

## **TERMS OF REFERENCE**

### **Mid-Term Evaluation of UNDP/GEF Conservation and Sustainable Utilization of Wild Relatives of Crops Project (Agro-Biodiversity Project)**

#### **1. Background**

China is one of the seven independent centres of crop origin in the world. It is estimated that of about 1,200 crop species harvested worldwide, 600 are found in China, and of those up to half originated in China. However, the diversity of wild relatives of crop species in China with high international significance is increasingly threatened from land conversion, improper agricultural practices, intensification of land use, spread of invasive species, pollution and impact of genetically modified crops. The underlying causes of these threats include short-term economic development measures at the local level, institutional constraints to implementation of conservation regulations, promotion of new cultivars and new techniques by the agricultural extension system, and obscurity of population status of wild relatives. If unaddressed, these issues will result in loss of genetic resources for China and the world.

UNDP/GEF Conservation and Sustainable Utilization of Wild Relatives of Crops Project (Agro-Biodiversity Project) will promote involvement of farmers in conservation activities instead of physically separating conservation from agricultural production. This will be achieved by working within existing governmental structures that support dialogue with farmers, but building the capacity of such structures to present and promote agricultural development options that incorporate conservation of wild relatives. Thus, the county and township agricultural bureaux and extension services will be supported in establishing participatory conservation measures in land under production. This project will also ensure that local knowledge regarding conservation and use of wild relatives is incorporated into conservation strategies. For sites where the opportunity to effect in situ measures has already passed as a result of the fast pace of economic development, ex situ conservation will be promoted where possible.

The project objective is to mainstream conservation of wild crop relatives in agricultural production landscapes by targeting wild relatives of rice, soybean and wheat in eight provinces of China. Five outcomes are designed to address barriers to this objective and underlying causes of threats to wild relatives: 1) Generation of sustainable financial or other incentives for their conservation at the county level in eight provinces; 2) Policy, legal and regulatory system supports conservation; 3) Stakeholders at the central and local level have adequate capacity to conserve wild relatives; 4) Accurate and timely information concerning the status of wild relatives is available and utilized; and 5) Lessons and experiences from target provinces create conditions for replication and expansion of conservation programs. In addition, this project will also contribute to alleviating poverty, improving educational levels and promoting gender equality at the wild crop relative sites.

The Agro-biodiversity project was approved by the GEF Council in 2006 and the Project Document was signed in May 2007, and project was launched in December 2007. According to Project Document, Agro-biodiversity Project lasts for five years, with total budget of USD 20,898,000 (8.056 million from GEF). Ministry of Agriculture (MoA) is the national implementing agency of the project. Some key stakeholders include State Forestry Administration (SFA), Ministry of Environmental Protection (MEP), National Development and Reform Commission (NDRC), Ministry of Land and Resources, Ministry of Science and Technology (MoST), National Management Office for Rural Development and Poverty Reduction, China Wild Plant Conservation Association (CWPCA), Scientific institutions, such as the Chinese Academy of Sciences (CAS) and Chinese Academy of Agricultural Sciences (CAAS), Farmers' Associations, and All-China Women's Federation (ACWF).

The project will target wild relatives of rice, soybean and wheat in eight provinces across China. These sites and focused species include: Ningxia Hui Autonomous Region and Xinjiang Vygur Autonomous Region for wild relatives of wheat; Jilin Province, Heilongjiang province and Henan Province for wild relatives of soybean; Guangxi Zhuang Autonomous Region, Yunnan Province and Hai'nan Province for wild relatives of rice.

## **2. Description of the Assignment**

The purpose of the evaluation is to help guide the project's implementation from now till end of the project to achieve its objective. The MTE is also meant to synthesize lessons to help improve the project design and implementation of project activities. The mid-term evaluation will do this by : 1) to briefly review development and policy environment relating to the conservation of wild relatives of crops over the project duration, commenting on how these might have affected project performance and assess the extent to which the project remained relevant to the needs of its targets; 2) to perform interim assessment of the extent to which Agro-biodiversity has successfully accomplished its objectives in terms of activities, outputs and outcomes as defined in the agreed Project Document (logframe), and assess the likelihood of achieving them upon project completion; 3) to identify implementing agency's institutional strengths and weaknesses, and identify potential options for improving project implementation capacities, which could include modification of activities, project management responsibilities, schedule of activities and budget allocations, among others; 4) to evaluate the relevance, effectiveness, efficiency and sustainability of project outcomes.

## **3. Scope of Services**

Under the supervision of UNDP CO in consultation with Implementing Partner of Agro-biodiversity Project, the mid-term evaluation team will accomplish the following tasks:

### **1) Review of the project design, planning and implementation**

- Whether problems to be solved by the project are clear, the project approaches and strategy are sound, and immediate objectives and outputs are properly stated and verifiable in the project logical framework;
- Whether project problems to be solved still stand, project responses strategies and project adaptive management measures still relevant to national priorities and GEF

strategies;

- Whether the designed institutional arrangement for project has been performing effectively during the project implementation and allocated responsibilities among key stakeholders are still relevant;
- Whether timeframe of the project is feasible and practicable; and
- Whether the project budget allocation is reasonable and practical based on the situation changes and policy progress.

## **2) Review of project performance**

- Timeliness and quality of inputs;
- Timeliness of activities undertaken;
- Project budget performance and cost-effectiveness budget performance;
- Ability of the project to utilize efficiently the inputs available to it;
- Quality and quantity of outputs produced;
- Achievement of immediate objectives;
- Factors that have facilitated or deterred the achievement of project objectives; and
- Co-funding mobilized till date;

## **3) Project impact**

- To determine the extent to which the project objectives are expected to be achieved and what are the short-term and long-term impact of the project, including efficiency of the project, cost-effectiveness of the project, impact on wild relatives of crops conservation management in China, generation of income to local communities, replication and dissemination of project results within and outside project areas; awareness raised of Agro-biodiversity by the public and decision makers.

