Mid-Term Review of FAO-GEF Project
GCP /CPR/048/GFF

GEF ID: 4632

"Biodiversity Conservation and sustainable land management in the soda saline-alkaline wetlands and agro-pastoral landscapes in the western area of the Jilin Province (Jilin-BCSLM) - China"

Final Report

MTR conducted in August 2021

FOOD AND AGRICULTURE ORGANIZATION OF THE UNITED NATIONS –
People's Republic of China, October 2021

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We are very thankful to Mr. Li Jidong, Deputy Secretary General and PSC Chair, Mr Sun Fuling, Deputy Director General of Jilin Departmnet of Water Resources and PSC Deputy Chair and Project Director and Mr Lou Junhai, Director General of Jilin Water Resources and Hydropower Survey and Design Institute and Deputy Director for providing information of the project. We are also thankful to other officers from the Department of Water Resources of Jilin Province. Thanks, also goes to Mr Watson Carlos for providing information regarding GEF activities in China and management status from FAO China for GEF funded projects. We would like to thank Project team at the PMO and FAO headquarters, and regional officer and FAO China office. Thanks also goes to State Owned Enterprises head and private companies head for providing information. We like to thank all who provided constructive comments/suggestions in the draft report.

The views expressed in this report are intended to offer an overview of, and some of the lessons learned from this project. We have tried to balance our thoughts and to offer fair perspectives of what was learned from people and reports.

And finally, we are very happy to learn with great admiration the dedication and enthusiasm that so many people bring to their work in managing wetlands, rangelands and eco-agriculture lands. We would like to thank them and wish them every success in their continuing endeavours.

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Acronyms and abbreviations

BCSAP	Biodiversity Conservation Strategy and Action Plan
CPF	Country Programme Framework
CAD	Country Agriculture Department
DWR	Department of Water Resource
FAO	Food and Agriculture Organization
GEF	Global Environment Facility
ILWMP	Integrated Land Water Management Plan
IUCN	International Union for Conservation of Nature
M&E	Monitoring & Evaluation
MTR	Mid-term Review
MWR	Ministry of Water Resources
NGO	Non-governmental Organization
NIGA	Northeast Institute of Geography and Agro-ecology
OPIM	Operational Partner Implementation Model
PIR	Project Implementation Report (for GEF)
PMO	Project Management Office
PPR	Project Progress Report (for FAO)
ProDoc	Project Document
PSC	Project Steering Committee
RLCP	River Lake Connection Programme
SDG	Sustainable Development Goal
SLWM	Sustainable Land Water Management
ToC	Theory of Change
WRB	Water Resource Bureau

Executive Summary

1. The Mid-term Review (MTR) of the project "Biodiversity Conservation and sustainable land management in the soda saline-alkaline wetlands and agro-pastoral landscapes in the western area of the Jilin Province" was undertaken to provide an assessment of the project performance and progress of implementation for planned project activities and planned outputs against actual results, and examine the extent and magnitude of project outcomes to date and determine the likelihood of future impacts of the intervention, as well as to identify, recommendations for improving project implementation and lessons learned that may help in the design and implementation of future FAO and GEF initiatives in Saline wetlands and agro-pastoral landscapes and biodiversity conservation.

2. The MTR assessed and provided ratings for (i) relevance; (ii) achievement of project results (effectiveness), including the capacity development dimensions of the project and likely progress to impact; (iii) efficiency, (iv) sustainability; and (v) factors affecting performance including project design and readiness, project implementation and execution as well as financial management and co-financing, stakeholder engagement, knowledge management and communications, and monitoring and evaluation (M&E). Environmental and social safeguards, and gender were also assessed.

Main Findings of the MTR

Overall rating of the project performance and achievement of outcomes – Moderately Satisfactory.

3. The project has achieved slightly less than the targets set for the mid-term point (as per work-plan). It has contributed to improving knowledge and capacity of government staff and farmers from wetland areas. Though it has not yet completed development of the SLWM model, it has already applied relevant practices (e.g. conservation tillage, efficient irrigation, use of organic soil treatment etc.) in Baicheng and Songyuan Prefectures including the surrounding areas of Chagan Lake and Qianguo County. The project has initiated restoration process (water retained but not all ecological function restored yet) and conserved (protection-arranged) wetland and as a result there has been some increase in biodiversity and improvement in Land degradation indicated by improved Portfolio Monitoring and Tracking Tool (PMAT) scores. The project has also been catalytic in including SWLM and biodiversity conservation concept into the 14th Five Year Plan of four counties (namely Da'an, Qianguo, Qian'An and Zhenlai) in West Jilin and within the government project "River-Lake connection Programme (RLCP) in West Jilin".

Relevance: Satisfactory

4. The project's overall objectives and interventions were in line with the FAO Strategic Framework (SO2) (2016-2021) Make Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries more productive and sustainable; Regional Result Area: Enhancing equitable, productive and sustainable natural resources management and utilization; FAO Country Programming Framework (2016-2020) Priority Area 4: Promoting sustainable agro-ecological development and agricultural conservation and utilization; as well as GEF Focal Areas of: Biodiversity and Land Degradation. The project also contributes to Chinese Government's initiatives that started in the 1970s to control salinization of land. It is in line with 71 laws and regulations (national to provincial) related to land management, biodiversity conservation and environment protection and also supports the Chinese

Government's commitment to the UN Convention to Combat Desertification, UN convention on Biodiversity and the Ramsar Convention. It also contributes to the National Project Plan for Wetlands Conservation (2002-2030) and National Biodiversity Conservation Strategy and Action Plan (2011-2030). The Sustainable Land and Water management (SLWM) model that is being developed by the project will contribute to addressing saline land and water problems of China.

Achievement of the project results: Moderately Satisfactory

5. The MTR targets proposed in the Result Framework (RF) were moderately achieved (i.e. around 40%). Since many activities are still to be completed in the remaining period of the project (by October 2022), it is difficult to confirm their contribution to the project objectives. Some initial indications of impacts were observed e.g. an increase in paddy field yield and improvements in biodiversity and land degradation scores. These early signs of impacts indicate a positive contribution to the project objective.

Effectiveness

Outcome 1: **Improvement of the policy, legal and regulatory framework for an SLWM model in productive landscapes, including capacity development: Moderately Satisfactory**

6. Consultations on regulations with the relevant departments have begun. The SLWM model was not completed but relevant practices are already applied in Baicheng and Songyuan Prefectures including at Chagan Lake and Qianguo County. The project is able to integrate requirements to apply the SLWM model in Jifa 2020 (35) (also called no. 35 policy of Jilin Provincial Government) known as the "Opinion of Supporting Da'an City to build Demonstration Zone of innovative development of ecological economy". In addition, field investigation for collection of data for the SLWM model and for integration of biodiversity conservation into sectoral policy and planning of the agriculture sector has been completed. The project has incorporated SWLM and biodiversity conservation into the 14th Five Year Plan of 4 counties in West Jilin and in the governmental-funded project "River-Lake Connection Programme (RLCP) in West Jilin". The project has also supported formulation of the "Chagan lake Governance & Conservation Plan (2018-2030). In all, 160 administrators from 46 work units were trained in wetland protection and restoration technology and 300 farmers (30% women) received eco-agriculture training to support effective implementation of the SLWM model and generate greater awareness. The monitoring of biodiversity indicated an increase in biodiversity by 30% and LD PMAT score of 40% compare to the baseline measurements made at the project design stage. The management arrangements were made with the establishment of management committee and management plans for these lakes. Also increasing awareness among local communities, threat to biodiversity of the lake and their habitat is reduced.

Outcome 2: Design and piloting of sustainable land and water management in agricultural practices in production landscapes around Chagan Lake: Moderately Satisfactory

7. The project has only completed an outline of water management guidelines. A monitoring system has been established and monitoring indicated that the degradation of rangeland is being reversed after restoration in Shenjingzi Pasture and improvement in the saline-alkaline paddy Niuxintaobao National Wetland Park (in Da'an irrigation area). Monitoring of ground water has been done for two years and ground water table (underground water level) was found between 6-7m. The use of new compound soil conditioner improved yield of rice to 3471kg/ha which will improve the household economy and reduce dependency on

other biological resources from the rangeland and wetlands. The development of technical guidelines is ongoing but not completed. Similarly, only a literature review and outline of the Integrated Land Water Management Plan (ILWMP) model was developed, the consultation with stakeholders for validation on the ILWMP has yet to be delivered, and integration of ILWMP guidelines and principles into training programs of the Water Resource Bureau (WRB) and County Agriculture Department (CAD) is being developed.

Outcome 3: Rehabilitation of wetlands and grasslands leading to improved land resource protection and biodiversity conservation in the productive landscapes around Chagan Lake: Moderately Satisfactory

8. The project was able to improve status of the wetland and made management arrangements by forming a management committees and management plans for 8728ha area of wetlands and in these wetlands populations of IUCN red listed bird species (*Siberian sp., Hooded sp., White-napped*, and *Red crowned*) were increased and the monitoring data from different seasons indicated a three-fold increase in biodiversity indicator species (Siberian sp., Hooded sp., White-napped, and Red crowned) compared to the baseline. The awareness generation of farmers contributed to reduce threat (pollution and hunting) to the wetland species. Monitoring points were set at water inlet, wetland and water outlet of the project sites and monthly sampling and monitoring were conducted. Monitoring data are being collected on several parameters including pH, COD, BOD, DO, TP, TN TK, total salt, typical pesticides and capacity of wetland per unit at four project wetlands. Similarly, species diversity, habitat and population of birds was monitored to get information on biodiversity.

9. Drafting of the disaster risk-warning manual has not been completed but is ongoing. Wetland co-management committees for two wetlands were established including representatives from the Local County in Dagangzi and Niuxintaobao wetlands and the management plans for these wetlands were also completed.

Outcome 4: Monitoring and evaluation of project activities, dissemination of knowledge and information and public awareness raising: Satisfactory

10. Various monitoring activities were conducted at the field level (explained above in Outcome 3). The project had both internal and external monitoring arrangements. Internal monitoring is done through regular field visits by the project steering committee members and PMO staff and also internally through biannual and annual reporting. The project produced three annual work plans, various newsletters, four PPRs, and three PIRs. Similarly, semi-annual financial reports were submitted and three PSC meetings were conducted. The project activities were promoted through television, print and electronic media. The project placed 13 signboards with awareness generating information in areas around wetlands. The project developed two booklets on birds and wetlands using information generated from the project activities from Dongting Lake & Poyang Lake projects and distributed these to community members and farmers from wetland areas. The project also celebrated world environment day, a bird-loving week and crab festival to raise awareness of the many values of wetlands (their ecosystem services) and need to protect and better manage them among community members.

Efficiency: Moderately Satisfactory

11, The capacity building of government staff and local farmers and linking the project to government's River-Lake connection project helped to implement sustainable water and land management activities to achieve some outputs without exceeding their budgets. The implementation of activities was delayed by almost one and half years because immediately after inception workshop the project faced problems regarding its pilot sites (Dakouzipao and Huaaopao). The problem was mainly related to unavailability of water storage, newly discovered cultural relics in the pilot areas and uncertainty over land use change in the Dakouzipao area due to national policy and changes of government priority. The project had mostly part-time staffs (except the project manager) which also reduced the project's ability to accomplish the Mid-term targets.

Sustainability: <u>Moderately Likely</u>

12. The project has supported sustainability of its results by strengthening the capacity of relevant government staff and increasing awareness among local farmers on wetland management, biodiversity conservation and eco-agriculture practices. The government staff in their regular wetland and biodiversity management and eco-agriculture programmes applied the learnings. Also, application of eco-agriculture practice by farmers demonstrated improvement in crop yield and they also contributed in rangeland and wetland management. Similarly, the project has been able to integrate provisions to apply the SLWM model into the "Jifa2020 (35) namely No.35 policy of Jilin Provincial Government also known as "Opinion on supporting Da'an City to build Demonstration Zone of innovative development of ecological economy". The project has also been able to incorporate SWLM and biodiversity conservation into the 14th Five Year Plan of 4 counties in West Jilin and in governmental investment project named "River-Lake Connection Programme in West Jilin". The project was also able to influence "Jifa 2020(35)" a government policy dedicated to implementing the deployment of an ecological economic zone in Western Jilin and high quality development of Da'an Irrigated area (in Baicheng) with green transformation to provisioning wetland and biodiversity conservation. Similarly, using experience from the application of sustainable land water management practices, the project supported Jilin Provincial Department of Water Resources to develop a proposal and apply for funding from Jilin Provincial Department of Finance with the aim to replenish more water into wetlands in Niuxintaobao and Dagangzi. The Jilin provincial finance department made financial support available to the Department of Water Resources for three years starting from 2020. 2.13million RMB was provided last year and 2.4 million RMB is earmarked for this year. Institutional and socio-economic sustainability is more likely but there is no financial commitment available at this stage to support results beyond the project life and also for replication of good practices in other similar areas. Similarly, there is no written commitment from the relevant government agency regarding distribution of water in the project wetlands in the future. The positive results of the project may encourage government to replicate good practices of this project to resolve similar problems of other areas of the country. Hence, the PMO needs to analyze all aspects of the sustainability and develop an exit strategy.

Factors Affecting Performance: Moderately Satisfactory

13. In general, the project design is suitable to delivering the expected outcomes. The theory of change was missing in the project document. The project objectives and components are clear, practical and feasible

within the timeframe but due to the COVID19 situation and a change of pilot sites, implementation of the project activities was delayed. Though the project's objectives and the result framework didn't specifically address gender (there are no gender-specific targets in the resource framework), the project document emphasises gender considerations in the project implementation. The project involved communities, farmers, state owned enterprises and private sectors in the project implementation but university, NGO or civil society organisations were not involved. It seems the PMO didn't approach for them.

14. The executing (Ministry of Water Resources) and the implementing (FAO) agencies discharged their role and responsibilities effectively. However, the lack of full-time staff in the PMO was a weakness in the management of project. The potential risks were well identified in the project document and they were reviewed annually. The project implementation always considered mitigation measures outlined in the project document. The PMO needs additional full-time staffs to accelerate project implementation for the remaining half of the project.

15. The difference in financial reporting time of PMO and NIGA was an issue of financial management and it was affecting financial reporting by PMO to FAO. Due to late submission of financial report of the earlier instalment by the PMO, the disbursement of the next instalment was affected and that affected the project activities.

16. The Jilin Provincial Government was fully engaged in the decision-making process and the implementation of the project activities and monitoring of the project results. The project has engaged a range of national, provincial, county level and community level stakeholders. Experts from the Northeast Institute of Geography and Agro-ecology (NIGA) of China Academy of Sciences were contracted for a variety of project activities, including the monitoring of biological resources, soil and water monitoring and the formulation of the SLWM. Local farmers were involved in implementation of activities related to the Sustainable Water and Land Management model and local enterprises such as farmers' cooperatives and rice companies, were involved to link farmer's product to better paying and reliable market. The project contributed in formation of co-management committee for two wetlands, which provided local community some access in decision making regarding wetlands. These management committee also has management plans for wetland management.

17. The Project Communication Plan was drafted by a communication expert hired by the PMO. The aim of this plan is to promote knowledge products and the results of the project, raise awareness at local level and among relevant institutions and to disseminate information related to the project through electronic and print media to wider audiences. The project documented and shared its results and experiences through its PIR and annual reports, webpage of the executing agency, the FAO Country Office webpage, documentaries, programs and news in electronic and print medias. Generation of awareness among the farmers and local youth helped to generate their support to conserve biodiversity of the wetlands because they stopped polluting and harming wetland biodiversity. Sharing of its lessons to relevant institutions should help to generate funding for replicating success stores from this project to other areas with similar the problems.

1. The M&E system is practical and was developed as per the standard provisions. The PMO, NIGA and FAO were involved in different monitoring activities as per the plan. The field monitoring activities were affected by the COVID19 pandemic situation because the movement was restricted. Though the target indicators are not gender-disaggregated, performances monitoring of the project activities was collecting gender disaggregated results.

Cross-cutting issues: Satisfactory

19. Gender considerations were taken into account while designing the project. Attention was given to gender equality in the project design and provisioned involving various stakeholders with strong emphasis on the gender equality throughout the project implementation processes. The project ensured female trainees in the technical trainings (30%), wetland management training and policy consultation workshops. Similarly, women represented about 15% of staff participating in the project's training and capacity building activities. Also, the project contributed to closing gender gaps in the access to and control over natural resources, improved participation of women in wetland management, generated socio-economic benefits/services for women and guided women to develop nature-based business, including some based on a reed-fish-crab model and another on sale of edible fungi. However, the role of women in decision-making could not be observed in any activities of the project. The project design also lacked activities to build women leadership skills, and the project should support a leadership development program targeting women. A project-specific gender action plan was not developed.

20. The project was developed to address the environmental and socio-economic issues of the target province, hence the environmental and social concerns were taken into consideration in the design and implementation of the project activities. The project implementation continuously reviewed environmental and social risks and adhered to mitigations actions identified to address them.

21. The MTR gave overall ratings on achievements as follows (see also summary evaluation table below):

Progress towards achieving the project's development objective: **Moderately Satisfactory**

Overall progress on implementation: **Moderate Satisfactory**

Overall risk rating: **Moderately likely** to achieve Sustainability

Summary of the evaluation (detail rating is available in Annex VIII)

Criteria	Rating	Justification for rating
Strategic relevance	S	Relevant to needs of the Jilin province and coherent with the national and local efforts to address the soil and wetland problems. Also helps address FAO and GEF priorities.
Achievement of project results / outcomes	MS	Overall, the project achieved less than the targets set for the mid-term point.
Efficiency	MS	The project's financial disbursement mechanism has worked slowly due to lack of full-time staffs and also change of pilot sites. Need to arrange full-time staffs or full-time consultant to speed up the project implementation. Also need to resolve the money disbursement issue to FAO.
Overall likelihood of the risks to sustainability	MU	The SLWM model has shown some initial positive signs. Relevant government personnel have verbally assured the project that they will replicate this model in other areas too. Similarly, they also assured distribution of water to the project

		sites in the future. But there is no written assurance for financing results of the project and also distribution of water to the project wetlands. Local government has included biodiversity and wetland management in their planning.
Overall assessment of factors affecting performance	MS	Due to Covid-19, mission from FAO regional office was limited. Lack of full-time staff adversely affected the project implementation. Due to delay in submission of financial report by PMO to FAO, money disbursement is delayed and it has affected implementation of the project activities.
Cross-cutting Issues	MS	Leadership building programs for women have been missing, social and environmental aspects were taken into consideration. There are no gender-disaggregated targets in resource framework.
Overall project rating	MS	The project has reached around 40% of the project's final targets. The PMO claimed that they could finish remaining activities by concentrating replication (provisioned for second half of the project) of good practices in the areas where already other government programmes are ongoing. This will save their time because they don't have to conduct studies of the sites for preparation of the programme implementation. But, still MTR team feels that it is challenging to complete remaining work within one year and extension of at least a year will be needed for the project to complete all targets.

22. **Conclusions:**

Relevance The project has been able to test relevant practices for sustainable Land water Management and generated a lot of knowledge for development of the SLWM model which it is hoped, can be replicated in other areas with similar problems.

Effectiveness With measures to reclaim the wetland, the project has contributed to improving biodiversity, and through improved irrigation and application of new type of soil conditioner increased rice crop yield. The project was also able to integrate the required provisions in the provincial policy document for the implementation of biodiversity conservation and SLWM model. The project also received adequate support from the stakeholders, and provided a foundation to improve the condition of soil and wetland areas, tested models and improved institutional, technical and individual capacity.

Efficiency Despite the implementation of the practices related to SLWM, the SLWM model has been not prepared and guidelines to implement ILWMP and water distribution guidelines were also not completed. Having only part-time staff has affected project implementation which needs to be resolved if the project is to complete remaining activities.

