

Project evaluation series
[23/2023](#)

Terminal evaluation of the project “A New Green Line: Mainstreaming Biodiversity Conservation Objectives and Practices into China’s Water Resources Management Policy and Planning”

Project code: GCP/CPR/057/GFF
GEF ID: 5665

Follow-up report

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<p>Recommendation 1.</p> <p><i>To MWR, Yunnan Department of Water Resources and Chongqing Department of Water Resources: Immediate</i></p> <p>Replicate the activities and practices developed in the project in other counties and rivers in the pilot provinces (Yunnan and Chongqing) to improve the results achieved under this project.</p> <p>Many of the activities and practices developed in this project have the potential to be scaled up and replicated and the communication and knowledge products developed should assist with this.</p> <p>Some replication has already occurred beyond the scope outlined in the Project Document, such as in the extensive application of the River and Lake Health Assessment and biodiversity monitoring in rivers in Yunnan and Chongqing other than the pilot rivers.</p> <p>Significant opportunities exist with Yunnan and Chongqing to further replicate these activities and practices. Given the skills and knowledge that are in these provinces due to the project, it would be timely to systematically roll out key activities and practices across these provinces.</p>	Accepted	Some of the activities and practices have already been applied in other counties and rivers in Yunnan and Chongqing. The PMOs are taking actions to sum up best practices and will explore to further apply them in wider areas.	<p>The Yunnan PMO has organized the compilation of a project achievement manuscript.</p> <p>Both Yunnan and Chongqing have produced promotional videos.</p> <p>Jingdong County plans to establish a National Park.</p> <p>The summary meeting of project was held in Beijing in September 2023, and the project achievements and summary report have been submitted to the relevant departments and bureaus of the Ministry of Water Resources for knowledge sharing.</p>	Good	The project's achievements and experiences have been promoted in the two pilot provinces (municipalities) and extended to the national level.

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<p>Recommendation 2.</p> <p><i>To MWR and FAO: Medium-term</i></p> <p>Replicate the activities and practices developed in the project in other provinces, using approaches designed for the relevant provinces' situations and needs.</p> <p>Significant opportunities also exist to replicate in other provinces the activities and practices developed in the project. The approaches to be used should be designed for the relevant provinces' situations and needs, rather than using a single approach in all provinces. Important lessons can be learned from the two pilot provinces in this project, which had very different situations and needs and therefore adopted different approaches.</p> <p>As a minimum, this recommendation should comprise information and training sessions to share the project's experiences and best practices with representatives from other provinces. Ideally, opportunities for funding and collaboration should also be proactively pursued. This may also require direct discussions with provinces to discuss what approaches may be suitable for them, considering their situations and needs.</p> <p>As the lead water resources management agency in China and the OP for this project, MWR should lead on this recommendation. This may initially include collating information, assessing the feasibility of different approaches in different settings, identifying stakeholders from other provinces to engage in discussions, and convening stakeholders. Given the effectiveness of MWR's lead role in this project, it may also be the appropriate lead agency for any major initiative that involves replication in other provinces.</p> <p>FAO can contribute to this recommendation by playing a facilitative role: assisting to convene stakeholders, encouraging shared reflection on the learnings from the project and this evaluation, jointly identifying</p>	Accepted	<p>The construction of ecological civilization is a long-term strategy of China, and recovering the ecological environment of rivers and lakes is a long-term key work of the Ministry of Water Resources. Brochures and videos have been prepared by the PMOs to share the project's experiences and best practices. Lessons learned will be shared with other relevant provinces with similar situations through PMO's communication platforms.</p> <p>FAO will explore future opportunities to cooperate with MWR and to share the project achievements and experience.</p>	<p>Colleagues of other FAO GEF projects from Jilin and Jiangxi provinces visited the project pilot areas to study and learn the experiences and achievements.</p> <p>The Yunnan PMO was invited by the Pearl River Water Resources Commission to participate in the River and Lake Health Assessment Conference to share project experiences.</p>	Good	<p>The project's achievements and experiences have been referenced, and applied in other provinces, including Jilin, Jiangxi, Sichuan, Qinghai, etc. The knowledge and capacity of water resource management and biodiversity conservation is improved.</p>