## **4) Sustainability of project outcomes**

- To analyze the risks and assumptions that are likely to affect the persistence of the project outcomes, including financial resources, socio-political, institutional and environmental risks.

## **5) Recommendations and lessons learnt**

- Success stories;
- Problems in project implementation;
- Lessons learnt including technical, management, policy, capacity building and implementation arrangement;
- Recommendations including budget allocation adjustment suggestions etc.

## **4. The Requested Services and Activities**

The team will use the information generated by Agro-biodiversity Project including baseline and information generated by the M&E framework, and seek the necessary contextual information to assess the significance and relevance of the results. The strategic priorities of biodiversity portfolio in GEF Phase IV will be used as benchmark for evaluation by the

mid-term evaluation.

In order to carry out the evaluation tasks, the team will carry out the following activities during the assignment period:

- 1) Review of background material and preparation of a tentative evaluation plan to be agreed with UNDP CO and PMO of MoA;
- 2) Desk review of documents provided by UNDP CO before start of the assignment;
- 3) Interviews and discussions with relevant stakeholders including:
  - PMO and NPD of MoA;
  - UNDP CO and UNDP RCU as required;
  - Ministry of Finance;
  - Local Project Steering Committee members of the project sites;
  - Local beneficiaries in 3 of the eight project pilot sites;
  - Key subcontractors, etc.
- 4) Field visits to 3 selected demonstration sites to be agreed with UNDP CO and PMO of MOA.
- 5) Debriefing at the UNDP CO on the preliminary findings after the meetings and visits with participation of key stakeholders;
- 6) Preparation and finalisation of evaluation report by incorporating any additional comments from the UNDP CO and MoA.

## **5. Qualifications**

The mid-term evaluation team will consist of an international consultant and a national consultant. Both the international and national consultants are expected to have Master's Degree on environmental science or related areas and at least five years of evaluation experiences. In addition, it is desirable that the international and national consultants have as many as possible the following qualifications:

- 1) Post-graduate education in natural resources management, agro-economics or relevant fields;
- 2) demonstrated experiences of evaluation of donor-funded development projects;
- 3) Knowledgeable about the relevant policies of the GEF;
- 4) Good communications and writing skills in English;
- 5) Knowledge of wild relatives of crops conservation, relevant agro-biodiversity regulation and policy, etc;
- 6) Knowledge of GEF projects and project requirements;
- 7) Professional experiences in working in China and with Chinese counterparts an asset

## **6. Outputs**

The consultant team are expected to deliver the following outputs:

- 1) An evaluation report presenting evaluation results of the project, and recommendations for remaining timeframe of the project. The report should be submitted to UNDP CO and PMO/MoA within six weeks from the date when the consultants are contracted. The documents should be submitted in electronic format.
- 2) Debriefing of findings to UNDP CO, MOA and the GEF focal point.

The findings of the evaluation will be used by Ministry of Finance as the GEF Focal Point in China, MoA as the implementing partner and UNDP to better adjust project strategy and approaches to guide the project implementation in the remaining period.

## **7. Duration of the Contracts**

Four work weeks, including travel time required. The consultant will visit Beijing and other cities as agreed between UNDP CO and PMO of MOA. The consultants will meet with government officials, project participants, and other stakeholders in order to evaluate the project implementation and impact. The travel schedule and logistics will be developed by UNDP CO in consultation with PMO/MoA.

## **8. Payment Schedule**

30% of the total amount due to the consultants will be paid upon signature of the contract. The remaining 70% is payable upon acceptance by UNDP CO of the evaluation report in its final form.

## **9. Start of the Assignment**

As soon as possible.

## **10. Documents to be provided for the Consultants:**

- Project document;
- Project implementation reports (PIRs);
- Reports of Chief Technical Advisor (CTA);
- Comprehensive report of subcontracts (in Chinese)

## **11. Sample Outline for the MTE Report**

### 1. Executive summary

- Brief description of project;
- Context and purpose of the evaluation;
- Main conclusions, recommendations and lessons learned;

### 2. Introduction

- Purpose of the evaluation;
- Key issues addressed;
- Methodology of the evaluation;
- Structure of the evaluation.

### 3. The project and its development context

- Project start and its duration;

- Problems that the project seeks to address;
- Immediate and development objectives of the project;
- Main stakeholders;
- Results expected.

#### 4. Findings and Conclusions

##### 4.1 Project Formulation

- ✓ Implementation
- ✓ Stakeholder participation
- ✓ Replication approach
- ✓ Cost effectiveness
- ✓ Linkage of the project and other interventions within the sector
- ✓ Indicators

##### 4.2. Project Implementation

- ✓ Delivery
- ✓ Financial management
- ✓ Monitoring and evaluation
- ✓ Execution and implementation modalities
- ✓ Management by UNDP and other partners
- ✓ Coordination and operational issues

##### 4.3 Results to date

- ✓ Attainment of Objectives
- ✓ Sustainability
- ✓ Contribution to upgrading skills at National level

#### 5.0 Lessons learned

6.0 Conclusions and recommendations, including overall rating of project implementation and the achievement of project outcomes and objective.

#### 7.0 Evaluation report Annexes

- Evaluation TORs , Itinerary and list of persons interviewed
- Summary of field visits, including evaluators findings, issues raised and recommendations by different stakeholders
- List of documents reviewed
- Questionnaire used and summary of results if any
- Comments by stakeholders (only in case of discrepancies with evaluation findings and conclusions)