Sustainability Involvement of relevant university relevant departments, departments of environment of the local government, NGOs and CSOs could help to make the monitoring activities sustainable beyond the project life.

Factors affecting the performance M&E plan was good and comprehensive in its depth and scope. The result-framework with clear objectives, components and appropriate to issues and also design considered the timeframe of the project. Baseline and target indicators lacked gender disaggregated information. The project worked with the relevant institution with permanent structure, which develops ownership making results sustainable. The project oversight and implementation was affected by the COVID19 situation.

Cross-cutting issues The project developed strong ownership over wetlands by involving relevant local government, communities, farmers, enterprises and private sectors. Gender equality consideration is reflected in the design that includes enhancement of participation of women in training programmes, generation of job in agriculture sector and also agriculture related companies. Women in decision-making was not much seen in the project.

Recommendations:

Relevance

1. The site selected earlier overlooked information like availability of water storage, existence of the cultural relics within the site and uncertainty of the boundaries due to government policy. Due to this, the project had to spend one and half year to find a new sites for piloting its activities. The PMO should immediately (October 2021) conduct thorough study of the sites before replicating the good practices in the second half of the project.

Effectiveness

2. As the SLWM model needs to be agreed with the stakeholders before implementation, the PMO should give priority to complete the model, and associated guidelines and manual. Work should be initiated immediately after the MTR i.e. October 2021.

Sustainability

3. The PMO should assign responsibility to conduct assessment of the potential support from different sector to make project results sustainable after the project end. Based on the thorough assessment they should develop an exit strategy with provisions for making project results sustainable even after the project end date. The development of exit strategy should begin from January 2022.

Factors affecting performance (project execution and implementation)

4. The project implementation has suffered due to a lack of full-time project staffs. Therefore, the PMO should arrange increase its number of full-time staff to the number required to fully support project

implementation. Staff arrangement is very important to move project activities so it should be initiated immediately after MTR i.e. from October 2021.

Factors affecting performance (project design)

5. Some indicators need change e.g. IUCN red-listed Eurasian otter is not found in the project sites so it should be removed. The baseline yield from degraded rangeland is much exaggerated (1,500kg/ha) so need to make realistic (800kg/ha). The annual yield target from the improved agriculture practices together with irrigation is also very ambitious (10,500kg/ha), so need to make it 8,500kg/ha. Hence, it is recommended that PMO should take initiation to get GEF approval to change these indicators to make them realistic. This should be done immediately i.e. in October 2021.

Factors affecting performance (M&E)

6. The PMO should communicate and negotiate with the relevant departments of the University (province based) to arrange regular monitoring of effect of agricultural practices and wetland functions. Discussions should be immediately initiated i.e. from October 2021 to initiate the negotiation for M&E arrangements.

Factors affecting performance (project execution and implementation)

7. The project has not met its mid-term level targets (as per work-plan) and completing all remaining activities within a year (October 2022) is not possible. Hence a 1-year no cost extension is recommended. The PMO and FAO should discuss this with the relevant executing partners and recommend to GEF for no cost extension immediately i.e. in October 2021.

Cross-cutting Issues

8. Women play key role in agriculture sector so their role need to be strengthened from all aspects. Women's role in decision making was not observed in this project. Programme should include leadership building training for women and also should give priority to women headed household while selecting the beneficiary household. The PMO & FAO should initiate planning and implementing leadership programme immediately (October 2021)

(More recommendation available in page 26)

Introduction

24. The Monitoring and Evaluation Policy at the project level in FAO/GEF has two overarching objectives, namely to promote accountability for the achievement of GEF objectives through the assessment of results, effectiveness, processes and performance of the partners involved in GEF activities; and to promote learning, feedback and knowledge sharing on results and lessons learned among the GEF and its partners, as basis for decision-making on policies, strategies, programme management and to improve knowledge and performance. With this in mind, this Mid-Term Review (MTR) has been initiated by FAO China as the GEF Implementation Agency for the "Biodiversity Conservation and sustainable land management in the soda saline-alkaline wetlands and agro-pastoral landscapes in the western area of the Jilin Province (Jilin-BCSLM)" project, to measure the effectiveness and efficiency of Project activities in relation to the stated objectives and to collate lessons learned. This MTR report outlines the proposed methodology, issues, milestones, work tasks and schedule for the MTR in order to :

- inform relevant stakeholders to the project that FAO is conducting this evaluation; and
- have a common understanding on the evaluation approach, methodologies, work plan and key milestones.

1. METHODOLOGY

1.1 Purpose of MTR

25. The main purposes of the MTR are to:

- provide accountability – to respond to the information needs and interests of policymakers and other actors with decision-making power, for example, FAO management and the FAO GEF CU;
- improve the project – the project improvement and organizational development provide valuable information to managers and others responsible for regular project operations (for example, the PMO, PTF, FAO GEF CU and PSC); and
- contribute to knowledge – in-depth understanding and contextualization of the project and its practices, of particular benefit to the FAO GEF CU, FAO staff and future developers and implementers.

1.2 Objectives of MTR

26. The Mid-term Review is an independent review and the team, wherever possible, did their best to evaluate issues according to the criteria listed in the FAO-*GEF Monitoring and Evaluation Policy and adhere to the Guide for planning and conducting mid-term reviews of FAO-GEF Projects and programmes*, namely:

- Relevance – the extent to which the activity is suited to local and national development priorities and organisational policies, including changes over time.
- Effectiveness – the extent to which an objective has been achieved or how likely it is to be achieved.
- Efficiency – the extent to which results have been delivered with the least costly resources possible.

- Sustainability – the likely ability of an intervention to continue to deliver benefits for an extended period of time after completion. The projects need to be environmentally as well as financially and socially sustainable.
- Factors affecting performance – the main factors to be considered are:
  - project design and readiness for implementation (e.g. sufficient partner capacity to begin operations, changes in context between formulation and operational start);
  - project execution, including project management (execution modality as well as the involvement of counterparts and different stakeholders);
  - project implementation, including supervision by FAO (BH, LTO and FLO), backstopping, and general PTF input;
  - financial management and mobilization of expected co-financing;
  - project partnerships and stakeholder involvement (including the degree of ownership of project results by stakeholders), political support from government, institutional support from operating partners (such as regional branches of agricultural extension services or forestry authorities);
  - communication, public awareness and knowledge management; and
  - application of an M&E system, including M&E design, implementation and budget. Cross-cutting dimensions – considerations such as gender, indigenous-peoples and minority-group concerns and human rights; the environmental and social safeguards applied to a project require, among other things, a review of the Environmental and Social Safeguards (ESS) risk classification and risk-mitigation provisions identified at the project's formulation stage.

27. The project review was undertaken in keeping with the Evaluation Consultant Code of Conduct Agreement as outlined in the *Guide for planning and conducting Mid-term Review of FAO-GEF Projects (2020).*

1.3 Intended Users

28. The main beneficiaries of the MTR report are:
    - The Jilin Department of Water Resources and local water management authorities in the project sites.
    - FAO and the GEF.
    - Depart of Environment and Ecology, Department of Natural Resources and Northeast Institutes of Geography and Agro-Ecology.
    - Ministry of Water Resources (MWR) at the national level, county level governments and water bureaus.

1.4. Evaluation Approach and Method

i. This MTR was planned to be conducted through field missions by the national consultant and online interviews by the evaluation team with all stakeholders individually. Since March 2020, all non-critical international travel has been suspended across the globe to avoid further expansion of the Covid-19 virus and only limited flights are operating. Moreover, China has also restrictions on foreigners to visit China from last year and it is still not changed. So it was planned to make field visits by the national consultant. But while developing the field missions, it was learned that the government restricted visits for the locals also due to increase in COVID19 cases. In light of this, and taking into consideration that

this project mainly implemented in partnership with the government at provincial level, a condition that facilitates that the majority of stakeholders can be interviewed using communication technology, the evaluation team opted to maintain the evaluation in the remote modality. Due to restrictions, communications with all stakeholders were conducted virtually.

ii. The evaluation adopted a qualitative and theory-based approach. Making use of methods such as documentation review, semi-structure interviews and zoom meetings and face-to-face interactions to collect data from secondary and primary sources, the major analysis method is content analysis.

iii. Data collected was stored, interpreted and analyzed to answer the evaluation questions and sub questions as designed in the evaluation matrix. The Results' Framework was yard sticks to guide the assessment of the evaluative dimensions. The MTR team also developed the Theory of Change to guide the assessment dimensions.

iv. The evaluation entirely adheres to the GEF-FAO Norms and Standards and in line with the *Guide for planning and conducting Mid-term Review of FAO-GEF Projects (2020)*. The evaluation adopted a consultative and transparent approach with the internal and external stakeholders throughout the process. The evaluation also follows the GEF and FAO Guidelines for Evaluation. The evaluation team members safeguard and ensure ethics at all stages of the evaluation cycle.

29. The Mid-term Review was initiated on 21st July 2021 and was completed on September 30, 2021. The draft MTR report was submitted to FAO China on 3rd September 2021.

30. The Evaluation was evidence-based wherever possible and conducted through the following participatory approach:

- extensive face-to-face interview by national consultant and virtual interviews with stakeholders by MTR team with the project management and technical support staff, including some members of the Project Management Office(PMO). Throughout the evaluation, particular attention was paid to explaining carefully the importance of listening to stakeholders' views and in reassuring staff and stakeholders that the purpose of the evaluation is not to judge performance in order to apportion credit or blame but to measure the relative success of implementation and to suggest ways to deliver and impact for the rest of the project work. The confidentiality of all interviews was stressed and remain paramount. Wherever quotes from interviews are used in the report, they will be unattributed to an individual unless they wish otherwise. Wherever possible, and within time constraints, information collected were cross-checked between various sources to ascertain its veracity.
- face-to-face interviews with local stakeholders, particularly local government staff, community members, experts from the Northeast Institute of Geography and Agro-ecology, FAO CO, staffs and regional office team, other entrepreneurs and private sector and the beneficiaries (farmers);
- a thorough review of the project documents and other relevant texts, including the Project related documents, revised result framework, and monitoring reports, such as progress and financial reports prepared for FAO and annual Project Implementation Reviews (PIR) and Project Progress Report (PPR) for GEF, minutes of the Project meetings, relevant correspondence, and other project-related material produced by the project staff or partners (Annex V); and

34. MTR evaluation Matrix and evaluation guidelines were used to guide the interviews.

31. MTR reviewed progress towards results. This was assessed based on the data provided, amongst others, in the project document, the project work plan, GEF Tracking Tools, and PIRs, as well as results verified in the course of the MTR mission.

32. **Evaluation Team composition and profile**

i. The Evaluation team is composed of Dr. Arun Rijal (Team Leader) and Mr. Zhao Yang (Team Member).

ii. Team members have experience in the project evaluation, the project program management, policy development, capacity assessment/development, Gender and social inclusion (gender equality and gender mainstreaming), economics of climate change, qualitative and quantitative data collection and analysis, result-based management evaluation.

1.5 Limitations and Risks

iii. The main limitation posed by Covid-19 relates to travel and access restrictions which had impacted the team's ability to conduct in person field level data collection. The planned face-to-face interviews were conducted using Skype, Zoom and other communication technology. While in person interactions are always preferable in evaluations, the evaluation team does not anticipate a significant impact in the quality of the data collection and thus in the results of the evaluation. It was planned to make field visits by the National consultant but due to increase in Corona cases government imposed more restrictions so even national consultant could not make field visits for interaction with the local level stakeholders and the local government partners so had to do all interactions or interviews through virtual means.

iv. The evaluation relied on the information provided by the key informants from the project and the information from the project reports/documents, as well as from other evidence provided by the stakeholders (picture, videos of the sites etc).

v. Due to language barrier, international consultant could not make direct conversation with the stakeholders and has to rely on interpreter and national consultant.

2. Project Background and context

33. China is facing most disruptive environmental challenges of large-scale land degradation and biodiversity damages caused by decreasing water resources and the Western Jilian Wetlands has unique opportunity to address these challenges. Historically uneven distribution of water resources within China, featuring a water-rich South and a dry North has severely exacerbated this situation reaching a point where ecosystems cannot compensate for the damages any longer and face the danger of irreversible degradation. Unsustainable agricultural practices driven by population growth and rapid economic development are damaging use of land and water resources. Climate change has added further detrimental effect on water resources pattern across China.

34. The FAO-GEF project "Biodiversity Conservation and sustainable land management in the soda saline-alkaline wetlands and agro-pastoral landscapes in the western area of the Jilin Province (Jilin BCSLM)" was endorsed by the GEF CEO on 23 June 2015. The GCP Agreement Letter and Execution Agreement were signed on 1 November 2016 and 18 November 2016, respectively. Its official starting date is 18 November 2016 and its closing date is 22 October 2022. The executional partner is the Department of Water Resources, Jilin Province (DWR Jilin). The project has a GEF budget of 2,627,000 USD and 16,800,000 USD co-financing.

35. The project's global environmental objective is to demonstrate and replicate an integrated model for Sustainable Land and Water Management (SLWM) in saline-alkaline productive landscapes including rehabilitation and biodiversity conservation in wetlands. The project's development objective is to provide long-term sustainable flow of income to farmer's communities from farming systems (crop, livestock and fish) in western Jilin province by building an ecologically resilient productive landscape.

36. Meanwhile, the total saline land area in China is about 99.13 million ha, making up about 10% of the world total saline land area. At the heart of the West Jilin ecosystem lies Chagan Lake, a large water body rich in biodiversity and fishery resources, a famous tourist destination and the natural reserve. Western Jilin is divided into two prefectures (Songyuan and Baicheng) and 11 counties with a total territory area of 51,801.5 km2 and 4.94 million residents, of which 3.31 million (67%) are rural residents. Land salinization in Western Jilin shows significant acceleration in salinization processes in the past three decades. The overall degradation of ecosystems in Western Jilin is dramatic and a cause for immediate and decisive action. It severely endangers the biodiversity and causes degradation and decrease in habitats for native and migrant birds and other wild life. The main causes of these degradation processes include natural shift in water pattern, global climate change as well as local socio-economic dynamics resulting in altered land and water use practices: (i)Rapid population increase and land-use changes for socioeconomic development have created high pressure on the vulnerable ecosystem (ii)Climate change accelerating the wetlands ecosystem degradation (iii)Decrease in water flow from upstream areas distorting wetlands flood recession cycle (iv)Overuse of groundwater resources (v)Improper water and soil management and salt and agrochemical pollution of wildlife wetlands habitats with irrigation drainage water (vi)Overgrazing. China urgently needs solutions for protecting these landscapes while balancing environmental protection with the socio-economic needs of local communities.

37. The provincial government, Songyuan and Baicheng prefectures and county government in the western Jilin province are planning or already implementing a number of programs to tackle the causes of degradation, salinization and alkalization and to halt the reduction of wetlands ecosystem services in Western Jilin. The GEF project can rely on an exceptionally strong set of baseline initiatives. The infrastructural investments within the Songyuan irrigation zone are fully compatible with the environmental objectives of

the project, backed by strong political support at all levels and implemented with major government resources. The irrigation scheme provides the backbone for the envisioned GEF activities and will be leveraged to create significant Global Environment Benefits (GEBs). The project activities will make strategic and targeted improvements to the existing set of initiatives, turning the irrigation scheme into a showcase example for integrated SLWM at the landscape level.

38. The strategy of the project to address the above mentioned barriers is to develop a comprehensive model for SLWM in irrigated areas that can ensure agricultural productivity, sustainable land use and biodiversity simultaneously.

3. Theory of Change

39. The project has global environmental objective of demonstrating and replicating an integrated model for Sustainable Land and Water Management (SLWM) in saline-alkaline productive landscapes including rehabilitation and biodiversity conservation in wetlands. The project's development goal is to provide long-term sustainable flow of income to farmer's communities from farming systems (crop, livestock and fish) in western Jilin province by building an ecologically resilient productive landscape. To achieve its objectives, the project has strategy to develop a comprehensive model for sustainable land and water management (SLWM) in irrigated areas to ensure agriculture productivity, sustainable land use and biodiversity simultaneously. The Theory of Change (ToC) pathway that will bring about this outcome is based on four different outcomes: (i) Improvement of the policy, legal and regulatory framework for an SLWM model in productive landscapes, including capacity development; (ii) design and piloting of sustainable land and water management and conservation agriculture practices in production landscapes around Chagan Lake; (iii) rehabilitation of wetlands and grasslands leading to improved biodiversity conservation in the productive landscape around Chagan Lake and (iv) monitoring and evaluation of project activities, dissemination of knowledge and information and public awareness raising.

40. The project planned to utilise government's existing institutional setup to implement the project activities. It has identified institutions and assessed capacity and reviewed existing policies to identify gaps. The baseline scenarios were used to develop appropriate project and implementation modality. Component 1 expects to achieve its outcomes through 6 outputs, component 2 through 9 outputs, component 3 through 9 outputs and component 4 through 3 outputs. Component 1 contributes in developing legal, regulatory and policy frameworks which will support implementation of activities related to alternative agriculture practices (component 2) and wetland rehabilitation (component 3). The component 4 makes the project implementation easier through public awareness generation and also contributes in dissemination of knowledge and information to a wide audience for up scaling of the lessons from this project. The monitoring and evaluation under component 4 also provide information for improvement of component 1, 2 and 3. The project design identified three categories of risks viz. ecological risks, socio-economical risks and institutional risks. The ecological risks includes impact of climate change, impact of water diversion on downstream, salt moving to the upper layer of the soil, The socio-ecological risks includes lack of capacity with farmers to adopt water saving agriculture practices and technologies, market risks for green food products, risk of marginalisation of rural women and poor farmers in the project and conflict between farmers livelihoods and management of wetland and habitat. Similarly, institutional risks includes interests conflicts between different sectors

and line agencies, lack of participation of agriculture, animal husbandry and environmental agencies in the policy implementation, local government's inability to pay the eco-service compensation to farmers and delayed physical engineering construction of Songyuan Iriigation Area for Dakouzipao Pilot Area. The ecological and institutional risks are mostly of medium level and socio-economical risks are low. The project design has provisioned mitigation measures to address these risks and also has provision of reviewing risks annually to update risk status and also identify new risks if any observed.