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<p>opportunities for replication and scaling up, fostering partnerships, and jointly pursuing funding opportunities if appropriate.</p> <p>The Yunan and Chongqing Water Resources Bureaus may also be involved in this process, given their extensive experience from this project.</p>					
<p>Recommendation 3.</p> <p><i>To PMO, MWR and FAO: Immediate</i></p> <p>Revise the project’s sustainability plan to identify how replication of activities and practices within and beyond the pilot provinces should be progressed, document how sustainability challenges relating to financing and technical support will be addressed, and indicate FAO’s role in implementation of the plan.</p> <p>A draft sustainability plan/exit strategy has been prepared and this should be finalized to address replication opportunities and sustainability challenges that have been identified.</p> <p>Replication of the project’s activities and practices within and beyond the pilot provinces should be included in the sustainability plan, to identify key opportunities, responsibilities, partnerships and next steps (see Recommendations 1 and 2).</p> <p>Although most results of the project are likely to be sustainable, the evaluation identified two areas in which there were risks to results being sustained: allocation of financing and availability of sufficient financing for infrastructure, and ongoing provision of technical support in biodiversity mainstreaming and aquatic ecology to the diverse stakeholders, processes and programmes that the project was involved with. These should also be addressed by the sustainability plan.</p> <p>It is important that FAO participates in development of the sustainability plan and that the plan identifies FAO’s role in implementation. Also, because there are several FAO-GEF projects in China that have recently</p>	Accepted	<p>The MWR PMO is updating the sustainability plan with this recommendation taken into consideration.</p> <p>FAO has been working on the gender strategy and action plan for the region, which could provide the reference for improvement of project implementation for gender related issues. .</p>	<p>The sustainability plan is finalized and approved. All stakeholders have been following the plan to ensure the sustainability of the project achievements.</p> <p>Gender strategy and action plan has been as weak point of the earlier GEF projects. In the new GEF 7 and 8 projects, it has been included in the ProDoc as one of the annexes.</p> <p>FAO has been sharing project knowledge and experience via newsletters, videos, conferences, events, etc. in various medias.</p>	Good	<p>Most of the project outcomes are sustainable.</p> <p>Project impact is enlarged.</p> <p>Gender perspective is strengthened in the future projects.</p>

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<p>closed or are scheduled to close in 2023, FAO should analyse findings from terminal evaluations and sustainability plans to identify commonalities and synergies, define any systemic issues to address, and consider consolidating sustainability action items into an action plan to ensure systematic follow up.</p> <p>Gender issues could also be included in the sustainability plan to ensure that gender issues are considered after project completion, given that there was no gender analysis or gender mainstreaming plan during project design or implementation (Finding 33).</p>					
<p>Recommendation 4. <i>To MWR and FAO: Medium- and long-term</i></p> <p>For future projects, ensure that project reporting and evidence clearly address a project's targets and indicators to ensure accountability and maximize transparency for project donors.</p> <p>To provide transparency and accountability for project donors, it is important that a project's results are clearly demonstrated through the provision of evidence of deliverables and outputs. The Results Matrix is a key part of this reporting and accountability. With 45 indicators and confusing relationships between outcomes and outputs, the results matrix for this project was difficult to report against and understanding project progress and deliverables was challenging. The reporting in PIRs and the self-assessment report for many outputs did not directly address the relevant indicator or target; in these cases, the assessment of achievement was difficult and the Evaluation Team was frequently required to request additional evidence. Projects should define early how each indicator will be measured and reported against, how success will be assessed, whether baselines are clearly established, and whether changes should be made to the Results Matrix.</p>	Accepted	<p>The MWR (PMO) will pay more attention to the result matrix design, and project reporting quality management in future projects.</p> <p>The Results Matrix design have been improved for GEF 7 and 8 projects.</p>	<p>With experience gained in this project as well as other ongoing projects, FAO and MWR will work with partners to improve the Result Matrix in the future, and make timely adjustments during Inception Workshop and Mid-term Review when necessary.</p>	Good	<p>FAO and MWR plans to design a project during GEF 8 with better quality of documents and M&E indicators.</p>

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<p>Recommendation 5.</p> <p><i>Ti MWR and FAO: Medium- and long-term</i></p> <p>For future projects, prepare comprehensive and concise reporting and evidence against each target (including documents, data, tracking tools and other information) in a timely manner for MTRs and terminal evaluations.</p> <p>The Evaluation Team received the self-assessment report soon after commencing this terminal evaluation, which augmented other reporting, especially the PIRs and PPRs. In the self-assessment report, reporting against many of the indicators in the results matrix was incomplete or did not sufficiently address the wording of the indicator and/or target; lists of reports and other documents did not align well with outputs and there was little evidence to support reported achievements against quantitative targets. Evidence of achievements was gradually accumulated during the evaluation using a diverse range of sources. Initially, few of the reported documents were provided to the Evaluation Team, due partly to strict controls on the release of electronic documents. Also, quantitative reporting was variable and seemed ad hoc. For future projects, it is important that projects agree early on how each indicator and target will be measured and verified and that evidence is gathered in a timely manner before commencement of the MTR and terminal evaluation. This should include obtaining early the necessary clearance for the release of relevant documents.</p> <p>Also, as described under Findings 8 and 26, there were shortcomings in the timely completion of the GEF tracking tools and in their use to track the project's progress. These important reporting tools should be prepared in a timely manner and should provide adequate information to inform the MTR and terminal evaluation.</p>	Accepted	<p>The MWR (PMO) will strengthen the preparation of reporting and evidence against targets for MTRs and terminal evaluations in future projects.</p> <p>In the project design stage, the Results Matrix design have been improved for FAO-GEF 7 projects and onwards, which will be helpful for accordingly fine-tuning the reporting.</p> <p>Since other partners do not have strict information control policy as MWR, there will not be problems of documents sharing and timely reporting to Evaluation Teams.</p>	<p>With experience gained in this project as well as other ongoing projects, FAO and MWR will work with partners to improve data collection and reporting in future projects.</p>	Good	<p>FAO and MWR plans to design a project during GEF 8 with better quality of documents and reporting.</p>

