning Unit's senior management, Procurement Services Unit and Legal Support Office will be notified as well so that a decision can be made about whether or not to withhold payment of any amounts that may be due to the evaluator(s), suspend or terminate the contract and/or remove the individual contractor from any applicable rosters. See the UNDP Individual Contract Policy for further details: https://popp.undp.org/_layouts/15/WopiFrame.aspx?sourcedoc=/UNDP_POPP_DOCUMENT_LIBRARY/Public/PSU_Individual%20Contract_Individual%20Contract%20Policy.docx&action=default

12. APPLICATION PROCESS[10]

Recommended Presentation of Proposal:

a) **Letter of Confirmation of Interest and Availability** using the template[11] provided by UNDP;
b) **CV** and a **Personal History Form** (P11 form[12]);
c) **Brief description of approach to work/technical proposal** of why the individual considers him/herself as the most suitable for the assignment, and a proposed methodology on how they will approach and complete the assignment; (max 1 page)
d) **Financial Proposal** that indicates the all-inclusive fixed total contract price and all other travel related costs (such as flight ticket, per diem, etc.), supported by a breakdown of costs, as per template attached to the Letter of Confirmation of Interest template. If an applicant is employed by an organization/company/institution, and he/she expects his/her employer to charge a management fee in the process of releasing him/her to UNDP under Reimbursable Loan Agreement (RLA), the applicant must indicate at this point, and ensure that all such costs are duly incorporated in the financial proposal submitted to UNDP.

Incomplete applications will be excluded from further consideration.

Applicants are requested to apply online (UNDP Procurement Website, etc.) by (July 17, 2023). Incomplete applications will be excluded from further consideration.
Criteria for Evaluation of Proposal: Only those applications which are responsive and compliant will be evaluated. Offers will be evaluated according to the Combined Scoring method – where the educational background and experience on similar assignments will be weighted at 70% and the price proposal will weigh as 30% of the total scoring. The applicant receiving the Highest Combined Score that has also accepted UNDP's General Terms and Conditions will be awarded the contract.

[10] Engagement of the consultants should be done in line with guidelines for hiring consultants in the POPP: https://popp.undp.org/SitePages/POPPRoot.aspx
[11] https://intranet.undp.org/unit/bom/pso/Support%20documents%20on%20IC%20Guidelines/Template%20for%20Confirmation%20of%20Interest%20and%20Submission%20of%20Financial%20Proposal.docx
[12] http://www.undp.org/content/dam/undp/library/corporate/Careers/P11_Personal_history_form.doc

ToR ANNEX A: List of Documents to be reviewed by the MTR Team

1. PIF
2. UNDP Initiation Plan
3. UNDP Project Document
4. UNDP Social and Environmental Screening Procedure (SESP)
5. Project Inception Report
6. All Project Implementation Reports (PIR's)
7. Quarterly progress reports and work plans of the various implementation task teams
8. Audit reports
9. Finalized GEF focal area Core indicators worksheet at CEO endorsement
10. Oversight mission reports
11. All monitoring reports prepared by the project
12. Financial and Administration guidelines used by Project Team

The following documents will also be available:

13. Project operational guidelines, manuals and systems
14. UNDP country/countries programme document(s)
15. Minutes of the Flyway Project (PIMS 6110) Board Meetings and other meetings (i.e. Project Appraisal Committee meetings)
16. Project site location maps
17. Any additional documents, as relevant.

ToR ANNEX B: Guidelines on Contents for the Midterm Review Report[13]

i. Basic Report Information *(for opening page or title page)*
- Title of UNDP supported GEF financed project
- UNDP PIMS# and GEF project ID#
- MTR time frame and date of MTR report
- Region and countries included in the project
- GEF Operational Focal Area/Strategic Program
- Executing Agency/Implementing Partner and other project partners
- MTR team members
- Acknowledgements

ii. Table of Contents

iii. Acronyms and Abbreviations

1. Executive Summary *(3-5 pages)*
- Project Information Table
- Project Description (brief)
- Project Progress Summary (between 200-500 words)
- MTR Ratings & Achievement Summary Table
- Concise summary of conclusions
- Recommendation Summary Table

2. Introduction *(2-3 pages)*
- Purpose of the MTR and objectives
- Scope & Methodology: principles of design and execution of the MTR, MTR approach and data collection methods, limitations to the MTR
- Structure of the MTR report

3. Project Description and Background Context *(3-5 pages)*
- Development context: environmental, socio-economic, institutional, and policy factors relevant to the project objective and scope
- Problems that the project sought to address: threats and barriers targeted
- Project Description and Strategy: objective, outcomes and expected results, description of field sites (if any)

[13] The Report length should not exceed *40* pages in total (not including annexes).