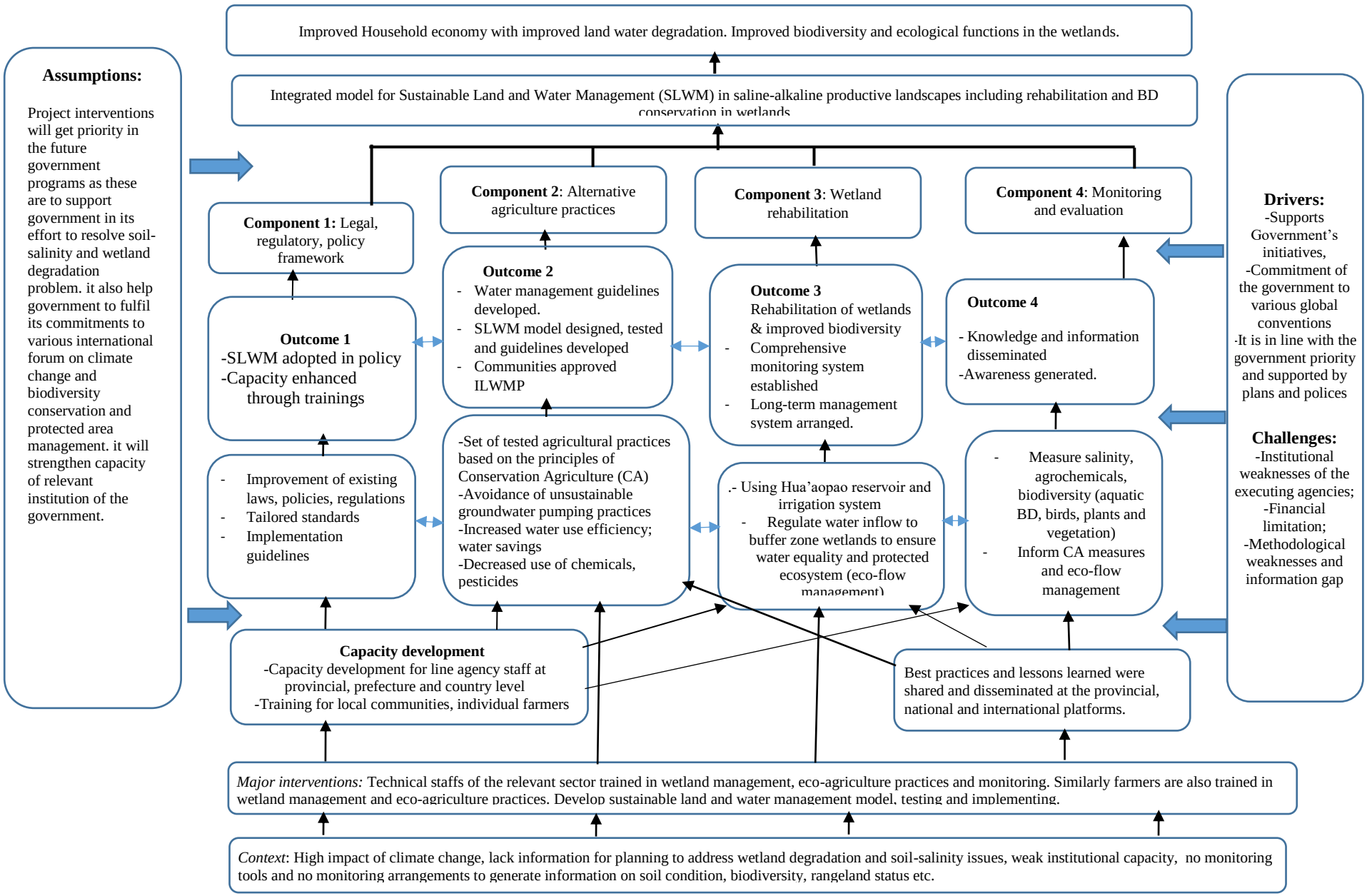
41. The project plans to achieve this goal through four main outcomes:

Component 1: Improvement of the policy, legal and regulatory framework for an SLWM model in productive landscapes, including capacity development.

Component 2: Design and piloting of sustainable land and water management in agricultural practices in production landscapes around Chagan Lake.

Component 3: Rehabilitation of wetlands and grasslands leading to improved land resource protection and biodiversity conservation in the productive landscapes around Chagan Lake.

Component 4: Monitoring and evaluation of project activities, dissemination of knowledge and information and public awareness raising.


Improved Household economy with improved land water degradation. Improved biodiversity and ecological functions in the wetlands.
Integrated model for Sustainable Land and Water Management (SLWM) in saline-alkaline productive landscapes including rehabilitation and BD conservation in wetlands
Assumptions:
Project interventions will get priority in the future government programs as these are to support government in its effort to resolve soil-salinity and wetland degradation problem. it also help government to fulfil its commitments to various international forum on climate change and biodiversity conservation and protected area management. it will strengthen capacity of relevant institution of the government.
Component 1: Legal, regulatory, policy framework
Component 2: Alternative agriculture practices
Component 3: Wetland rehabilitation
Component 4: Monitoring and evaluation
Outcome 1
-SLWM adopted in policy
-Capacity enhanced through trainings
Outcome 2
- Water management guidelines developed.
- SLWM model designed, tested and guidelines developed
- Communities approved ILWMP
Outcome 3
Rehabilitation of wetlands & improved biodiversity
- Comprehensive monitoring system established
- Long-term management system arranged.
Outcome 4
- Knowledge and information disseminated
-Awareness generated.
Drivers:
-Supports Government's initiatives,
-Commitment of the government to various global conventions
-It is in line with the government priority and supported by plans and polices
Challenges:
-Institutional weaknesses of the executing agencies;
-Financial limitation;
-Methodological weaknesses and information gap
- Improvement of existing laws, policies, regulations
- Tailored standards
- Implementation guidelines
-Set of tested agricultural practices based on the principles of Conservation Agriculture (CA)
-Avoidance of unsustainable groundwater pumping practices
-Increased water use efficiency; water savings
-Decreased use of chemicals, pesticides
.- Using Hua'aopao reservoir and irrigation system
- Regulate water inflow to buffer zone wetlands to ensure water equality and protected ecosystem (eco-flow management)
- Measure salinity, agrochemicals, biodiversity (aquatic BD, birds, plants and vegetation)
- Inform CA measures and eco-flow management
Capacity development
-Capacity development for line agency staff at provincial, prefecture and country level
-Training for local communities, individual farmers
Best practices and lessons learned were shared and disseminated at the provincial, national and international platforms.
Major interventions: Technical staffs of the relevant sector trained in wetland management, eco-agriculture practices and monitoring. Similarly farmers are also trained in wetland management and eco-agriculture practices. Develop sustainable land and water management model, testing and implementing.
Context: High impact of climate change, lack information for planning to address wetland degradation and soil-salinity issues, weak institutional capacity, no monitoring tools and no monitoring arrangements to generate information on soil condition, biodiversity, rangeland status etc.

4. MTR questions and Key findings

Relevance

EQ. 1: To what extent FAO and GEF's support to targeted province has been relevant? How did the project design respond to the needs, priorities and capacities of the project's main counterparts?

Finding 1. This project is very relevant to address the serious issues of land and water resources of Jilin province of China and it is contributing to Chinese government's (Central and Provincial) effort to saline land control programmes.

42. About 99.13 million ha area is saline land in China which is about 10% of the world total saline land area. Central as well as local government of China had been implementing saline alkaline land control programmes since 1970s. Land degradation in China is very much related to water scarcity, natural and human induced activities like unsustainable agricultural practices, damaging use of land and water resources and adverse effects of climate change like shifting water resources pattern across China. China is reaching to a breaking point regarding its land use in agricultural land and related environmental damages. China was in urgent need of solutions for protecting its landscapes, environment and at the same time provide socio-economic needs of the local communities. Out of more than 10 threatened areas in China, Jilin is one of them. The project activities were developed based on participatory interaction with relevant stakeholders and information on ground situation (capacity of relevant government and farmers) was considered while designing the project. Hence, its activities are directly linked to the needs of the province. The project contributes to address soil salinity problem and also wetland issues of the Jilin province. It also intend to contribute to farmers to increase their farm productivity through ecologically friendly agriculture practices. The training programs helps to increase awareness and knowledge of farmers in wetland management and also enhance capacity of relevant government staffs to manage wetland and address salinity problem of the agriculture land.

EQ 2: How did the project design respond to the priorities of the FAO country programming Framework and the GEF focal areas/operational project strategies?

Finding 2. The project contributes to the CPF (2016-2020) Priority Area 4 of the country programme Framework of FAO by promoting sustainable agro-ecological development and agricultural heritage conservation and utilization. The biodiversity conservation and land degradation control programs of the project also contribute to GEF focal area of biodiversity and land degradation.

43. The project has activities to develop an integrated SLWM model, train relevant technical staffs of the local government, development of water management guidelines, design and piloting of eco-agriculture practices contributes in priorities of the FAO country programme (Priority area 4). The project also established cordial environment for implementation of the SLWM by adjusting policy, plans, legal provisions and regulations and to facilitate implementation of the legal provisions, it has trained relevant government staffs.

44. Unsustainable agriculture practices affects biodiversity conservation. Hence, to avoid negative impacts of agriculture practices, the SLWM model also included biodiversity conservation. The project has activities to rehabilitate wetlands and improve biodiversity conservation in the wetlands. These activities contributes in GEF focal area for biodiversity and land degradation. To feedback management on soil condition, water status, biodiversity status, it has established a regular monitoring system.

EQ. 3: Is project expected outcomes congruent to the needs and priorities of the targeted beneficiaries (local communities, men and women, indigenous communities etc.)

Finding 3. The project outcomes is congruent to the needs and priorities of the targeted beneficiaries i.e. local ethnic groups both men and women.

45. From the project preparation phase, local communities were involved actively to bring their issues in design so that they could benefit from the project and also to make local ownership. Farmers including women were actively involved in interaction programs which also helped in knowledge exchange and also strengthened gender equality focus of the project. Hence the project design was able to capture needs and priorities of the local beneficiaries and with the support from the project, ethnic group from the project area were able to apply and demonstrate ecological agriculture, conservation tillage and reed-fish-crab ecological industry model. Involving ethnic groups in the project development and implementation respected their right to their resources and their culture. From these activities their income was also increased.

EQ 4: To what extent was the technical support provided by FAO relevant to the country?

EQ 5: To what extent were FAO's comparative advantages and existing complementarities with other partners taken into account in the project design?

Finding 4&5. The technical support from FAO was relevant and their comparative advantages and existing complementarities were taken into account in the project design.

46. FAO has distinguished itself in its role as the world's agricultural knowledge agency for policy development, integrated capacity building, technical cooperation, collection and dissemination of information, and for the implementation of major international agreements. So FAO's experience was useful in designing trainings, eco-agriculture practices, wetland management plans and knowledge management. FAO has representation engagement at the country level through its partnership with the host ministries (Ministry of Agriculture, Ministry of Water Resources and Ministry of Finance). This decentralization promotes partnerships with the national institutions and other UN Agencies, the private sector, academia and civil society. FAO's technical competences, strong national networks, and complementarities were taken into account while designing the project. Based on its mandates and standing contribution to national development, FAO was able to convoke inter-sectoral and national actors to provide a national platform that catalyzed traction and a pathway towards commitment to action on eco-agriculture and wetland management.

47. The project was able to draw down on the expansive pool of national and international expertise to support implementation of the project. Due to COVID19 related restrictions, some planned monitoring by the regional experts was affected. The project design took into consideration FAO's vast experience and expertise in climate change adaptation in agriculture practices and wetland management for biodiversity conservation planning.

EQ 7: Has there been any changes in the relevance of the project since its formulations? Is there any need to make change in the design/activities to make it more relevant?

EQ 8: To what extent is the project's results framework/log-frame (i.e. theory of change, intervention logic, indicators etc.) appropriate to reach the project's goal and objectives?

EQ 9: Is the project design suited to delivering the expected outcomes?

EQ 10: Is the project's casual logic coherent and clear?

EQ 11: To what extent are the project's objectives and components clear, practical and feasible within the timeframe allowed?

Finding 7, 8, 9, 10, 11. The relevancy has not changed since project formulations and it is still very important and relevant to the project sites. The result framework (RF) has clear objective, component, outcome and outputs.

48. The Theory of Change (ToC) was not mentioned in the project document but the concept and strategy with which the project was developed was appropriate to reach the proposed goal and objectives. The objective, component, outcomes and overall logic of the project is coherent and clear. It is understandable, verifiable, testable, plausible and inclusive. The result framework (RF) was appropriate to address country's specific needs and priorities and programs were selected by the Jilin province as per their needs. The objectives, components and outputs are clear and appropriate to the issues. The mid-term level target indicators were missing in the result framework so the MTR team used annual work plan for the judgment of mid-term level achievement. Although some indicators are not SMART and their targets poorly defined, the indicators are achievable and measurable. A few changes in sites and target areas were made based on expert's advice to avoid duplication and also to include areas with severe problem of salinity and also the areas with no other program to support. The activities and outputs were clear, practical and feasible within the timeframe of the project.

49. The logic of the Jilin-BCSLM project as expressed in its concept was as follows: if (a) the policy, legal and regulatory framework for an integrated sustainable land and water management model in the productive landscapes are improved including capacity development; if (b) the design of sustainable land and water management and conservation agriculture practices in production landscapes is piloted; if (c) rehabilitation of wetlands and grasslands leading to improved biodiversity conservation in the production landscape is done and monitoring and evaluation activities is strengthened to support management; and if (d) knowledge and information is disseminated to raise public awareness; then (e) the objective of building an ecologically resilient productive landscape model for providing long-term sustainable flow of income to farmer's communities from farming systems in the western Jilin province will be achieved.

50. Based on the implementation experience and also revision of the targets and indicators some changes were recommended to make them realistic. Some changes made were as follows: change in project sites and areas, remove IUCN red-listed Eurasian otter because they does not exists in the pilot sites, target of annual yield of 10500kg/ha is over ambitious target to achieve from the alternative agricultural practices so adjustment to 8500kg/ha is recommended, yield of hay 1500kg/ha is also too high for the degraded grassland so need to make it 800kg/ha to be a reasonable baseline.

Effectiveness- Progress towards results

EQ12. Has an integrated model for Sustainable Land and Water Management (SLWM) in saline-alkaline productive landscapes been developed and demonstrated?

EQ 13. Has an SLWM model been included in the policy, legal and regulatory framework?

EQ 14. Has the capacity of decision makers, government and technical staff and local communities and farmer been improved?

Finding 12, 13 &14. The SLWM model development was not completed. The policy and plans has made provision for implementing SLWM model. The capacity development trainings for the decision makers, government staff and local farmers was conducted.

51. The project team consulted with relevant department for their input regarding SLWM. Though the SLWM model is not completed officially, relevant practices (rehabilitation of wetlands and grasslands, use of new type of organic compound for improvement of soil condition, monitoring ground water and biodiversity of wetlands) are already applied in Baicheng and Songyun Prefectures including Chagan Lake and Qianguo country because these areas are also required by "Jifa 2020(20)" namely No 26 policy of Jilin Provincial Government: "Opinion on Supporting Qianguo County to build demonstration zone of ecologically prioritized green development"

52. "Jifa 2020 (35) namely No 35 policy of Jilin Provincial Government also known as "Opinion on supporting Da'an City to build Demonstration Zone of innovative development of ecological economy" has integrated requirements to apply the SLWM model. SWLM and biodiversity conservation is incorporated into 14th Five Year Plan of 4 counties in West Jilin and in governmental investment project "River-Lake Connection Programme in West Jilin"

53. Altogether 160 wetland administrators from 46 work units were trained on wetland protection/restoration technology, 300 farmers (30% women) received eco-agriculture training. But the project has not conducted post training assessment to analyze change in knowledge. The knowledge gained from the training was utilized by the wetland administrators and it is demonstrated in their performances in restoration of 3400ha saline-alkaline landscapes are managed under the application of wetlands biodiversity conservation programme. Also 8,728ha area of the wetlands restored and conserved and this improved biodiversity of the area by 30% increase in biodiversity score and 40% improvement in land degradation score. Similarly, farmers after training practiced eco-agriculture and their paddy yield was improved to 3471 kg/ha.

EQ 15. Has water management guidelines for agriculture use been developed and used?
EQ 16. Has sustainable agriculture practices for water and land use been designed, tested and adopted?
EQ 17. Has local agreement on integrated land and water management plan (ILWMP) been developed?
Finding 15, 16, 17. Water management guidelines was not completed. SLWM was not designed and local agreement on ILWMP was not made yet.

54. The project has only made outline of the water management guidelines. ILWMP model was also not developed. Due to delay in initiating activities owing to change of the pilot sites and also COVID19 restrictions delayed the project activities. Only literature review and outline of ILWMP model was developed. After completion of the draft ILWMP, it will be consulted with the stakeholders and agreement with local stakeholders on the model will be established. But practices related to ILWMP (e.g. conservation tillage technology i.e. no or low tillage, use of new organic compound for soil treatment, water saving irrigation etc.) are already implemented. An implementation of eco-agricultural practices will generate information useful to support ILWMP plan development.

EQ 18. Has the wetlands in the project sites been rehabilitated?
EQ 19. Has the comprehensive monitoring system to monitor salinity, biodiversity etc. been designed and established?
EQ 20. Has the long-term management system to protect rehabilitated wetlands and conserve wetland biodiversity in project sites been designed?

Finding 18,19 & 20. Some wetlands in the project sites are rehabilitated. The comprehensive monitoring system to monitor salinity, biodiversity and water quality is established and functioning.

55. A total of 8728ha wetland areas are in the process of restoration with management committee and management plans for conservation. It will take few years to attain full ecological function of these wetlands i.e. situation before human interferences. As some initial impact of improvement of the wetland, number of IUCN red listed species using in these wetland sites has increased e.g. Siberian., Hooded., White-napped, and Red crowned cranes. Of these 22 species of Anseriformes sp. accounted for 23.66%, and 20 species of Charadriiformes and Passerines accounted for 21.51%, respectively. Two Class I national protected species were also recorded (IUCN Red List Critically Endangered species) e.g. *Grus leucogeranus* and *Ciconia boyciana*. The project has been conducting regular monitoring of water, soil and biodiversity of the area from the past two years. Sampling and monitoring is conducted on a monthly basis. The monitoring points have been set at water inlet, wetland and water outlet of the project sites. Data collectors are trained and equipped with sampling apparatus. Monitoring includes the surface water quality indicators including pH, COD, BOD, DO, TP, TN, TK, total salt, typical pesticides, etc. Monitoring also includes monitoring of the wetland capacity for absorbing agricultural non-point source pollution. In Niuxintaobao wetland, the capacity of wetland per unit area is being tested and calculated. Water Monitoring is carried out in four wetlands.

56. Two wetland co-management committees with Local County were established in Dagangzi and Niuxintaobao wetland, respectively and their management plans were also prepared.

EQ 21. Are there any unintended consequences of the project's actions (positive and or negative)?
Finding 21. A few unintended consequences of the project's actions were observed.

57. "Jilin Provincial Biodiversity Conservation Strategy and Action Plan, BCSAP (2011-2030)" is benefited with the information from the project. The policies supporting Da'an City demonstration sites has integrated requirements to apply SLWM model. 14th Five Year Plan of four counties (Da'an, Qianquo, Qian'an and Zhenlai) in west Jilin incorporated SLWM.

EQ 22. Are there any barriers or other risks that may prevent future progress towards and the achievement of the project's outcomes and objectives?
Finding 22. The project has limited time to implement remaining activities. The delay in disbursement of budget from FAO to PMO could also affect the implementation process to achieve the project objectives and outcomes.

58. The project was not able to accomplish all targets of the mid-term level (as per work plan). In remaining nearly one year (by October 2022) it has to accomplish second half targets as well as incomplete works from the first half. The government has asked the PMO to not extend the time rather complete all activities with the project end date. This is very challenging because one year of time to accomplish such a big amount of work is almost impossible. Besides, the differences in financial reporting of PMO and FAO has also delayed the disbursement of money to PMO from FAO. It was agreed in the project contract that PMO will submit financial report with related voucher as per FAO reporting provisions. But it seems PMO didn't follow this and due to that they could not submit financial report on time to receive next installment.

59. An availability of water for the wetlands in the future could also be potential barriers for the wetland management activities. But, as the department itself is the executing agency of this project and project is in line with the government's national plan and strategy to address the issues related to wetland, and the Department of Water Resources, Jilin Province committed to maintain flow of water to the wetlands, this risk may not take place in the future. Since the Department of Water Resources of Jilin Province and Northeast Institute of Geography and Agro-ecology of Chinese Academy of Sciences

(involved in monitoring) expressed their commitment to continue their support beyond the project life, technical inputs related risks are minimal. But no commitment is available in written.

Efficiency

EQ. 23. To what extent the programme implemented efficiently and cost effectively?
EQ 24. To what extent did the programme implementation mechanism contribute to efficient implementation of main outputs?
EQ 25. Has project management been able to adopt to any changing conditions to improve the efficiency of programme implementation?
EQ 27. How does the project's cost efficiency (cost/time) compare to that of similar projects?

Finding 23, 24, 25&27. The programme was implemented cost effectively. Some activities were efficiently implemented while others were delayed and not completed within the targeted time frame (mid-term point). Lack of full-time staff with the PMO affected the programme implementation. The project adopted changing conditions in the initially identified pilot sites.