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<p>Recommendation 6.</p> <p><i>To FAO, PMOs: Medium and long term</i></p> <p>For future projects, adopt a systematic and transparent approach to the regular reassessment of environmental and social impacts to ensure that projects do not continue to operate according to assessments that are dated and do not meet current expectations.</p> <p>The Evaluation Team found shortcomings in the completion of the ESS Checklist in 2016, especially regarding the consideration of ethnic minorities, that a questionable "Low" risk rating was assigned as a consequence and that this "Low" rating was confirmed annually as part of each PIR (Finding 35). A full reassessment of the ESS Checklist was not conducted during implementation. In addition, the Project Document included a brief environmental impact assessment that concluded there would be no environmental impact, but included no social impact assessment.</p> <p>Consequently, the project is operating according to brief environmental and social impact assessments that were conducted more than six years ago. Ethnic minorities are present at several project locations, yet they were not considered in these assessments and this shortcoming was not identified during implementation or as part of the MTR. It is important that projects genuinely and transparently reassess environmental and social impacts during implementation, rather than continuing to operate according to dated assessments. A more thorough reassessment would have been more likely to identify shortcomings (such as the omission of ethnic minorities from consideration), rather than simply confirming the risk rating as part of the PIRs.</p> <p>An important component of this recommendation would be ongoing support and training from FAO HQ and RAPs to Country Offices and PMOs, to improve and update knowledge in ESS issues and assessments</p>	Accepted	<p>The FAO ESS system has been upgraded in 2018. Now the rating system is much more comprehensive and stricter than it was when this project was designed.</p> <p>For future projects, FAO and PMOs will strengthen the ESS related knowledge, update the rating in a timely manner and explore to better meet the updating environmental and social expectations.</p>	<p>Updated FAO ESS system is in function.</p> <p>The ESS risk level is updated annually during PIR submission for ongoing projects.</p>	Good	<p>There have been more projects with higher ESS risk level in the new system. Comprehensive countermeasures are taken to control and reduce and risks and influences.</p>

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and to foster a culture of continuous improvement within projects rather than relying on dated assessments and assumptions.					
<p>Recommendation 7.</p> <p><i>To PMO: Immediate</i></p> <p>Establish a bird monitoring system along Chuan River in Jingdong County, Yunnan Province.</p> <p>Output 2.2.5 included the target "Enhanced habitat for and increasing population of aquatic birds as measured by bird monitoring system ...", relating to wetland restoration and tree restoration along the Chuan River. However, a bird monitoring system was not established. Given that anecdotal reports were provided of several bird species being newly recorded in Jingdong County and that this may relate to improved river health, it is recommended that a monitoring system be established to enable systematic recording of such trends.</p>	Partially accepted	Birds are important indicators for wetland and tree restoration. The local forest department has been monitoring birds and collecting data. The Yunnan PMO will review the situation of bird monitoring practices in Jingdong County to ensure there is reliable recordings to reflect the wetland restoration and tree restoration along the Chuan river.	In the Yunnan project pilot area, a remote video monitoring system and an intelligent patrol monitoring information management platform have been established, effectively enhanced the comprehensive supervision and resource protection capabilities. The project completed a bird survey of the Chuan River, and recorded a total of 373 bird species belonging to 17 orders and 49 families. Among them, there are 241 resident bird species, 56 summer migratory bird species, 41 winter	Good	It is verified bird species diversity in general is on the rise along Chuan River in Jingdong County. The recommendations provided by the project are helpful for further improving the capacity of local monitoring agencies, and strengthening the financial and technical support and professional training.

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			migratory bird species, and 35 transient bird species.		
<p>Recommendation 8.</p> <p><i>To FAO Country Office: Immediate and medium term</i></p> <p>Share experiences and lessons learned in indirect project execution in China with other FAO Country Offices and teams that are planning and implementing OPIM projects.</p> <p>FAO China Country Office now has extensive experience with indirect execution and OPIM, from five "pre-OPIM" projects and from this and other OPIM projects. It would be valuable for them to share their experiences and lessons learned with other FAO Country Offices and teams. This may include approaches such as workshops, webinars, or case studies in written or video form. This is discussed further under Lesson 1.</p>	Accepted	FAO China office is experienced with OPIM and has been providing support to other Country Offices through OPIM team. FAO China office has provided templates of TORs of assurance activities, fixed assets handover documents and experience of the project closure process, and will continue sharing.	<p>The FAO GEF portfolio officer of the project is now working in the regional office as the Operational Partnerships Specialist. She will disseminate the project experience to other countries in the region.</p> <p>Online training on OPIM was held for country offices in April 2024.</p> <p>An online platform is established for experience sharing and capacity building among budget holder offices in the region.</p>	Good	There are over 40 active OPIM projects in the region. With more and more training and exchange opportunities, the capacity of budget holder offices continues to improve.

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