- Project Implementation Arrangements: short description of the Project Board, key implementing partner arrangements, etc.
- Project timing and milestones
- Main stakeholders: summary list

4. Findings *(12-14 pages)*

4.1 Project Strategy
- Project Design
- Results Framework/Logframe

4.2 Progress Towards Results
- Progress towards outcomes analysis
- Remaining barriers to achieving the project objective

4.3 Project Implementation and Adaptive Management
- Management Arrangements
- Work planning
- Finance and co-finance
- Project-level monitoring and evaluation systems
- Stakeholder engagement
- Social and Environmental Standards (Safeguards)
- Reporting
- Communications & Knowledge Management

4.4 Sustainability
- Financial risks to sustainability
- Socio-economic to sustainability
- Institutional framework and governance risks to sustainability
- Environmental risks to sustainability

5. Conclusions and Recommendations *(4-6 pages)*

5.1 Conclusions
- Comprehensive and balanced statements (that are evidence-based and connected to the MTR's findings) which highlight the strengths, weaknesses and results of the project

5.2 Recommendations
- Corrective actions for the design, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of the project
- Actions to follow up or reinforce initial benefits from the project
- Proposals for future directions underlining main objectives

6. Annexes
- MTR ToR (excluding ToR annexes)
- MTR evaluative matrix (evaluation criteria with key questions, indicators, sources of data, and methodology)
- Example Questionnaire or Interview Guide used for data collection
- Ratings Scales
- MTR mission itinerary
- List of persons interviewed
- List of documents reviewed
- Co-financing table (if not previously included in the body of the report)
- Signed UNEG Code of Conduct form
- Signed MTR final report clearance form
- *Annexed in a separate file:* Audit trail from received comments on draft MTR report
- *Annexed in a separate file:* Relevant midterm *Core Indicators* W*orksheet*
- *Annexed in a separate file: GEF Co-financing template (categorizing co-financing amounts by source as 'investment mobilized' or 'recurrent expenditure')*

ToR ANNEX C: Midterm Review Evaluative Matrix Template

(Draft questions to be filled out by the Commissioning Unit with support from the Project Team)

This Midterm Review Evaluative Matrix must be fully completed/amended by the consultant and included in the MTR inception report and as an Annex to the MTR report.

Evaluative Questions	Indicators	Sources	Methodology
Project Strategy: To what extent is the project strategy relevant to country priorities, country ownership, and the best route towards expected results?			
(include evaluative question(s))	(i.e. relationships established, level of coherence between project design and implementation approach, specific activities conducted, quality of risk mitigation strategies, etc.)	(i.e. project documents, national policies or strategies, websites, project staff, project partners, data collected throughout the MTR mission, etc.)	(i.e. document analysis, data analysis, interviews with project staff, interviews with stakeholders, etc.)
Progress Towards Results: To what extent have the expected outcomes and objectives of the project been achieved thus far?			
Project Implementation and Adaptive Management: Has the project been implemented efficiently, cost-effectively, and been able to adapt to any changing conditions thus far? To what extent are project-level monitoring and evaluation systems, reporting, and project communications supporting the project's implementation? To what extent has progress been made in the implementation of social and environmental management measures? Have there been changes to the overall project risk rating and/or the identified types of risks as outlined at the CEO Endorsement stage?			
Sustainability: To what extent are there financial, institutional, socio-economic, and/or environmental risks to sustaining long-term project results?			

ToR ANNEX D: UNEG Code of Conduct for Evaluators/Midterm Review Consultants[14]

Evaluators/Consultants:

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

MTR Consultant Agreement Form

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

Name of Consultant: _____

Name of Consultancy Organization (where relevant): _____

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

Signed at _____ *(Place)* on _____ *(Date)*

Signature: _____

[14] http://www.unevaluation.org/document/detail/100

ToR ANNEX E: MTR Ratings

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

Ratings for Project Implementation & Adaptive Management: (one overall rating)		
6	Highly Satisfactory (HS)	Implementation of all seven components – management arrangements, work planning, finance and co-finance, project-level monitoring and evaluation systems, stakeholder engagement, reporting, and communications – is leading to efficient and effective project implementation and adaptive management. The project can be presented as "good practice".
5	Satisfactory (S)	Implementation of most of the seven components is leading to efficient and effective project implementation and adaptive management except for only few that are subject to remedial action.
4	Moderately Satisfactory (MS)	Implementation of some of the seven components is leading to efficient and effective project implementation and adaptive management, with some components requiring remedial action.
3	Moderately Unsatisfactory (MU)	Implementation of some of the seven components is not leading to efficient and effective project implementation and adaptive, with most components requiring remedial action.
2	Unsatisfactory (U)	Implementation of most of the seven components is not leading to efficient and effective project implementation and adaptive management.
1	Highly Unsatisfactory (HU)	Implementation of none of the seven components is leading to efficient and effective project implementation and adaptive management.

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

ToR ANNEX F: MTR Report Clearance Form

(to be completed and signed by the Commissioning Unit and RTA and included in the final document)

Midterm Review Report Reviewed and Cleared By:

Commissioning Unit (M&E Focal Point)

Name: _____

Signature: _____ Date: _____

Regional Technical Advisor (Nature, Climate and Energy)

Name: _____

Signature: _____ Date: _____

ToR ANNEX G: Audit Trail Template

Note: The following is a template for the MTR Team to show how the received comments on the draft MTR report have (or have not) been incorporated into the final MTR report. This audit trail should be included as an annex in the final MTR report.

To the comments received on (*date*) from the Midterm Review of the Flyway Project

The following comments were provided in track changes to the draft Midterm Review report; they are referenced by institution ("Author" column) and not by the person's name, and track change comment number ("#" column):

Author	#	Para No./ comment location	Comment/Feedback on the draft MTR report	MTR team response and actions taken

Annex 10: Signed MTR final report clearance form

Mid-term Review Report Reviewed and Cleared By:	
Evaluation Manager	
Name: Qian Sun	
Signature: DocuSigned by: B510E356B66F44F...	Date: 21-Dec-2023
UNDP-GEF Regional Technical Advisor	
Name: Solene Le Doze	
Signature: DocuSigned by: Solene Le Doze 818641CE0080476...	Date: 21-Dec-2023