60. The programme was implemented efficiently in some cases and cost effectively. None of the activities exceeded provisioned budget. The project made good implementation mechanism to contribute to efficient implementation but the most of the staffs of the PMO were part-time staffs so time availability and sometime overlap of their time for different activities created shortage of staff. The PMO has already hired a finance staff and the project director mentioned that they are planning to hire more full-time staffs to address this problem. But there is no additional money with the PMO for the salary of the full-time staffs or consultants so the management of full-time staff for PMO is challenging. The programme implementation was delayed for one and half year due to change of the project sites from Dakouzipao and Huaaopao to Xiaoximipao, Dagangzipao, Niuxintaobao, Beixian Rice Industry and Shenjiangzi Pasture. The changes were made to address issues like: Huaaopao and Dakouzipao were not equipped with water storage conditions; cultural relics were found in the project pilot areas and surrounding land area change of Dakouzipao was uncertain due to national policy and change of government priority. The time spent was for identification of new sites, reaching consensus and processing the approval with stakeholder. Similarly, the main piloting (test) area was adjusted from Songyuan area to Da'an area in the Baicheng Prefecture. These changes helped to make the project implementation more effective. The implementation resumed only in second half of 2019. The project implementation was also affected by COVID19 but despite this they continued implementation of activities in the field. The monitoring of field activities by the project management office and the regional technical team and implementation of training and biodiversity and water monitoring was affected by the COVID19. It is challenging to complete the remaining activities by the end of October 2022.

61. The project was developed utilizing the knowledge of other similar project implemented in China. The project was developed in 2012 and implementation started in 2019 and the cost of project implementation (salary of staff, equipment and other material costs) has risen by the time implementation started i.e. August 2019. Adjustment was made to address the problem. None of the activities of the project exceeded budgeted amount. The money allocated for international travel for knowledge exchange was unspent so the PMO is coordinating with the FAO to adjust unspent money for more activities related to publicity and awareness generation.

EQ 28. To what extent has the project built on synergies and complementarities with other biodiversity projects, partnerships, etc. and avoided duplication of similar activities by other groups and initiatives?

Finding 28. There was no specific arrangement made to build synergies and complementarities with other biodiversity projects. A few activities provided forum to exchange knowledge from different projects.

62. There are biodiversity focused GEF projects like Poyang Lake and Dongting Lake projects. But the project didn't make any specific arrangement to build synergies and complementarities with other biodiversity projects. But the project had partnership with the river–lake connection programme of the government. From this partnership, the project was benefited with water supply for lakes, rangelands, and agriculture lands of the pilot sites. To provide opportunity for sharing knowledge, from other FAO wetlands projects such as Poyang Lake in Jiangxi province, Dongting Lake in Hunan province, the FAO and PMO arranged study tours and several training seminars. These seminars contributed to exchange knowledge and the lessons learned. The learning from these seminars helped PMO to improve its implementation speed. The PMO also visited the project sites of Dongting and Poyang Lake projects to exchange ideas on the project management and implementation. Besides these, no other activity was found to further inter-project cooperation except for bird habitat in wetlands as they share much common ground. The project developed biodiversity & bird pamphlets based on the knowledge from their sister projects and shared with other relevant projects. Technical Officer based in Bangkok visited the project sites twice for monitoring and also to provide instructions on the project sites replacement and identification of potential service provider to support the project implementation. Further duty travel was affected by the COVID19 pandemic situation.

Sustainability

EQ 30. What is the likelihood that the project results can be sustained after the end of the project?

EQ 31. What are the key risks that may affect the sustainability of the project results and its benefits (financial, socio-economic, institutional and governance, and environmental aspects), as well as risks identified in the project document?

Finding 30 & 31. At this stage, there is little reason to expect sustainability of the project results.

63. The project is developed to contribute China's effort to address soil salinity and lake restorations and biodiversity conservation and the programmes were also developed with active participation of the relevant government personnel, community representatives, research institutes etc. This develops ownership of these stakeholders on the project results. Similarly, the project activities are tied with the ongoing government's agriculture, wetland, irrigation and river diversion projects, such as "Channel Nenjiang River into Baicheng Prefecture". The DWM mentioned that they are committed verbally to maintain the results of this project but there is no written commitment. Moreover, other local bodies and research institutes have also expressed their commitment to continue their support to continue results of this project and will also contribute to replicate models developed by this project in other wetland areas with similar problems. Similarly, using experience from the application of sustainable land water management practices, the Jilin Provincial Department of Water Resources developed a proposal and applied for funding from the Jilin Provincial Department of Finance with the aim to replenish more water into wetlands in Niuxintaobao and Dagangzi. The Jilin provincial finance department made financial support available to the Department of Water Resources for three years starting from 2020. 2.13million RMB was provided last year and 2.4 million RMB is earmarked for this year. But these supports does not assure sustainability for the post project phase. The technical staffs of the government are trained in wetland management and eco-agriculture and they will be using the knowledge they gained in the future also. Even more reliable base to believe the sustainability of this project results is that the farmers are trained in eco-agriculture and wetland management and rangeland management. They have practiced these in their land and wetlands and benefited with increased productivity. The increased yield and increased economic return will encourage them to continue those

practices beyond the project life so these results are likely to sustain after the end of the project.

64. The project documents identified 11 risks together with mitigation options. Of these 6 were of low scale and 5 of medium scale. There was no risk of high scale. The project always paid attention to risks while implementing the project activities. The risks were monitored every year and discussed their status and effect of mitigation measures. Since the results of the project are tied up with the government's ongoing activities and trained relevant government staffs and local farmers, it is expected that the results will sustain institutionally and socio-economically beyond the project life. But still financial risks to continue project results may remain as risk for sustainability. Another risk identified for post project life is availability of water for the wetlands. Though the Jilin Department of Water Resources has assured that they will maintain water needs of the wetlands in the future also, there is no commitment in written.

EQ 32. Has any project results, lessons or experiences have been replicated (in different geographic areas) or scaled up (in the same geographic area, but on a much larger scale and funded by other sources)? What results, lessons or experiences are likely to be replicated or scaled up in the near future?

Finding 32. The project's good practices are replicated by the national and provincial projects of the government. Besides, the project has plan to replicate good practices in more areas in the second half of the project.

65. There are one National project and four Provincial projects with corresponding national/provincial enforcement policies going on in the demonstration areas and replication areas, which are very conducive for the FAO project to effectively replicate. That is the main reason why PMO keeps insisting that they can complete the project by official closure time (October 2022) without further extension. The project is able to align and synergize with these national and local programmes funded by cross sectoral governmental departments of different levels that are interwoven into the overall framework much larger scale, called "River-Lake Connection Programme in West Jilin".

i. "Jifa 2020 [26]", namely, No.26 policy of Jilin Provincial Government- "Opinion on Supporting **Qianguo County of Songyuan Prefecture** built demonstration zone of ecologically prioritized green development";

ii. "Jifa 2020 [35]", namely, No. 35 policy of the Jilin Provincial Government, known as "Opinion on Supporting Da'an City to build Demonstration Zone of Innovative Development of Ecological Economy" has already integrated the requirement to apply the SLWM model. "Jifa 2020 [35]" is a government policy dedicated to implementing the deployment of ecological economic zone in Western Jilin and high-quality development of **Da'an Irrigated Area of Baicheng Prefecture,** with green transformation achieved, which leveraged FAO project results into policy level, a sustainability credit to the project.

iii. "Chagan Lake Governance & Conservation Plan (2018-2030)"; Chagan Lake is the watershed of Niuxintaobao, Xiaoximipao, Dagagnzipao, Xinmiaopao wetlands that play a role in purify/assimilate pollutants from the water receding from the paddy /farming lands in irrigated areas of four counties in western Jilin province, namely, Da'an , Qianguo, Qian'An and Zhenlai, they are project replication areas, accounting for more than 220, 000 ha., to meet project indicator.

iv. "14th Five Year Plan" of four counties (Da'an, Qianguo, Qian'an and Zhenlai) in West Jilin. They are all irrigated areas with plentiful paddy and productive landscapes to apply project modeling practices/results in developing ecofriendly agriculture with bettered farmers' income in harmony with wetlands biodiversity. These four counties are also the project pilots for which both SLWM model and Integrated Land Water Management Plan (ILWMP) are in progress and will be applied.

v. "Outline of Northeast Black Soil Protection Planning (2017-2030)"

vi. Government project "Channel Nenjiang River into Baicheng Prefecture

vii, Niuxintaobao National Wetland Park planning and action plan

EQ 33. Has the project established sustainable institutional arrangements or cross-sector partnerships?
Finding 33. The project established sustainable institutional arrangements and cross-sector partnerships.

66. The project is tied up with the government's river-lake connection programme and implemented by the Jilin Department of Water Resources and for technical support in research and monitoring, the Northeast Institute for Geography and Agro-ecology was contracted. These are permanent institutions and had been working in the project sites from long time. They already had ground information and preparatory works were already done as part of their ongoing activities and that helped for smooth implementation of this project. Besides, the Jilin provincial finance department made financial support available for three years starting from 2020. Last year 2.13million RMB was provided and 2.4 million RMB is earmarked for the next year. The project also involved the Shenjingz Rach (a state owned enterprise), the Hongqi Farm and the private company named Beixian Rice Base. These companies buys rice from the farmers in a better price for the paddy produced using eco-agriculture practices and that encourage farmers to continue their practices that they learned from the trainings organized by the project.

EQ 34. Did the OPIM contribute to increase national, regional and sub-regional ownership to support better sustainability of results? And to strengthen capacities of regional, sub-regional and/or national entities?
Finding 34. OPIM contribution was limited.

67. OPIM contributed only at the initial stage to analyse the executing partners and implementing agencies. As learned from the OPIM team, this project is not completely OPIM model but initial approach of move from Direct Implementation Modality (DEX) to OPIM. Since OPIM does not involve in operational/management part of the project they were also unaware of the progress of the project. They did their best in analyzing partner so that could contribute in the project management or leverage from the partners. So the contribution of OPIM was to increase ownership at national level through the selection of appropriate partner whose institutional setup remains beyond the project life and contribute to make results sustainable. Capacity strengthening at different levels is not part of OPIM team.

Factors affecting Progress

Financial management and co-financing

EQ 26. Is the co-financing being made available to the project as planned to contribute to meeting project outputs, outcomes and objectives?
EQ 43. What have been the financial-management challenges of the project? To what extent has pledged co-financing been delivered? Has any additional leveraged co-financing been provide since implementation?
Finding 26 & 43. The co-financing was made available to the project as per the plan. The money disbursement from FAO to PMO was challenge of the financial management.

68. The co-financing was made to the project as per planned to contribute the project activities. No complain was heard from PMO or any other stakeholders regarding contribution from the co-financers. The only issue was related to disbursement of money from FAO to PMO. Comparatively very small amount of the GEF fund disbursed to PMO (See graph below). There was no expenses related to component 1 and 4 in year 2019 and 2021. In year 2019, expenses of component 2 and 3 exceeded the budgeted amount and in other components, spending was below 50% of the budgeted amount. In 2019, less than 1% of

budgeted amount was spend, in 2020, 41% of the budgeted amount was spent and in 2021, 9% of the budget amount was spent. But due to differences in financial closing dates, the challenge exists in disbursing money to PMO because FAO requires to audit all expenditures of both PMO and NIGA (authentication by financial report) before delivering next installment and IGA (contract value 1.54 million USD) could not present invoices on time for verification of "real spending" as their bookkeeping practices take place at the end of year.

69. For example, PMO already paid NIGA US$540,000 by the end of 2020 and will pay 2nd installment US$600,000 towards the end of 2021 and remaining US$400,000 before project closure. But financial report presented by NIGA are far from meeting these figures, and FAO now refuses to deliver requested amount because FAO has not received financial report of the earlier delivery with matching figures of disbursement with the expenses. PMO stated that auditing in China is strict enough to prevent potential financial risks or fraud, FAO shouldn't be over-worried as to check NIGA's expenditure by verifying financial report. PMO didn't get financial data from the NIGA on time to include in the financial statement so the figure of money disbursed from FAO and money expensed by PMO didn't match.

70. Pledge of financing is over-fulfilled. "River-Lake Connection Programme in West Jilin" was aimed for Da'an city of Baicheng prefecture in Nenjiang River, Qianguo county of Songyuan Prefecture in Songhuangjia River and Niuxintaobao and Dagangzipao of Chagan and this was launched 5 years ago. This river-lake connection project of the government has provided co-financing for the GEF project amounting input of billions of RMB, including infrastructure engineering support and policy support, technical guide and management plans and cross sectoral institutional arrangement to integrate ecofriendly agriculture and restoration of the wetlands. The river-lake government programme therefore encompasses and supports this project in activity implementation and results application, with more co-financing than stipulated in the Prodoc, since more government policies and projects continued to be enacted/launched.

Project execution

EQ 29. Has the Operational Partners Agreement been applied efficiently?

Finding 29. Operational execution agreement was efficiently applied.

71. The Jilin Department of Water Resources was responsible for executing overall project activities and it had Project Management Office headed by the Project Director. The project had Project Steering Committee (PSC) headed by the chairperson who is also the Vice Secretary-General of the Jilin Provincial Government and the Project Director who is also the Deputy Director of the Department of Water Resources, and the Project Deputy Director who is the DDG of the Jilin Department of Finance. For daily management, it had project manager and several other staffs that are mainly the public servants from the Jilin Department of Water Resources. FAO supervision was accomplished through standard procedures and undertaken competently. MTR team received no complaints from interviewees about the excessive FAO bureaucracy or delay in procurements, and FAO's heavy requirements for reporting. Only issue was due to difference between financial reporting time of FAO and PMO which caused delay in disbursement of money. Key aspects of supervision were made through FAO's involvement in communication with the Jilin Department of Water Resources and other stakeholders. FAO was heavily involved in regular issues such as review and approval of work plans and budgets, review of progress and performance against such work plans, and completion of the tracking tools. Similarly, risk management options were identified in close consultation of partners and experts and the project was able to manage risk efficiently. The execution partners' agreement was applied efficiently and each partner fulfilled their commitment to the project.

EQ 37. Is project on track as it was originally designed or have there been delays in the project approval, implementation and reporting process? What are the major reasons of the delay?

EQ 38. To what extent did the executing agency effectively discharge its role and responsibilities in managing and administering the project?

EQ 39. How well is the PMO functioning?

EQ 40. Is there sufficient human resources, financial resources, etc. for the PMO operation and does it have the capacity to support project implementation?

EQ41. What have been the main challenges in terms of the project management administration?

EQ 42. How well have risks been identified and managed?

Finding 37, 38, 39, 40, 41 & 42. The project is slightly behind the schedule. The lack of full-time staffs in PMO affected project implementation and reporting. Risks were well identified and mitigation measures were provisioned.

72. The project was launched in March 2017 but it faced some problems like Huaaopao and Dakouzipao was not yet equipped with water storage conditions, cultural relics were found in the project pilot sites and also affected by national policy that the surrounding land area change of Dakouzipao was uncertain. Due to these reasons the project was delayed by 18months and started after changing the sites from, Dakouzipao and Huaaopao to Xiaoximipao, Dagangzipao, Niuxintaobao, Beixian Rice base and Shenjiangzi Pasture. These changes made implementation more efficient and effective. It was not easy to the executing agency to implement the project activities due to COVID19 and also due to change of sites. But despite difficulties, it has initiated most of the activities. The project had part-time staffs (except project manager) and they faced conflict with their other routine works which also affected the project implementation to achieve its target of the Mid-term level. Recently project finance manager is recruited as full time staff and it is expected that more fulltime staff will be recruited soon to speed up implementation process for achieving the final targets within the remaining project time i.e. by October 2022. As informed by the PMO they have sufficient financial capacity for operation of the project activities. For the activities that need technical experts, they signed agreement with the Northeast Institute of Geography and Agro-ecology of Chinese Academy of Sciences for technical inputs to the project.

73. The project analysed potential risks during project design exercise and also proposed mitigation measures. Risks were monitored every year and updated mitigation measures. The mitigation measures were effectively applied while implementing the project and this helped project to avoid risks.

Project implementation and oversight

EQ 44. To what extent has FAO delivered oversight and supervision and backstopping (technical, administrative and operational) during the project identification, formulation, approval, start-up and execution? What kind of support or changes is expected from FAO by the execution partners?

Finding 44. FAO delivered oversight and supervision and backstopping. Duty travel related monitoring and knowledge sharing at international level by FAO was affected due to COVID19 situation.

74. The FAO support to this project was relevant and its comparative advantages were considered while development of this project. The project is benefited from FAO's expertise and experience in developing methodologies and practices and providing technical assistance and capacity building in the management of land and water resources, including conservation agriculture and sustainable

intensification of production which is among the FAO core priorities. Capacity of the relevant department was assessed in the beginning of the project design and based on that capacity enhancement programs were provisioned.

75. FAO supervision was accomplished through standard procedures and undertaken competently. MTR team received no complaints from interviewees about excessive FAO bureaucracy or delay in procurement or FAO's heavy requirements for reporting. Key aspects of supervision were made through FAO' involvement in communication with the Ministry of Finance, Ministry of Agriculture and the Department of irrigation and water management. FAO team were heavily involved in regular issues such as the review and approval of work plans and budgets, review of progress and performance against such work plans, and completion of the tracking tools. GEF team in China had only two officers and one newly recruited Project Assistant, so they had very heavy workload considering the activities to manage each project (16PPRs, 16 financial reports, 8PIRs, 16 spot checks or audits, at least 8 PSCs, field missions and various capacity-building activities. FAO team (financial and communication staffs) has provided strong support to GEF team. It appears that the FAO country office team was helpful and supportive throughout the implementation, responding adequately to provide good guidance, honest and constructive criticism, and help to overcome particular problems as necessary. FAO support was focused towards achieving targeted results and support was appropriate, adequate and timely and the project staffs were satisfied by the quality of FAO support. Annual planning was done on time with active participation of stakeholders. Similarly, risk management options were identified in close consultation of partners and experts and the project was able to manage risk efficiently. It is learned that under the current GEF fee allocation system, FAO China doesn't have sufficient and sustainable budget to support GEF team.

Stakeholder relationships and partnerships

EQ 35. How do the various stakeholders see their own engagement with the project?

Finding 35. Stakeholders expressed satisfaction for their engagement with the project. They mentioned that they are benefited from the project.

76. Farmers as beneficiaries interviewed by the MTR revealed that now they have better service related to water for production than before, more timely and quantity is sufficient. Yield and prices are better than before which increased their family income.

- Administrators interviewed by MTR, such as Da'an Irrigated Area Administration Bureau, Dagangzi Town Government (Dagangzipao), Niuxintaobao National Wetland Park Management Center also revealed that government is able to regulate/provide water for paddy and dry farming land more effectively to meet needs of production of agriculture, husbandry and aqua culture.
- Businesses personals also expressed satisfaction regarding benefits they achieved by involving with the project. The Shenjingzi Ranch, a state owned enterprise (SOE) and Hongqi Farm (SOE) and Beixian Rice Base (Private company) produce on their own and also purchase from the farmers of the surrounding areas and they expressed that with the support from the project their yield is increased and also quality improved which received high price in the market.
- Northeast Institute of Geography and Agroecology (NIGA), Chinese Academy of Sciences, as the only institutional Service Contractor contributed mainly in research and monitoring activities. They also had monitoring data from the pilot sites and replication areas which helped to analyse the changes made by the project. NIGA got involved in the project through public and fair tendering, however, the contract value accounts for more than 2/3 (two thirds) of total foreign funds of the project.
- PMO staffs are all from the Jilin provincial department of Water Resources, they mentioned that integration of the project results into daily routine work of the department was helpful for department.

EQ 36. Were local actors – civil society or private sector – involved in project design or implementation and

what was the effect on project results?

Finding 36. Local actors and civil society and private sectors were not involved in the project design but only in implementation.

77. Local actors were not involved in the project design, but only in project implementation. Their involvement made very positive contribution to the project results. as such:

- Beixian Rice Base, a private company has been buying from the Hongqi farm, paying higher price than the market price because of the higher quality of the rice from that farm due to enhanced water supply based on SLWM modeling. As State-owned Enterprise, Hongqi Farm located in Qianguo Irrigated Area, Songyuan Prefecture having benefitted from FAO project's modeling practices and scientific data that makes water supply both timely and ample, which is vitally important for the farm to grow rice (1800ha.), peanut (1400ha.) , corn and soy. a total of 4400 employees (all from local and 2100 retired) are on the payroll of the Hongqi farm that also apply measures such as conservation tillage, returning straw to the field, organic fertilizer and nature-based solutions as introduced by the FAO project. These practices enhanced project sustainability with results in the aspect of social safeguards undertaking, livelihoods safeguarding, etc.
- Many micro private businesses owned by farmer family in raising crab and fish in wetlands as approved by local government, or growing paddy rice, corn, peanut and soybean, and household mill (grinding corn). Some of these SMEs hire local peasants and seasonal workers during harvest times.
- FAO project concept and techniques were also adopted to paddy of 1000ha. in Beixian Rice Base. Beixian Rice Base has been buying crop products from farmers and farms (e.g. Hongqi Farm) and particularly provide training and support to farmers in selection of seed, farming skill, use of fertilizer, etc., so it is a type of farmer cooperative.

Knowledge Management, awareness-raising and communication

EQ 45. How effective has the project been in communicating and promoting its key messages and results to partners, stakeholders and a general audience?

Finding 45. The project has been effective in communicating and promoting its key messages and results to partners, stakeholders and general public.

78. The farmers after learning about the eco-agriculture practice, adopted this practice in their lands. The training and awareness campaign was effective in changing attitude of the community members and farmers. Due to awareness of importance of endangered species and conservation of wetlands, they started contributing in the wetland management. The improvement in biodiversity status in wetland is also due to community support in favor of protection of biodiversity of the wetlands. Effectiveness of awareness was also observed from the active participation by the community members, youth, and farmers in crab-festival, the World Environment Day and bird loving week programmes. The successful arrangement in the policy (Jifa 2020(35), Jifa 2020 (26)) and 14th Five Year Plan of four counties (Da'an, Qianguo, Qian'an and Zhenlai) for applying SLWM is also due to effective communication of by the project.

79. The activities that the project conducted to communicate its message and results to partners, stakeholders and general public are as follow: The project conducted 3 project steering committee (PSC) meetings which helped to convey progress information and also information on risks or issues faced by the project to all stakeholders represented in the PSC. The project also erected 13bulletin boards on the project sites to provide information of the project to public. The project also produced newsletters and bird and wetland pamphlets and distributed to local communities, project partners, students etc. Similarly, the project information was updated in the Jilin Department of Water Resources and FAO CO webpages. The project also developed videos and project news were also covered by CCTV, Jilin Daily and ScienceNet.cn and helped to disseminate information on project activities and achievements.

M&E (design and implementation)

EQ 46, Is the project's M&E system practical and sufficient? How has stakeholder engagement and gender assessment been integrated into the M&E system?

EQ 47. Was the project M&E system operating as per the M&E plan? Has information been gathered in systematic manner, using appropriate methodologies?

Finding 46 & 47. The project M&E system was operating as per the plan and the information gathering was done according to the standard methodologies.

80. The project design included good monitoring and evaluation (M&E) plan which is comprehensive in its depth and scope. The project had a Result Framework (RF) with clear objectives, components to monitor achievement and appropriate to the issues and also designed considering the timeframe of the project. The output targets were realistic compared to the budget and timeframe. A baseline scenario was clearly developed to compare the achievement of the interventions. Roles and responsibilities of the partners were made clear from the project design phase. The indicators of the RF was SMART but still some rooms for improvement e.g. There is no mid-term level target in the result framework, baseline as well as indicators should have been gender disaggregated, remove IUCN red-listed Eurasian otter because they does not exists in the pilot sites, target of annual yield f 10500kg/ha is over ambitious target to achieve from the alternative agricultural management practices so need to adjust it to 8500kg/ha, yield of hay 1500kg/ha is too high for the degraded grassland so need to make 800kg/ha will be reasonable for the baseline.

81. The project had regular monitoring and reporting systems and they were very practical and sufficient. Monitoring also assessed gender aspects and monitoring was done as per M&E plan. The technical monitoring like testing of water quality, biodiversity monitoring etc. were done by Northeast Institute of Geography and Agro-ecology, while regular project activities monitoring by the PMO. FAO had responsibility of monitoring progress against the work plan and also financial monitoring. The progress monitoring was done through half-yearly and annual reporting to FAO. The annual work plans have been developed at the end of each year with inputs from the project staffs. The major findings and observations of all half-yearly reports have been given in an annual report covering the period July to June, the Project Implementation Review (PIR), which is also submitted by the project team to FAO for review and comments, followed by final submission to GEF. All reports were presented to the Project Steering Committee members and through these means, the key national government partners have been kept abreast of the project's implementation progress. The project produced 2AWP/B, 3PPR and 2PIR submitted and one PIR was in draft form. Similarly 3 semi-annual financial reports were also submitted. The project team visited field on regular basis to monitor the program implementation and progress. Since COVID19 pandemic, field visits were affected.

Cross-cutting issue

EQ 6: To what extent were gender equality considerations and Human Rights reflected in project design?

Finding 6. The gender equality is considered and reflected in the project design but gender action plan was not developed.

82. The degradation of land and wetlands had affected livelihood of the farmers. The women are more connected with the farming system, hence they are most affected due to degradation of land and water. The project's main objective is to improve household economy by improving the land and water degradation. So the project design contributes to the human right of living comfortable life with support to their economy through improved conservation agricultural practices. It has paid attention to gender equality in the project design and provisioned participatory practices with strong emphasis on the gender

equality throughout the project implementation process. The project ensured certain percentage of female trainees in the technical training, wetland management training and policy consultation workshops e.g. 300 farmers were trained in eco-agriculture practices in which 30% were female farmers. The project conducted training for 160 wetland administrators training from 46 work units in wetland protection/restoration technology of which about 15% was female staffs. Through improved rangeland management, many local workers are benefited including women e.g. Shenjingzi Pasture is a state-own enterprises ranch occupying 12600 ha. Land area, specialized in agriculture and husbandry of cow and sheep is providing job to 428 local workers (20% women). The project contributed in closing gender gaps in access to and control over natural resources, improved women's participation and decision making, generated socio-economic benefit/services for women and guided women to develop ecological industries such as reed-fish-crab model and edible fungi. In the project pilot area, women are the main labour forces in the production activities. With the promotion and implementation of the model, the amount of labour effectively reduced in the production process, which reduced drudgery of women and improved their living quality and enriched their amateur cultural life.

EQ 48. To what extent were gender considerations taken into account in designing and implementing the project? Has the project been designed and implemented in a manner that ensures gender-equitable participation and benefits? Was a gender analysis done? Gender in decision making?
Finding 48. The gender consideration was taken into account in the project design and implementation. The design and implementation ensures gender-equitable participation and benefits. Gender analysis was done but gender in decision making was minimal.

83, The project recognized that women are a significant actor in the agricultural sector, and more specifically, the pivotal role they play in inadvertently enabling acceleration of climate change if alienated, or slowing down its impact if involved. Hence, during project preparation, local communities including women were actively involved in the project related decision-making processes. Participatory practice was strongly adopted with emphasis on gender equality throughout the project implementation processes. Selection of farmers followed the criteria developed to ensure gender and social concerns are met. The Eco-agriculture training for farmers from wetland areas involved 30% women farmers. Similarly, restoration of wetland and improvement of paddy farming also generated work for women as observed in Da'an irrigated area e.g. A state-owned enterprise, Hongqi Farm located in Qianguo irrigated area, Songyuan Prefecture is benefitted from the land and water management model practices introduced by the project and scientific data that makes water supply both timely and ample for crops. This enterprise has 4400 employees with 30% women. Similarly, in Shenjingzi Pasture a state-owned enterprises has 428 local workers and of these 20% are women. But the project design failed to include activity to contribute in leadership building of women for their role in decision making.

Environmental and Social issues
EQ 49. To what extent was environmental and social concerns were taken into consideration in the design and implementation of the project? Has the project been implemented in a manner that ensures the ESS Mitigation Plan (if one exits) has been adhere to?
Finding 49. The project has taken into consideration to environmental and social concerns in the design and implementation.

84, One of the examples of consideration to environmental and social concern is change of pilot sites from Dakouzipao and Huaaoa to Xiaoximipao, Dagangzipao, Niuxintaobao and Shenjiangzi pasture due to environmental and cultural reasons e.g. the Dakouzipao and Huaaoa area had no water storage facilities available and also there was cultural relics within the pilot sites so these two sites were dropped. The eco-agriculture practices, improvement in rangeland and wetland are environmentally friendly

practices that help to increase income of the farmers. The project is implemented following planned mitigation measures which are also annually reviewed to update the risk situation.

EQ 50. Does project contributes to SDGs?
Finding 50. The project contributes to several SDGs directly or indirectly.

85. The eco-agriculture practices, improvement in rangeland and wetland help to increase income of the farmers. Increase in food contributes to SDG 1 (no poverty), SDG 2 (Zero hunger) and SDG 8 (Economic growth). Similarly, the project implementation stressed in women's participation and trained 30% of women in farmers and 15% in wetland staff training. Women were also benefited with job opportunity e.g. Shenjingzi Pasture, a state- owned enterprises has 428 local workers and of these 20% are women. These contributes to SDG 5 (Gender equity). The project has water cleaning and monitoring provisions which contributes to SDG 6 (clean water). The wetland and rangeland restoration, biodiversity conservation and eco-agriculture activities contributes to SDG 13 (Climate action), 14 (Life underwater and 15 (Life on land). Indirectly with increased economic return from environment friendly agriculture practices and rangeland improvement, it also contributes to health (SDG 3) of beneficiary household and their children's education (SDG 4).

5. Conclusion and recommendation

5.1 Conclusion

86. **Conclusion 1- Strategic relevance**: The project objectives, outcomes, outputs and activities remained relevant to both national and provincial priorities on addressing the saline land problem for economic and environmental benefits. The project's overall objectives and interventions were in line with the FAO Strategic Framework (SO2); FAO Country Programming Framework Priority Area 4; GEF Focal Area. It also contributes in Chinese Government's initiatives since 1970s to control salinization of land. It is in line with the 71 laws and regulations related to land management, biodiversity conservation and environment protection and also support Chinese Government's commitment to the UN Conventions, National Project Plan for Wetlands Conservation (2002-2030) and National Biodiversity Conservation Strategy and Action Plan (2011-2030). The sustainable Land and water management (SLWM) model that is being developed by the project will contribute to address saline land problems that more than 99.13 million ha area of China is facing. The pilot sites identified in the project document had problems like unavailability of water storage, existence of religious relics within the sites and also the government policies uncertain boundaries of the wetlands. Hence, selection of remaining sites should consider these issues before finalizing them for replication part of this project.

87. **Conclusion 2- Effectiveness**: The activities were implemented cost effectively and cost has not exceeded than the planned amount for each activities. The project began consultation on regulations with the relevant departments. Though the SLWM was not completed, relevant practices were already applied in Baicheg and Songyuan Prefectures. The project was able to integrate required provisions in the Jifa 2020 (35) also called no. 35 policy of the Jilin Provincial Government known as "Opinion of supporting Da'an City to build Demonstration Zone of innovative development of the ecological economy". The biodiversity conservation and SLWM are incorporated in 14th Five Year Plan of 4 counties in West Jilin and in the Governmental investment project "River-lake connection Programme in west Jilin". For effective implementation of the activities, 160 administrators from 46 work units were trained in wetland restoration and protection and 300 farmers (30% women) in eco-agriculture training. The project restored 8728ha area of wetland and two co-management committees for wetland management are formed. 30% increase in

biodiversity score and 40% improvement in Land Degradation scores and increase in yield to 3471kg/ha after use of new type of compound soil conditioner are some indicators of positive impact of the project interventions or progress towards development objectives. The water management guidelines and risk warning manual were not developed but only draft prepared.

88. **Conclusion 3- Efficiency**: The project was developed utilizing knowledge of similar other projects and costs for activities were provisioned realistically. The operation partners fulfilled their responsibilities as per the agreement. To avoid environmental, social and political risks, the pilot sites Dakouzipao and Huaaopao were changed after the inception workshop and new sites Xiaoximipao, Dagangzipao, Niuxintaobao, and Shenjiangzi Pasture were identified as new pilot sites. The synergy and complementarities with other biodiversity projects, partnerships development were weak because no coordination arrangement between different biodiversity projects was established. The project arranged a few study tours/seminars to share knowledge from other wetland projects (focused on biodiversity conservation) which contributed to some extend knowledge sharing between different project personnel. The project has only part time staffs except the Project Director and this has affected efficiency of the project.

89. **Conclusion 4 – Sustainability**: The Project strengthened capacity of relevant government staffs and generated awareness among local farmers in sustainable environment friendly agriculture practices which helps to make project results sustainable. The project was also able to influence some key policy documents (Jifa 2020 (35)) and 14th five year plan of 4 counties in west Jilin and in government project named "River-Lake Connection Programme in West Jilin". Similarly, it has also contributed to developing proposal for more funding for the continuation of the results from this project. Similarly, using experience from the application of sustainable land water management practices, the Jilin Provincial Department of Water Resources developed a proposal and applied for funding from the Jilin Provincial Department of Finance with the aim to replenish more water into wetlands in Niuxintaobao and Dagangzi. The Jilin provincial finance department made financial support available to the Department of Water Resources for three years starting from 2020. 2.13million RMB was provided last year and 2.4 million RMB is earmarked for this year. After improved irrigation and use of organic soil treatment compound, the yield from the agriculture land has been increased. This increase of yield encourage farmers to continue such practice in the future also. By the time MTR, no written financial commitment from any sources was available to sustain project results beyond the project life. Hence, PMO need to explore all aspects of sustainability and develop exit strategy.

90. **Conclusion 5 – Factors affecting performance**:
The concept of the project design was appropriate to achieve the goal of the project and to address gaps in the agriculture sector, wetland management and biodiversity conservation of the west Jilin Province. M&E plan was good and comprehensive in its depth and scope. The project had a result-framework with clear objective, components and appropriate to issues and also design considered the timeframe of the project. The output targets were realistic compared to the budget and timeframe. The project had baseline scenario to compare and analyse the impact of interventions but it lacked gender disaggregated information. Baseline figure of yield from degraded rangeland was unrealistic i.e. higher than potential yield. Likewise, Eurasian utter which is not found in the project sites were also expected. Similarly, some yield targets are also unrealistic. The Result Framework (RF) was appropriate to measure progress towards the targets and project objectives. Overall, indicators were SMART, however, there are rooms for improvement in indicators.

91. The project was implemented by the provincial government's relevant department i.e. the Jilin Department of Water Resources. Working with relevant institution with permanent structure develops ownership which makes results sustainable. Moreover, project was implemented in the areas where government had already activities and that made it easier to implement activities utilizing physical structures developed by them. Involvement of relevant departments of the University in the project to support research and monitoring activities was lacking.

92. The project oversight and implementation was affected by the COVID19 situation. Despite the pandemic situation, the project implemented many of its activities. The field supervision from the regional office and also knowledge exchange between similar projects was limited. There was no synergies developed between biodiversity projects. The difference of financial reporting time of FAO and PMO made money disbursement challenging and it has also affected implementation of the project activities. The project has produced several reports, erected sign post in areas around lakes, used electric and print Medias and organized several events to share knowledge with the wider audiences and also generate awareness.

93. Comparison of the volume of work left to complete and time available for that, it seem very challenging to complete remaining task in the remaining time. But PMO team mentioned that they could complete within the remaining time. One base to trust them is that replications will be taking place where government is already working and that reduce preparatory activities and make replication easier. But, rush work may affect quality of work, so the time extension may be needed.

94. **Conclusion 5 – Cross cutting dimensions**: The project developed strong ownership over wetlands by involving relevant local government, communities, farmers, enterprises and private sectors. But, involvement of NGOs, civil society organizations and education institutes like schools and universities are missing.

95. Gender equality consideration is well reflected in the design that includes enhancement of participation of women in training programmes, generation of job in agriculture sector and also agriculture related companies, plan to communicate equally when disseminating knowledge and training material. But the project didn't had leadership building programs for women. Women in decision making was not much seen in this project. Hence, programs to develop women's leadership is needed.

96. **Conclusion 6 – Risk Assessment**: Mitigation measures for risks were applied effectively while implementing project activities and risks were monitored every year to update the status and also to explore if any new risks rose. The project risks are rated unlikely.

The overall MTR assessment of the project is Moderately Satisfactory.

5.2 Recommendation

Rec, no.	Rationale for recommendation	Recommendation	Responsibility	Timing/dates for actions
Strategic Relevance				
1.	The site selected earlier overlooked information like availability of water storage, existence of the cultural relics within the site and uncertainty of the boundaries due to	Conduct through study of the sites before replicating the good practices in the second half of the project.	PMO	Immediately after the MTR (October 021).

	government policy. Due to this, the project had to spend one and half year to find a new sites for piloting its activities			
Effectiveness				
2.	The project didn't established synergy with other biodiversity projects. A few study tours and workshops for wetland projects were organized for knowledge sharing.	The PMO/FAO should establish synergy and complementarities with other biodiversity projects. This will help each other from sharing of knowledge.	PMO/FAO	Initiate from November 021.
3.	SLWM model and ILWMP are not completed. Similarly, water management guidelines and risk warning manual are not developed yet.	As these model need to be agreed with the stakeholders before implementation. Hence PMO should give priority to complete these model, guidelines and manual.	PMO	Immediately after MTR (October 2021)
4.	The project has conducted several training sessions but has not conducted post-training evaluation to measure the change in knowledge among the trainees.	The PMO should conduct post-training assessment to understand the effectiveness of the trainings.	PMO	Immediately after MTR (October 2021)
Efficiency				

5.	The project implementation was affected due to having only part-time staffs. The project has large amount works which has to be complemented within limited time.	It is recommended that PMO should arrange required number of full-time staffs to support project implementation.	PMO	Immediately after MTR (Oct-Nov 021)
6.	Large number of activities are to be completed by October 2022. It is challenging to complete all activities within the remaining time. An implementation in rush may affect the quality of the work.	No cost extension for a year is recommended. The PMO should discuss on this and recommend to GEF for no cost extension through FAO.	PMO/ FAO/GEF	Immediately after MTR (October 021)
	Number of person trained will not confirm knowledge gained.	At the beginning of the training and also at the end of the training programme, assessment should be conducted to measure the level of knowledge. This should be done following the score card methods. https://www.unssc.org/courses/evaluating-impact-training/	Number of person trained will not confirm knowledge gained.	At the beginning of the training and also at the end of the training programme, assessment should be conducted to measure the level of knowledge. This should be done following the score card methods. https://www.unssc.org/courses/evaluating-

				impact-training/
Sustainability				
7.	The project has trained relevant government's technical staffs. Also farmers and communities were training on wetland management and eco-agriculture. This makes the project results sustainable socio-economically and institutionally to some level. But training for policy makers and planners are yet to be completed.	The training for the decision makers should be completed earliest because this could have impact on project's sustainability.	PMO	Immediately after MTR (initiate by December 021)
8.	No written commitment for financial support for project results beyond the project life is available. Even for technical assistance only verbal assurance available. This does not ensure sustainability of the project results beyond the project life.	The PMO should assign responsibility to conduct assessment of the potential support from different sector to make project results sustainable after the project end. Based on the through assessment they should develop an exit strategy with provisions for making project results sustainable even after the project end date.	PMO	Within 2022

Factors Affecting Performances				
9.	The project document didn't have Theory of Change. It is now developed by the MTR team. The indicators in the RF was not gender disaggregated. Also some indicators were not realistic so need to correct.	The indicators and baseline should be gender disaggregated. Some indicators need change e.g. IUCN red-listed Eurasian otter is not found in the project sites so it should be removed. The baseline yield from degraded rangeland is much exaggerated (1500kg/ha) so need to make realistic (800kg/ha). The annual yield target from the improved agriculture practices together with irrigation is also very ambitious (10500kg/ha), so need to make it 8500kg/ha.	PMO	Immediately after MTR (October 2021)
10.	It is necessary to make regular monitoring of the results of the project to analyze the dynamism of the results. Yield from the improved practices need to be monitored in regular basis beyond the project life and analyse if any	The PMO should communicate and negotiate with the relevant departments of the University to arrange regular monitoring effect of agricultural practices and wetland functions.	PMO/FAO	Immediately after MTR (November 021)

	changes are observed. This helps to further improve the results of this project. Similarly, the project reinstated several wetlands and some initial benefits are observed. It will take some years for the wetlands to offer its complete ecological functions			
11.	Due to difference of financial reporting time of FAO and PMO, the disbursement of money was affected. As per contract FAO disburse money only after it receives financial report of the earlier installment. But late financial closing time of PMO caused late submission of financial report which delayed disbursement of money from FAO to PMO and that has affected the project activities.	PMO should stick to the financial reporting that it agreed in the contract document. Financial reporting should be made on time so that disbursement of next installment will not be affected.	PMO	Immediately after MTR (October 021)
Cross-cutting dimensions				

12.	Women play key role in agriculture sector so their role need to be strengthened from all aspects. Women's role in decision making was not observed in this project.	Programme should include leadership building training for women and also should give priority to women headed household while selecting the beneficiary household.	PMO/FAO	Immediately after MTR (Oct 021).
13.	GEF team in China had only 2 officers and one PA, which is not sufficient to support 9 projects in China. They were receiving heavy support from FAO China. FAO China doesn't have sufficient and sustainable budget to support the GEF team. More workload are being assigned to BH, such as MTR, FE but budget has not been increased. Under current GEF fee allocation system, FAO China doesn't have sufficient and sustainable budget to support the GEF team.	It is recommended to revise the GEF fee division so that FAO country office could have enough fund to support GEF country office team.	GEF Secretariat and FAO HQ.	Immediately, Oct-Nov 2021.

6. Lessons Learned

- Maintaining excellent cooperation with local enterprises, towns committees, and farmers helped to reduce impact of COVID19 on the project activities.
- Linking project with government's ongoing river-lake connection programme helped with the existing engineering infrastructures to implement the project activities successfully and this also helps in making results sustainable.
- Implementing project activities through the existing government structure helps to reduce cost and also implement activities easily. This also develops ownership on the project results making them sustainable.

- **Appendices**

Appendices I. Terms of reference for the MTR

Terms of reference for the mid-term review of the project Biodiversity Conservation and sustainable land management in the soda saline-alkaline wetlands and agro-pastoral landscapes in the western area of the Jilin Province (Jilin-BCSLM) GCP/CPR/048/GFF GEF ID: 4632

FOOD AND AGRICULTURE ORGANIZATION OF THE UNITED NATIONS

[May 2021]

Contents

Acronyms and abbreviations

List your acronyms and abbreviations here. Check the whole document and list all the acronyms and abbreviations you have used. Do not include acronyms and abbreviations that are not in the document. When an abbreviation is used for the first time in the text, it should be explained in full; it should be included in the list of acronyms when it is used repeatedly in the report. Typical standard acronyms and abbreviations include the following:

BH	**Budget holder**
CBIT	**Capacity-Building Initiative for Transparency**
CO	**Country Office**
EOI	**Expression of interest**
FAO	**Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations**
FLO	**Funding liaison officer**
FPMIS	**Field Project Management Information System**
LDCF	**Least Developed Countries Fund**
LTO	**Lead technical officer**
LTU	**Lead technical unit**
MTE	**Mid-term evaluation**
MTR	**Mid-term review**
NPD	**National Project Director**
OED	**FAO Office of Evaluation**
PMU	**Project management unit**
PSC	**Project Steering Committee**
PTF	**Project Task Force**
RM	**Mid-term review manager**
RO	**Regional Office**
SCCF	**Special Climate Change Fund**
SO	**FAO Strategic Objective**
SRO	**Sub-regional Office**

Introduction

This document provides the terms of reference for the mid-term review (MTR) of the FAO-GEF project "Biodiversity Conservation and sustainable land management in the soda saline-alkaline wetlands and agro-pastoral landscapes in the western area of the Jilin Province (Jilin-BCSLM)".

1 Project/programme background and context

1. **The FAO-GEF project "Biodiversity Conservation and sustainable land management in the soda saline-alkaline wetlands and agro-pastoral landscapes in the western area of the Jilin Province (Jilin-BCSLM)" was endorsed by the GEF CEO on 23 June 2015. The GCP Agreement Letter and Execution Agreement were signed on 1 November 2016 and 18 November 2016, respectively. Its official starting date is 18 November 2016 and its closing date is 22 October 2022. The executional partner is Department of Water Resources, Jilin Province (DWR Jilin). The project has a GEF budget of 2,627,000 USD and 16,800,000 USD co-financing.**

2. **The project's global environmental objective is to demonstrate and replicate an integrated model for Sustainable Land and Water Management (SLWM) in saline-alkaline productive landscapes including rehabilitation and biodiversity conservation in wetlands. The project's development objective is to provide long-term sustainable flow of income to farmer's communities from farming systems (crop, livestock and fish) in western Jilin province by building an ecologically resilient productive landscape.**

1.1 Description of the project, project objectives and components

3. **Box 1: Basic information**

A. GEF Project ID Number: 4632
B. Recipient country: China
C. Implementing Agency: FAO
D. Executing Agency: Department of Water Resources, Jilin Province (DWR Jilin)
E. GEF Focal Area: Biodiversity and Land Degradation
F. GEF Objectives: BD-2, LD-1, and LD-3
G. **FAO Strategy/operational program: SO2 (Increase and improve provision of goods and services from agriculture, forestry and fisheries in a sustainable manner)**
H. Date of CEO endorsement: 23 June 2015
I. Date of project start (EOD): 18 November 2016
J. Execution Agreement signed: 18 November 2016
K. Execution Agreement amended: 5 November 2018;25 November 2019;20 September 2020
L. Initial date of project completion (original NTE): 17 November 2020
M. Date of Mid-Term Evaluation: July 2021

4. **China has encountered the challenges of ecosystem degradation and severe land resource degradation often related to scarcity of water resources during the last three decades of fast social and economic development. Meanwhile the total saline land area in China is about 99.13 million ha, making up about 10% of the world total saline land area. The naturally uneven distribution of water resources within China, featuring a water-rich South and a dry North, has been plaguing the country throughout Chinese history. In recent times, human actions have severely exacerbated this situation reaching a point where ecosystems cannot compensate for the damages any longer and face the danger of irreversible degradation.**

5. The western part of Jilin Province in North-Eastern China is characterized by saline and alkaline soils, extensive temperate wetlands and rich grasslands exposed to seasonal flooding. At the heart of the West Jilin ecosystem lies Chagan Lake, a large water body rich in biodiversity and fishery resources, a famous tourist destination and natural reserve. Western Jilin is divided into two prefectures (Songyuan and Baicheng) and 11 counties with a total territory area of 51,801.5 km2 and 4.94 million residents, of which 3.31 million (67%) are rural residents. Compared with other prefectures of Jilin, western Jilin ranks as the poorest region in the Province. There are four ethnic minorities in Songyuan and Baicheng, namely Manchu, Mongol, Hui and Korean.

6. Over the last six decades, the Western Jilin wetlands witnessed dramatic water- and land-use changes and shifts in water availability as well as climatic changes negatively affecting their ability to provide ecosystem services. Land salinization in Western Jilin shows significant acceleration in salinization processes in the past three decades. The overall degradation of ecosystems in Western Jilin is dramatic and a cause for immediate and decisive action. It severely endangers the biodiversity and causes degradation and decrease in habitats for native and migrant birds and other wild life.

7. The main causes of these degradation processes include natural shift in water pattern, global climate change as well as local socio-economic dynamics resulting in altered land and water use practices:

   (1) Rapid population increase and land-use changes for socioeconomic development have created high pressure on the vulnerable ecosystem

   (2) Climate change accelerating the wetlands ecosystem degradation

   (3) Decrease in water flow from upstream areas distorting wetlands flood recession cycle

   (4)Overuse of groundwater resources

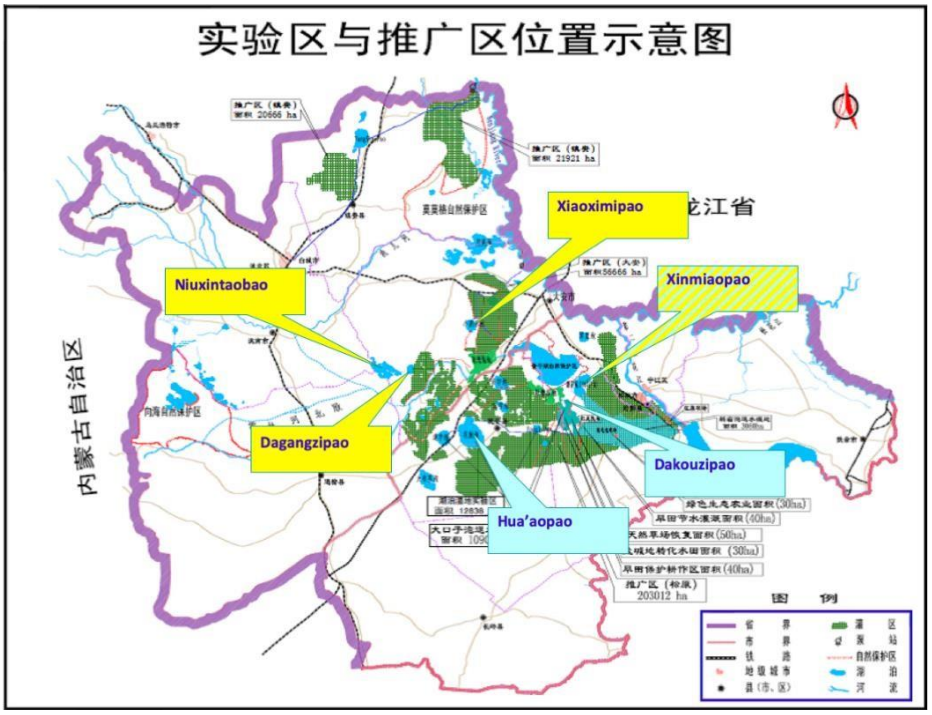
   (5) Improper water and soil management and salt and agrochemical pollution of wildlife wetlands habitats with irrigation drainage water

   (6) Overgrazing

8. China urgently needs solutions for protecting these landscapes while balancing environmental protection with the socio-economic needs of local communities. Diversion of water resources in the context of large irrigation systems will inevitably be part of these restoration efforts. Thus far, water diversion projects in China followed a rather heavy-handed approach, focusing on local agricultural needs while ignoring detrimental effect to the local as well as downstream ecosystems. Demonstrating a careful and prudent way of environmentally sound water diversion, featuring a clear understanding of ecosystem impacts and innovative solutions for maximizing environmental benefits, carries enormous potential to improve biodiversity conservation and land management across China.

9. The provincial government, Songyuan and Baicheng prefectures and county government in the western Jilin province are planning or already implementing a number of programs to tackle the causes of degradation, salinization and alkalization and to halt the reduction of wetlands ecosystem services in Western Jilin. The envisioned GEF project can rely on an exceptionally strong set of baseline initiatives. The infrastructural investments within the Songyuan irrigation zone are fully compatible with the environmental objectives of the project, backed by strong political support at all levels and implemented with major government resources. The irrigation scheme provides the backbone for the envisioned GEF activities and will be leveraged to create significant GEBs. The project activities will make strategic and targeted improvements to the existing set of initiatives, turning the irrigation scheme into a showcase example for integrated SWLM at the landscape level. In this way, the comparatively small GEF investment will yield exceptionally high environmental benefits of global significance.

10. **A map of the project area is shown below, with the initial pilot sites highlighted in blue boxes, and the new pilot sites in yellow. The new pilot sites are all located in Baicheng prefecture, while the initial sites were located in Songyuan prefecture.**



11. **Despite the extensive government initiatives, the following technical, social economic barriers remain, hampering stakeholders to adequately address the main causes for land and biodiversity habitat degradation in Western Jilin. These barriers will be addressed by the GEF project:**

    (1) Legal, regulatory and policy framework: the integrated approaches are not reflected in policies and regulations and in inter-institutional and sectoral coordination frameworks;

    (2) Knowledge, information, capacity: a good practice model for these integrated approaches needs to be developed; there is still a lack of testing and piloting of suitable livestock and crop production practices; there is a particular gap in understanding incentives and capacity needs for wider adoption among farmers;

    (3) Threat of agrochemicals and pesticides: conventional and intensive farming practices based on chemical fertilizers and chemical pesticides are the major challenges for the water pollution;

    (4) Threat of salinity level and irrigation water management: irrigation water management and integrated use of flooding water is a crucial factor for both cropland productivity and wetland rehabilitation as well as for the biodiversity conservation

12. **The strategy of the project to address the above mentioned barriers is to develop a comprehensive model for Sustainable Land and Water Management (SLWM) in irrigated areas that can ensure agricultural productivity, sustainable land use and biodiversity simultaneously.**

The project's global environmental objective is to demonstrate and replicate an integrated model for Sustainable Land and Water Management (SLWM) in saline-alkaline productive landscapes including rehabilitation and biodiversity conservation in wetlands.

The project's development objective is to provide long-term sustainable flow of income to farmer's communities from farming systems (crop, livestock and fish) in western Jilin province by building an ecologically resilient productivelandscape.

13. To achieve the project objectives and expected outcomes the Project has been structured in 4 components and various sub-components as presented in the box below.

Box 2: Components and Outcomes

Component 1: Improvement of the policy, legal and regulatory framework for an SLWM model in productive landscapes, including capacity development

1.1 Adoption of integrated SLWM model including biodiversity conservation by local governments and drafting of corresponding policy implementation guidelines

1.2 Adjustments of policy plans, legal provisions and regulations to mandate the SLWM model implementation and replication (including location-specific environmental standards for salinity and agrochemical levels)

1.3 Training of decision makers, government and technical staff as well as local communities and individual farmers (training in SLWM agricultural practices)

Component 2: Design and piloting of sustainable land and water management and conservation agriculture practices in production landscapes around Chagan Lake

2.1 Water management guidelines for agricultural use (based on and flexibly adjustable to the information gathered through the comprehensive water monitoring system)

2.2 Design, testing and adoption of sustainable agricultural practices for water and land use in coherence with the overarching SLWM model including the development of technical guidelines for implementation

2.3 Local agreement on Integrated Land and Water Management Plans (ILWMP) for agricultural use in coherence with the overarching SLWM model

Component 3: Rehabilitation of wetlands and grasslands leading to improved biodiversity conservation in the productive landscapes around Chagan Lake

3.1 Rehabilitation of wetlands in project sites 1&2 leveraging the baseline irrigation infrastructure; water flow management and control informed by monitoring system (see 3.2)

3.2 Design and establishment of a comprehensive monitoring system to monitor salinity as well as pollutant levels, water flow quantities, and biodiversity development *(early warning system to inform adjustments of water management and farming practices throughout the project)*

3.3 Long-term management system to protect rehabilitated wetlands and conserve wetland biodiversity in project sites of *Xinmiaopao, Niuxintaobao, Dagangzipao and Xiaoximipao*; includes a wetland co-management approach for local communities as well as awareness raising efforts wetland biodiversity conservation

Component 4: Monitoring and evaluation of project activities, dissemination of knowledge and information and public awareness raising.

14. **The main beneficiaries of the Project are:**

The Jilin Department of Water Resources and local water management authorities in the project sites will benefit from capacity building, access to international experience and cross-sector cooperation with other government partners;

Many of the benefits of the project will directly go to local communities and farmers. Especially in the long term, the more ecologically sustainable approach to water use in agricultural production will ensure long- term productivity and ultimately provide a significant surplus in terms of agricultural production. In addition to this direct agricultural gain, the project will safeguard the ecosystem of Chagan Lake, which is a major tourist attraction of the region. The land degradation that this project addresses is also a danger to the income generated from tourism in this region. Tourism is the second major source of income next to agriculture/fishery of the local communities surrounding Chagan Lake. The project will therefore directly contribute to the economic wellbeing of local people.

15. **FAO serves as the GEF Agency for this project. The executing partner on the side of the Government of China is the Jilin Department of Water Resources (DRW). Under guidance of the Ministry of Water Resources (MWR) at the national level, the project management offices in the Jilin DRW play the central role in the coordination of activities at the province level. Ultimate implementation is led by the county level governments and water bureaus, who oversee and guide the activities applied by household level farmers and local communities.**

16. **The total co-financing of the project is USD 16,800,000, including: (i) Water Resource Department, Jilin Province (USD 16 600 000); (ii) FAO (USD 200 000). As reported in the PIRs, the co-financing materialized is USD 16,625,000 until December 2020.**

FINANCING PLAN: GEF ALLOCATION	USD 2 627 000
Co-financing:	
Water Resource Department, Jilin Province	USD 16 600 000
FAO	USD 200 000
Subtotal Co-financing:	USD 16 800 000
Total Budget:	**USD 19 427 000**

17. **The project supports the China National Biodiversity Conservation Strategy and Action Plan 2011-2030 (NBCSAP) and the National Plan for Desertification Prevention and Control (2005-2010). The project is cross- cutting linking the GEF Biodiversity and Land Degradation focal area strategies. It supports the BD objective 2:** *Mainstream biodiversity conservation and sustainable use into production landscapes/seascapes and sectors* **and LD objective 1:** *Maintain or improve flows of agro-ecosystem services to sustain livelihoods of local communities* **and objective 3:** *Reduce pressures on natural resources from competing land uses in the wider landscape*. **The GEF project aligns closely with FAO's revised Strategic Framework and corresponds fully with Strategic Objective 2:** *Increase and improve provision of goods and services from agriculture, forestry and fisheries in a sustainable manner*.

1.2 Project stakeholders and their role

18. The key partners and stakeholders involved in the project, including the executing agencies and partners, local groups and beneficiaries. The initial stakeholder analysis is captured in Table A4.1.

Table A4.1. Stakeholder analysis matrix

Key stakeholders (disaggregated as appropriate)[1]	What is their role in the project?	What is the reason for their inclusion in or exclusion from the MTR?	Priority for MTR (1-3)[2]	How and when should they be involved in the MTR?
1. Active stakeholders with direct responsibility for the project, e.g. FAO, executing partners				
FAO	GEF agency	Manage and disburse funds from GEF in accordance with the rules and procedures of FAO; Oversee project implementation in accordance with the project document; Provide technical guidance; Report to the GEF Secretariat and Evaluation Office through the annual Project Implementation Review on project progress and provide financial reports to the GEF Trustee.	**1**	Interviewees: Carlos Watson, FAOR and BH; YAO Chunsheng, GEF Portfolio Officer; Li He, LTO based in RAP, Zoom interview; Yurie Naito: FLO based in HQ, Zoom interview.
Jilin Department of Water Resources	Execution Partner	Directly responsible for implementation of project activities, day-to-day monitoring as well as financial management and purchase of goods, works, and services (procurement). It closely coordinates with other partners at different levels.	1	Interview with SUN Fuling, Deputy Director-General of JLMWR, Project Director; Song Jilin, Deputy Project Director(tbc); Zhang Yingbo, Project Manager; Zhang Wenjie, Project Finance Manager;
Northeast Institute of Geography and Agroecology of Chinese Academy of Sciences	subcontractor	Through public procurement, the institute is recruited to implement the project activities of Component 2 and Component 3.	1	Interview with LV Xianguo, the leading expert
National consultants	Provide technical support to the PMO	Responsible for certain project activities and contribute to project outcomes	1	Interview with ZHANG Wenguang, CTA
2. Active stakeholders with authority to make decisions on the project, e.g. members of the PSC				
Ministry of Finance	GEF Focal Point in China	Overall planning and supervision of all GEF projects.	**2**	
Project Steering Committee(PSC)	PSC	Make decisions on the overall management of the project, and will be responsible for maintaining the strategic focus of the project and the successful execution of operational tasks.	2	**Interview with the LI Jidong, Chair of the PSC,**
Jilin Department of Finance (JLDF)	PSC member	supervise the project execution and receive the GEF project funds transferred by FAO based on the procedures for funds transfer as established in EA, and transfer the funds to the Executing Partner;	2	**Interview with HAN Jing, Deputy Project Director**

Jilin Department of Environment and Ecology	PSC member	Relevant to component 3 and component 2 and will play roles in project implementation and replication of the piloted land and water	2	**Zoom Interview; Additional**

[1] **Include the names of relevant individuals, if known, and be as specific as possible**
[2] **1 = essential; 2 = desirable; 3 = if time and resources allow**

Key stakeholders (disaggregated as appropriate)[1]	**What is their role in the project?**	**What is the reason for their inclusion in or exclusion from the MTR?**	**Priority for MTR (1-3)[2]**	**How and when should they be involved in the MTR?**
		management model and wetland biodiversity conservation model.		**Meetings may be organized during the field visit if authorised**
Jilin Department of Nature Resources	PSC member	Relevant to component 3 and component 2 and will play roles in project implementation and replication of the piloted land and water management model and wetland biodiversity conservation model.	2	**Zoom Interview; Additional Meetings may be organized during the field visit if authorised**
Jilin Provincial Agricultural Committee	PSC member	agricultural and livestock bureau, relevant agricultural extension services at provincial, prefecture and county levels will play very important roles in piloting the conservation agriculture and sustainable pastoral management practices.	2	**Zoom Interview; Additional Meetings may be organized during the field visit if authorised**
Baicheng and Songyuan Prefecture Government	Local Partners	major local co-executing partners for the implementation of pilot activities and replicating the SLWM and biodiversity conservation practices and model		**Zoom interviews with key local government staff; Meetings will be organized during the field visit if authorised**
Qian'guo, Da'an County government	Local partners	major local co-executing partners for the implementation of pilot activities and replicating the SLWM and biodiversity conservation practices and model	2	**Zoom interviews with key local government staff; Meetings will be organized during the field visit if authorised**
3. Secondary stakeholders (only indirectly or temporarily affected)				
Name Stakeholder group 1				
Name Stakeholder group 2				
Etc.				
4. Stakeholders at grassroots level who benefit directly or indirectly from the intervention (gender disaggregated where possible)				
Niuxintaobao National Wetland Park	beneficiaries	Key project site for Saline Land Rehabilitation, Wetland Management, develop and test the integrated and sustainable land and water management model (SLWM) in rice paddies and adjacent wetlands	**2**	**Zoom interviews with key staff; Meetings will be organized during the field visit if authorised**

Local communities and farmers	beneficiaries	The farmers will be the recipients of most of the targeted training and capacity development activities supported by the project, empowering them to implement SLWM practices effectively and effi-ciently and thereby paving the way for broader adoption and mainstreaming of these practices not only within the specific project locations, but throughout the far larger area covered by the baseline initiatives.	**2**	**Zoom interviews; Meetings will be organized during the field visit if authorised**
Etc.			**2**	

Key stakeholders (disaggregated as appropriate)[1]	What is their role in the project?	What is the reason for their inclusion in or exclusion from the MTR?	Priority for MTR (1-3)[2]	How and when should they be involved in the MTR?
5. Stakeholders at grassroots level who do not benefit from the intervention (gender disaggregated where possible)				
Name Stakeholder group 1				
Name Stakeholder group 2				
Etc.				
6. Other interest groups that are not participating directly in the intervention, e.g. development agencies working in the area, civil-society organizations				
Name Stakeholder group 1				
Name Stakeholder group 2				
Etc.				

19. This initial list of key stakeholders is important to help identify potential groups and individuals to be consulted and interviewed as part of the MTR process. The initial list is likely to be modified by MTR team members once they become engaged in the MTR and will be updated as part of the MTR inception report.

1.3 Theory of change

20. The project document did not propose any Theory of Change, but has a detailed results matrix. The Theory of Change will be constructed by the MTR team during the inception phase and used to guide key findings, conclusions and recommendations. The ToC will be included in an appendix in the MTR report.

1.4 Implementation progress and main challenges to date

21. The GEF project had been approved by the GEF in June 2015 and was launched in March 2017, when the first Project Steering Committee Meeting and Project Inception Workshop were held. However, due to some changes in government priorities, a delay in the implementation of the Songyuan Irrigation Area (an important baseline project), and the need to identify alternative pilot sites, the implementation of the project has been delayed.

22. A technical field assessment of project sites in the Jilin-BCSLM Project had been conducted in September 2018 and an assessment report completed in December 2018. The change of pilot sites was agreed by the multi-stakeholder meeting on 9th September 2018 and by the Jilin Water Resource Department on 10th September 2018. In April 2019, FAO's GEF Unit requested the support of a Consultant to revise the project document for the CPR/048 Jilin project in China, following the "procedures for Minor Amendment for FSPs" modality outlined in the GEF Guidelines on the Project and Program Cycle Policy (2017). The revised project document has been approved by FAO GEF Unit in June 2019.

23. With joint efforts of FAO and PO, a new PMO has been set up, and competent CTA, consultants and service providers are hired, which laid solid foundation for project implementation. The project got back on track after the PSC meeting held during August 22-24th in 2019. Major project activities have been conducted according to the work plan, but in general, the project implementation should be sped up, especially in the area of developing policy implementation guidelines and integrated land

and water management plan. The major progress of project implementation for each component until June of 2021 is summarized as follows:

Component 1: **"Several proposals on Wetland Protection and Restoration in Jilin Province" that were put forward by wetland ecological expert, had been approved by provincial leaders and would be included in the government-directed planning in the future. The project concept was successfully incorporated into the project "River and lake connected construction plan in western Jilin". The hydrological connectivity promoted the habitat restoration. The ecological connectivity of the whole Jilin Province will be enhanced to form a more comprehensive, scientific and reasonable system of natural protected areas. The handbook about wetland utilization and ecological agriculture for the training had been published.**

Component 2**: The surface water flow and water quality have been monitored according to the paddy field water supply, paddy field recession, wetland water supplement of the key points in different wetland blocks in Niuxintaobao. The medium and heavy saline-alkali land was selected to implement the demonstration of improved paddy fields cultivation in the demonstration area of Niuxintaobao National Wetland Park. The soil conditioner"Desodium-no.3"was applied. The typical salinized dry land was selected as the demonstration area with conservation tillage technology.**

Component 3**: 30 million cubic meters of water was replenished to the pilot of Niuxintaobao National Wetland Park. Through ecological water replenishment, restored and conserved 3300 ha of degraded reed wetland. The wetland reed-crab (fish) -rice composite ecological model has been implemented. "The Ecological Monitoring Manual for Wetlands (the first draft)" was compiled. The integrated monitoring system has been established to monitor the salinity, pollutant levels, water quantity, and bird and fish biodiversity in the project areas. Bird and fish monitoring plans were developed for different pilot areas and investigated the diversity of birds and fish in the project areas. The training workshops about wetlands management and saline-alkali land improvement were held in 2020. Two wetland co-management committees were established with Niuxintaobao wetland and Dagangzi wetland.**

Component 4**: Three PSC meetings from 2019 to 2021 have been organized and Project progress reports and Project Implementation Review have been provided as required. PMO has published three issues of newsletters in Chinese and one issue of newsletter in English was published on FAO website.**

24. **As the project design was done a few years back, some of the activities/outputs designed no longer fit the current situations nor have allocated sufficient resource, posing a challenge for project implementation and requiring for adaptive management. Besides, some project activities such as capacity building were delayed due to the unexpected pandemic. FAO and JLDWR worked together to propose revisions to the overall work plan and the project has been granted a no-cost extension of 2 years until 31 October 2022.**

2 MTR purpose and scope

25. As indicated in the project document, an MTR is to be undertaken at the project midterm to review project activities, procedures, outputs, results and financial flows against targets, over a given period of time and identify reasons for positive or negative variance, to suggest recommendations for corrective actions to get project back on track where negative variance is observed and to identify good practices and lessons-learned for future application. The MTR is a requirement of the GEF and also demanded by FAO for project monitoring and reporting purposes. It is being conducted for both accountability and learning purposes of GEF, FAO, and other participating institutions.

26. The main purpose of the MTR is to:

- provide accountability – to respond to the information needs and interests of water resource management and land management authorities of different levels and other actors with decision-making power, for example, FAO management and the GCU;
- provide recommendations to improve the project management by providing valuable information evaluation findings, lessons learned and good practices to managers and others responsible for regular project operations, such as the PMO, PTF, FAO-GEF CU and PSC; and
- contribute to learning – in-depth understanding and contextualization of the project and its practices, of particular benefit to the government authorities for water resources management, land degradation and biodiversity conservation, NGOs, FAO-GEF CU, FAO staff and future developers and implementers

27. The main audience and intended users of the MTR are:

- The project management organization (PMO);
- The FAO Country Office, members of Project Task Force in the FAO Headquarters and regional offices who will use the findings and lessons identified in the MTR to continue and improve the project activities and plan for sustainability of the results achieved;
- The GEF who will use the findings to inform strategic investment decisions in the future in China;
- The Chinese counterparts, such as Ministry of Finance as the GEF focal point in China, government authorities on water resources management, land degradation, environmental protection, conservation agriculture, etc., will use the evaluation findings and conclusions for future practice; and
- The Northeast Institute of Geography and Agroecology of Chinese Academy of Sciences, as one of the project partner and research organization, will refine their work according to the findings of the MTR and share the practice in other countries and regions

2.1 MTR scope

28. The MTR will cover the project implementation period since its start in November 2016, until June 2021, and will analyze all the project components. It will cover all the geographical areas where the

project has been implemented (Niuxintaobao, Dagangzipao and Xiaoximipao in Da'an County, Baicheng Prefecture; and Xinmiaopao in Qian'guo County, Songyuan Prefecture), although not all the project locations might be visited by the MTR team.

29. **The MTR will also consider the pre-conditions and arrangements in place that have contributed to – or hindered - the adequate implementation of the planned activities, including linkages and/or partnerships between the project and other major country initiatives.**

3 MTR objectives and key questions

3.1 MTR objectives

30. **The MTR objectives describe precisely what it should achieve and what it should examine in relation to the GEF evaluation criteria. It will address and rate the following:**

Relevance – **the extent to which the intervention's design and intended results are consistent with local, national, sub-regional and regional environmental and development priorities and policies and to GEF and FAO strategic priorities and objectives; its complementarity with existing interventions and relevance to project stakeholders and beneficiaries; its suitability to the context of the intervention over time.**

Effectiveness – **the degree to which the intervention has achieved or expects to achieve results (project outputs, outcomes, objectives and impacts, including Global Environmental Benefits) (GEF, 2019c) taking into account key factors influencing the results, including an assessment of whether sufficient capacity has been built to ensure the delivery of results by the end of project and beyond and the likelihood of mid- and longer-term impacts.**

Efficiency – **the cost-effectiveness of the project and timeliness of activities; the extent to which the intervention has achieved value for resources by converting inputs (funds, personnel, expertise, equipment, etc.) into results in the timeliest and least costly way compared with alternatives.**

Sustainability – **the (likely) continuation of positive effects from the intervention after it has ended and the potential for scale-up and/or replication; any financial, socio-political, institutional and governance, or environmental risks to sustainability of project results and benefits; any evidence of replication or catalysis of project results.**

Factors affecting performance – **the main factors to be considered are:**

- **project design and readiness for implementation (e.g. sufficient partner capacity to begin operations, changes in context between formulation and operational start);**
- **project execution, including project management (execution modality as well as the involvement of counterparts and different stakeholders);**
- **project implementation, including supervision by FAO (BH, LTO and FLO), backstopping, and general PTF input;**
- **financial management and mobilization of expected co-financing;**
- **project partnerships and stakeholder involvement (including the degree of ownership of project results by stakeholders), political support from government, institutional support from operating partners (such as regional branches of agricultural extension services or forestry authorities);**
- **communication, public awareness and knowledge management; and**
- **application of an M&E system, including M&E design, implementation and budget.**

Cross-cutting dimensions – **considerations such as gender, indigenous-peoples and minority-group concerns and human rights; the environmental and social safeguards applied to a project require, among other things, a review of the Environmental and Social Safeguards (ESS) risk classification and risk-mitigation provisions identified at the project's formulation stage.[3]**

[3] FAO applies an online screening system during the project design phase. This is mandatory, even if the project was approved before FAO adopted the GEF Policy on Agency Minimum Standards on Environmental and Social Safeguards (GEF, 2011) in February 2015, as FAO had already applied the Environmental Impact Assessment Guidelines in 2011 (FAO, 2012a) to screen and rate the risks of every FAO project. Consequently, the MTR team should review and confirm the ESS assessments and risk status at mid-term and any changes suggested, if needed. The most recent GEF guidance can be found in GEF (2019b). A GEF project should not cause any harm to the environment or to any stakeholder and, where applicable, will take measures to prevent and/or mitigate any adverse effects.

3.2 MTR questions

31. MTR questions are included in this section, corresponding to one or more GEF evaluation criteria (the MTR gathers evidence by posing questions to assess its degree of compliance with the GEF criteria). They will be refined later in consultation with the MTR team and documented in the inception report.

Box A4.1. Examples of MTR questions (to be adapted for each project)

1. Relevance (rating required)	**Are the project outcomes congruent with country priorities, GEF focal areas/operational programme strategies, the FAO Country Programming Framework and the needs and priorities of targeted beneficiaries (local communities, men and women, and indigenous peoples, if relevant)?** **Has there been any change in the relevance of the project since its formulation, such as the adoption of new national policies, plans or programmes that affect the relevance of the project's objectives and goals? If so, are there any changes that need to be made to the project to make it more relevant?**

2. Effectiveness of project results **(rating required)**	**Has an integrated model for Sustainable Land and Water Management (SLWM) in saline-alkaline productive landscapes been demonstrated?** **(Component 1) Has an SLWM model been included in the policy, legal and regulatory framework?** **(Component 1) Has the capacity of decision makers, government and technical staff and local communities and farmer been improved?** **(Component 2) Has water management guidelines for agriculture use been developed and used?** **(Component 2) Has sustainable agricultural practices for water and land use been designed, tested and adopted?** **(Component 2) Has local agreement on Integrated Land and Water Management Plans(ILWMP) been developed?** **(Component 3) Has the wetlands in project sites been rehabilitated?** **(Component 3) Has the comprehensive monitoring system to monitor salinity, biodiversity etc. been designed and established?** **(Component 3) Has the long-term management system to protect rehabilitated wetlands and conserve wetland biodiversity in project sites been designed?** **Are there any unintended consequences of the project's actions (positive and/or negative)?** **Are there any barriers or other risks that may prevent future progress towards and the achievement of the project's outcomes and objectives?**

3. Efficiency **(rating required)**	**To what extent has the project been implemented efficiently and cost effectively?** **To what extent has project's implementation mechanism contributed to efficient implementation of main outputs?** **Has project management been able to adapt to any changing conditions to improve the efficiency of project implementation?** **Is the co-financing being made available to the project as planned to contribute to meeting project outputs, outcomes and objectives?** **How does the project's cost efficiency (cost/time) compare to that of similar projects?** **To what extent has the project built on synergies and complementarities with other projects, partnerships, etc. and avoided duplication of similar activities by other groups and initiatives?** **Has the Operational Partners Agreement been applied efficiently?**
4. Sustainability **(rating required)**	**What is the likelihood that the project results can be sustained after the end of the project?** **What are the key risks that may affect the sustainability of the project results and its benefits (financial, socioeconomic, institutional and governance, and environmental aspects, as well as the risks identified in the project document)?** **What project results, lessons or experiences have been replicated (in different geographic areas) or scaled up (in the same geographic area, but on a much larger scale and funded by other sources)? What results, lessons or experiences are likely to be replicated or scaled up in the near future?** **Has the project established sustainable institutional arrangements or cross-sector partnerships?** **Did the OPIM contribute to increase national, regional and sub-regional ownership to support better sustainability of results? And to strengthen capacities of regional, sub-regional and/or national entities?**
5. Factors affecting progress **(ratings required)**	**Is the project design suited to delivering the expected outcomes? Is** **the project's causal logic coherent and clear?** **To what extent are the project's objectives and components clear, practical and feasible within the timeframe allowed?** **How do the various stakeholder groups see their own engagement with the project?** **Were local actors – civil society or private sector – involved in project design or implementation and what was the effect on project results?** **Is the project on track as it was originally designed or have there been delays in the project approval, implementation and reporting process? What are the major reasons of the delay?** **To what extent did the executing agency effectively discharge its role and responsibilities in managing and administering the project?** **How well is the PMO functioning?** **Is there sufficient human resources, financial resources, etc. for the PMO operation and does it have the capacity to support project implementation?**

	What have been the main challenges in terms of project management and administration? **How well have risks been identified and managed?** **What have been the financial-management challenges of the project? To what extent has pledged co-financing been delivered? Has any additional leveraged co-financing been provided since implementation?** **To what extent has FAO delivered oversight and supervision and backstopping (technical, administrative and operational) during project identification, formulation, approval, start-up and execution? What kind of support or changes is expected from FAO by the execution partners?** **How effective has the project been in communicating and promoting its key messages and results to partners, stakeholders and a general audience?** **Is the project's M&E system practical and sufficient? How has stakeholder engagement and gender assessment been integrated into the M&E system?** **Does the M&E system operate per the M&E plan? Has information been gathered in a systematic manner, using appropriate methodologies?**
6. Cross-cutting priorities **(rating required)**	**To what extent were gender considerations taken into account in designing and implementing the project? Has the project been designed and implemented in a manner that ensures gender-equitable participation and benefits? Was a gender analysis done?** **To what extent were environmental and social concerns taken into consideration in the design and implementation of the project? Has the project been implemented in a manner that ensures the ESS Mitigation Plan (if one exists) has been adhered to?**

32. It should be noted that GEF is placing increased emphasis on gender concerns and how its programmes and projects contribute to gender equality and women's empowerment (GEF, 2017a; 2017b; 2018a; 2018b). Consequently, the MTR should, as much as possible, collect and report sex-disaggregated and gender-sensitive indicators and results (further questions for assessing gender concerns are suggested in Annex 12 of the MTR Guide). GEF is also paying more attention to stakeholder engagement and development, the use of knowledge products and the identification of good practices. All of these areas require specific reporting when the MTR report is uploaded to the GEF Portal webpage.

4 Methodology

33. The MTR should adhere to the UNEG Norms & Standards (UNEG, 2016) and align with the FAO–GEF MTR Guide and annexes detailing methodological guidelines and practices. The MTR will adopt a consultative and transparent approach, keeping internal and external stakeholders informed throughout the MTR process. The evidence and information gathered will be triangulated to underpin its validity and analysis and to support its conclusions and recommendations.

34. The main evaluation tools and methods will include the following :

- **A** desk-review **of existing project documents and reports (e.g. the project document, the inception report, the Execution Agreement, project implementation review, project**

progress reports, backstopping mission reports, audit reports, newsletters, etc.). The MTR team will propose the project's Theory of Change (ToC) **after the desk-review. The ToC will outline the multiple linkages between the project objectives, outputs and outcomes to the national goals, and will support the evaluation process.**

- Remote semi-structured interviews **with key stakeholders, including representatives of FAO project taskforce members, PSC members, the execution partners, the local government authorities, key national consultants, important service providers, etc. Alternatively, where stakeholders cannot be interviewed under the current restrictions relating to the Covid-19 pandemic, an online questionnaire may be applied. The first draft of the MTR report will be developed based on the desk-review and the interviews, and will be shared with FAO and national partners for comments.**

- Field visits **–** in the event UNDSS provides clearance - **to the project sites in Jilin will be carried to verify project implementation and results in the field, collect feedback from local partners, as well as analyse the capacities of the local project teams. Face-to-face interviews and meetings will be carried out during the field visits. The MTR report will be updated accordingly to support/adjust its main findings and finalise its conclusions and recommendations after the field visit.**

- **A** wrap-up meeting **will be held at the end of the field mission to share initial findings and conclusions with the Project Coordination Unit and representatives of the PSC (including FAOR China, PTF, FAO-GCU).**

35. **Final decisions about the specific design and methodology for the MTR should emerge from consultations between the project team, the MTR consultants and key stakeholders on what is appropriate and feasible in order to meet the MTR's purpose and objectives and answer the MTR's questions.**

36. **Due to the limitations of the Covid-19 pandemic, this MTR will be undertaken remotely to minimize epidemiologic risks. As safety is a key priority, no stakeholders, consultants or project staff will be put in harm's way. In this context, the general approach is that International lead consultant will work remotely from his home-office doing a desk review of project documents which will be supported by remote semi-structured interviews using communication tools such as email, Skype, Zoom, WhatsApp and other convenient electronic tools. National consultant will be responsible to conduct interviews face-to-face or by using communication tools such as phone, Skype, Zoom or other means, following guidelines that are in place locally to minimize epidemiologic risks. To aid the interviews process of different stakeholders, the MTR team will produce a detailed evaluation matrix in which indicators and judgement criteria will be identified in relation to the MTR's main evaluation questions.**

37. The use of videos, photos, etc. is encouraged and is part of collecting evaluative evidence. All collected data (including photos/videos) will be remotely shared with the International consultant. Where relevant and where it is technically possible, National consultant may try to organize field video-calls from project sites to help International consultant observing directly relevant project outputs and activities. These field video-calls would be additional opportunities to witness project impacts on beneficiaries. Observations made during these visits accompanied by photos and short videos where possible should be documented in short (point form) reports.

5 Roles and responsibilities

38. The BH is accountable for the MTR process and report and is responsible for the initiation, management and finalization of the MTR process. Depending on availability and commitments, the BH has designated YAO Chunsheng as the RM, to act on their behalf.

39. With the assistance of the project's LTO and the FAO GEF CU, FLO and MTR focal point, and guidance from this document and the main MTR Guide, the BH/RM is responsible for the drafting and finalizing the terms of reference and providing input to the background and context section. The terms of reference should be based on a document review, discussions with the PTF and, if possible, a face-to-face or Skype meeting with the LTO to get a good understanding of the project. The BH/RM is also responsible for identifying and recruiting the MTR team members, in consultation with the FAO GEF CU and the LTO. In collaboration with the FAO GEF CU, the BH/RM also briefs the MTR team on the MTR methodology and process and leads the organization of MTR missions. The BH/RM and the FAO GEF CU's MTR focal point review the draft and final MTR reports to assure their quality in terms of presentation, compliance with the terms of reference, timely delivery, quality, clarity and soundness of evidence and analysis supporting the conclusions and recommendations. The BH is also responsible for leading and coordinating the preparation of the FAO Management Response and the associated follow-up report, supported by the LTO and other members of the PTF. Further details on the Management Response can be found in the MTR Guide.

40. The FAO GEF CU will appoint a focal point to provide technical backstopping throughout the MTR process, including guidance and punctual support to the BH/RM and MTR team on technical issues related to the GEF and the MTR. This includes support in identifying potential MTR team members,[4] reviewing candidate qualifications and participating in the selection of consultants, as well as briefing the MTR team on the MTR process, relevant methodology and tools. The FAO GEF CU also follows up with the BH to ensure the timely preparation of the Management Response.

41. PTF members, including the BH, are required to participate in meetings with the MTR team, make all necessary information and documentation available and comment on the terms of reference and MTR report. However, their level of involvement will depend on team members' individual roles and level of participation in the project.

42. **The** National Project Director **(NPD) facilitates the participation of government partners in the MTR process and supports the PMU in ensuring good communication across government. The** Project Steering Committee **(PSC) facilitates government and other partner and stakeholder participation in the MTR process.**

43. **The** MTR team **is responsible for developing and applying the MTR methodology, producing a brief MTR inception report, conducting the MTR and producing the MTR report. All team members will participate in briefing and debriefing meetings, discussions and field visits. They will contribute written inputs to the draft and final versions of the MTR report, which may not reflect the views of the government or of FAO. The MTR team leader will guide and coordinate the MTR team members in their specific tasks and lead the preparation of the draft and final reports. The team leader will consolidate team inputs with his/her own and will have overall responsibility for delivering the MTR report. The MTR team will agree with the FAO GEF CU MTR focal point on the outline of the report early in the MTR process, based on the template provided in Annex 12 of the MTR Guide. The MTR team is free to expand the scope, criteria, questions and issues listed above, and develop its own**

[4] **The BH/RM should be responsible for the administrative procedures associated with the recruitment of the MTR consultants.**

MTR tools and framework, within the timeframe and resources available and based on discussions with the BH/RM and PTF. Although an MTR report is not subject to technical clearance by FAO, the BH/RM and FAO GEF CU do provide quality assurance checks of all MTR reports.

44. **Ministry of Finance, as the** GEF Operational Focal Point (OFP) **in China, will be involved in the MTR, in accordance with the GEF Evaluation Policy (2019). The BH will inform the OFP of the MTR process and the MTR team is encouraged to consult with him/her during the review process. The team will also keep the OFP informed of progress and send him/her a copy of the draft and final MTR reports.**

6 MTR team composition and profile

45. **The MTR team will be formed by one international consultant, as the team leader and one national consultant, as the team member. Please refer to the TORs of the 2 consultants attached for more details.**

46. **The MTR consultants should be independent of any organizations that have been involved in designing, executing or advising on any aspect of the project being evaluated in the MTR and should not have been involved in any aspect of the project previously.**

7 MTR products (deliverables)

47. **This section describes the key deliverables the MTR team is expected to produce. At a minimum, these products should include the following:**

- The MTR inception report. **The MTR team should prepare an inception report before beginning data collection. This should detail the MTR team's understanding of what is being assessed and why, and their understanding of the project and its aims (set out in a theory of change). It serves as a map and reference for planning and conducting an MTR and as a useful tool for summarizing and visually presenting the MTR design and methodology in discussions with stakeholders. The inception report details the GEF evaluation criteria, the questions the MTR seeks to answer (in the form of an MTR matrix), the data sources and data collection methods, analysis tools or methods appropriate for each data source and data collection method, and the standard or measure by which each question will be evaluated. The inception report should include a proposed schedule of tasks, activities and deliverables, designating a team member with lead responsibility for each task or product (as appropriate).**

- The draft MTR report(s). **The project team, BH/RM, FAO GEF CU and key stakeholders in the MTR should review the draft MTR report to ensure its accuracy and quality in two review rounds: (a) a first review, taking around 10 working days, by the project team and FAO (BH, LTO, FLO and FAO GEF CU MTR focal point), then a second review, also taking around 10 working days, by the government counterpart(s), key external partners and stakeholders.**

- The final MTR report. **This should include an executive summary and be written in English. Supporting data and analysis should be annexed to the report, if deemed important, to complement the main report. Translations into other official UN languages, if required, will be FAO's responsibility. The executive summary should include the following paragraphs in order to update the GEF Portal: (1) information on progress, challenges and outcomes on stakeholder engagement; (2) information on progress on gender-responsive measures; and (3) information on knowledge activities and products. The template for the MTR report can be found in Annex 11 and guidance on writing the report in Annex 12 of the MTR Guide.**

- A two-page summary **of key findings, lessons, recommendations and messages from the MTR report, produced by the RM and PMU, in consultation with the MTR team, that can be disseminated to the wider public for general information on the project's results and performance to date. This can be posted as a briefing paper on the project's website but more creative and innovative multimedia approaches, such as video, photos, sound recordings, social media, short stories (for suitable cases or country studies), infographics or even comic or cartoon format, may be more effective depending on the circumstances.**

- Participation in knowledge-sharing events**, such as stakeholder debriefings, as needed.**

8 MTR timeframe

48. This section lists the due date or timeframe of the MTR and describes all tasks and deliverables (such as briefings, the draft report and final report), as well as the associated roles and responsibilities of the key MTR individuals and groups.

Table A4.2 Suggested MTR timeline

Task	When/duration (recommended)	Responsibility
Terms of reference preparation	**May 2021**	**BH/RM, LTO, FLO and FAO GEF CU MTR focal point**
Terms of reference finalization	**May 2021**	**BH/RM**
Team identification	**May 2021**	**BH/RM, LTO, FLO and FAO GEF CU MTR focal point**
Team recruitment	**July 2021**	**BH with input from the FAO GEF CU for international and national consultants**
Travel arrangements and organization of the agenda and travel itinerary in country for the field mission (by the national consultant)	July 21st-27th 2021	**BH/RM, project team and MTR team**
Reading background documentation	**July 21st -29th 2021**	**MTR team in preparation for the MTR**
Briefing of MTR team	**July 28th 2021**	**BH/RM, supported by PTF and FAO GEF CU as necessary**
MTR inception report	**July 31st 2021**	**MTR team**
Quality assurance and clearance of the MTR inception report	**August 1th-3rd 2021**	**BH/RM and the FAO GEF CU MTR focal point**
Online interviews	**August 4th 2021**	**MTR team with the support of the PMU**
Debriefing session – at the end of the data collection	**August 20th 2021**	
Production of first draft report for circulation	**August 22nd 2021**	**MTR team**
Circulation and review of first draft MTR report	**August 30th 2021**	**BH/RM, PMU, FAO GEF CU MTR focal point, LTO for comments and quality control (organized by BH/RM)**
Production of second draft MTR report	**September 7th 2021**	**MTR team**

Circulation of second draft MTR report	**September 15th 2021**	**BH/RM and key external stakeholders (organized by BH/RM)**
Production of final MTR report	**September 25th 2021**	**MTR team**
Management Response	**October 25th 2021**	**BH**
Follow-up reporting in FAO PPR or GEF PIR	**July 15th 2022**	**BH**

Annexes

49. **Annexes to the MTR terms of reference can be used to provide additional detail about the background to the MTR and requirements to facilitate the work of MTR consultants. Some examples include:**

- *Project results framework and theory of change* – **This provides additional information on the structure and causal logic of the project being assessed.**
- *FAO–GEF project MTR report outline, including the GEF rating table* – **This is available in Annex 11 in the MTR Guide.**

- *Documents to be consulted* – **This is a list of important documents and web pages the MTR team can consult at the outset, before finalizing the MTR's design and inception report. A list of key documents to be included in the "project information package" can be found in Box A4.2.**

Box A4.2. Documents to be provided to the MTR team ("project information package")

1. GEF PIF with technical clearance
2. Comments from the GEF Secretariat, the GEF Scientific and Technical Advisory Panel (STAP) and GEF Council members on project design, plus FAO responses
3. FAO concept note and FAO Project Review Committee report
4. Request for GEF CEO endorsement
5. FAO–GEF project preparation grant document
6. GEF-approved project document and any updated approved document following the inception workshop, with latest budgets showing budget revisions
7. Project inception report
8. Six-monthly FAO PPRs
9. Annual workplans and budgets (including budget revisions)
10. All annual GEF PIR reports
11. All other monitoring reports prepared by the project
12. Documentation detailing any changes to the project framework or components, such as changes to originally designed outcomes and outputs
13. List of stakeholders
14. List of project sites and site location maps (for planning mission itineraries and fieldwork)
15. Execution agreements under OPIM and letters of agreement
16. Relevant technical, backstopping and project-supervision mission reports, including back-to- the-office reports by relevant project and FAO staff, including any reports on technical support provided by FAO headquarters or regional office staff
17. Minutes of the meetings of the PSC, FAO PTF and other relevant groups
18. Any ESS analysis and mitigation plans produced during the project design period and online records on FPMIS
19. Any awareness-raising and communications materials produced by the project, such as brochures, leaflets, presentations for meetings, project web address, etc.
20. FAO policy documents in relation to topics such as FAO Strategic Objectives and gender
21. Finalized GEF focal-area tracking tools at CEO endorsement, as well as updated tracking tools at mid-term for GEF-5 projects (and for GEF-6 and GEF-7 projects with Biodiversity Focal Area (BD) Objective 2 and management of protected areas) and/or review of contribution to GEF- 7 core indicators (retrofitted) for GEF-6 projects, and GEF-7 core indicators for GEF-7- approved projects, as defined in the Core Indicators Worksheet (GEF, 2019a)
22. Financial management information, including an up-to-date co-financing table, a summary report on the project's financial management and expenditures to date, a summary of any financial revisions made to the project and their purpose, and copies of any completed audits for comment (as appropriate)
23. The GEF Gender Policy (GEF, 2017), GEF Gender Implementation Strategy (GEF, 2018a), GEF Guidance on Gender Equality (GEF, 2018b) and the GEF Guide to Advance Gender Equality in GEF Projects and Programmes (GEF, 2018c)

The following documents should also be made available to the MTR team on request or as required:

24. FAO Country Programme Framework documents, the FAO Guide to the Project Cycle (FAO, 2012b), FAO Environment and Social Management Guidelines (FAO, 2015), FAO Policy on Gender Equity, the Guide to Mainstreaming Gender in FAO's Project Cycle (FAO, 2017a) and the Free, Prior and Informed Consent Manual (FAO, 2016)

Annex II. MTR itinerary, including field missions (agenda)

The field mission was cancelled at the latter stage due to government's restriction on field visit owing to threat from COVID19.

	Unit	Name	Interview Time	Duty /Title	Contact Information	Role
	Zoom Group interview with FAO					
1)	FAO Beijing /Bangkok	YAO Chunsheng; Abera, Ydidiya; Li He; Yurie Naito	2021.7.28	GEF Portfolio Officer, FAO Beijing GEF funding officer, FAO LTO based in RAP FLO based in HQ	Ydidiya.Abera@fao.org	Implementing Agency (IA)
	Zoom Individual interviews with FAO					
2)	FAO Bangkok	Li He	2021.8.16	LTO based in RAP	He.Li@fao.org	LTO
3)	FAO Beijing	YAO Chunsheng;	2021.8.18	GEF Portfolio Officer, FAO Beijing	Chunsheng.Yao@fao.org	Portfolio Officer
4)	FAO Bangkok	Yurie Naito	2021.8.18	LTO based in RAP	Yurie.Naito@fao.org	FLO
5)	FAO Beijing	Carlos Watson	2021.8.25	China Office Rep. , FAO Beijing	Carlos.Watson@fao.org	China Office Representative
	Online interview with Jilin Dept. of Water Resources					
6)	Jilin Provincial People's Government	Li Jidong	2021.8.12	Deputy Secretary General/PSC Chair		Executing Agency, EA
7)	Department of Water Resource, Jilin Province	Sun Fuling	2021.8.12	Deputy Director-General/Project Director of GEF		
8)	Department of Water Resource, Jilin Province	Lou Junhai	2021.8.12	Director-Genera(minister-lever)/Executive Deputy Director of PMO of GEF		
9)	Project Management Office（PMO	Zhang Wenguang	2021.8.12	Chief Technical Adviser of GEF Project	18704474896	
10)	Project Management Office	Zhang Yingbo	2021.8.12	Project Manager of GEF	18943975255	

11)	Project Management Office	Jia Zhiguo	2021.8.12	Technical Supervision Expert of GEF Project	13074311097	Project partners as PSC member
12)	Project Management Office	Zhang Wenjie	2021.8.13	Finance Manager of GEF Project	13944891970	
13)	Jilin Department of Finance	Wang Zhenyu	2021.8.13	Jilin Department of Finance	15943262078	
14)	Jilin Department of Ecology & Environment	Duan Lijie		Sr. Engineer	13584336158	
15)	Jilin Department of Agriculture	Tang Xiusong	2021.8.13		18243052723	
16)	Project Management Office	Ma Jichao	2021.8.13	Policy and Regulatory expert		Project Expert
17)	Project Management Office	Wang Zhichun	2021.8.13	Saline-alkaline improvement expert	15843076972	
18)	Project Management Office	Wang Lin	2021.8.13	Bird expert	15948338167	
19)	Northeast Institute of Geography and Agroecology, Chinese Academy of Sciences	Lv Xianguo	2021.8.13	Leading expert	13943195012	Institutional Service Contractor for component2/ 3
	Online interview with Da'an city and Qian'guo County of Baicheng/ Songyuan city					
20)	Niuxintaobao	Li Yan	2021.8.16	Director of Jilin Niuxintaobao National Wetland Park Management Center	15043639666	Project site
21)	Dagangpao	Zhang Shaoqian	2021.8.16	Deputy Secretary of the Party Committee of Dagangzi Town Government	15843652225	
22)	Shenjingzi Pasture	Cui Yanbin	2021.8.16	Deputy Director of Shenjingzi Ranch Duck, cow, rice	18304432999	
	Online interview with beneficiaries					
23)	Farmers as beneficiaries	Wen Guoqing	2021.8.16	Rice farmer	13843650419	Project beneficiaries
24)	Private sector company having been sourcing reed, crab and rice	Cheng Cheng	2021.8.16	Crab and fish farmer	1376616101	
25)	Community based NGO	Zhang Jianlin	2021.8.16	Rice farmer	18304432999	

26)	Qianjin Village, Hailuo Town, Daan Irrigated Area	Chen Zhimin	2021.8.16	Owner-manager of household mill		

Annex III. Stakeholders interviewed during the MTR

Organisation		Name of Interviewee	Date of Interview	Position	Contact of Interviewee	Role
1)	FAO Beijing /Bangkok	YAO Chunsheng; Abera, Ydidiya; Li He; Yurie Naito	2021.7.28	GEF Portfolio Officer, FAO Beijing GEF funding officer, FAO LTO based in RAP FLO based in HQ	Ydidiya.Abera@fao.org	Implementing Agency (IA)
	Zoom Individual interviews with FAO					
2)	FAO Bangkok	Li He	2021.8.16	LTO based in RAP	He.Li@fao.org	LTO
3)	FAO Beijing	YAO Chunsheng;	2021.8.18	GEF Portfolio Officer, FAO Beijing	Chunsheng.Yao@fao.org	Portfolio Officer
4)	FAO Bangkok	Yurie Naito	2021.8.18	LTO based in RAP	Yurie.Naito@fao.org	FLO
5)	FAO Beijing	Carlos Watson	Tried twice but not able to catch him	China Office Rep. , FAO Beijing	Carlos.Watson@fao.org	China Office Rep.
6)	FAO Rome	Gianmarco Morici	2021.8.27	OPIM, FAO	OPIM-MS701@fao.org	OPIM
7)	FAO ROME/ Beijing/Bangkok	Braun, Genevieve YAO Chunsheng; Abera, Ydidiya; Li He; Yurie Naito	2021.8.31	GEF Portfolio Officer, FAO Beijing GEF funding officer, FAO LTO based in RAP FLO based in HQ	Braun, Genevieve (OCB) <Genevieve.Braun@fao.org>	Debriefing by MTR to FAO
	Online interview with Jilin Dept. of Water Resources					
8)	Department of Water Resource, Jilin Province	Sun Fuling	2021.8.18	Deputy Director-General/Project Director of GEF		Executive Agency (EA)
9)	Project Management Office（PMO）	Zhang Wenguang	2021.8.12	Chief Technical Adviser of GEF Project	18704474896	
10)	Project Management Office	Zhang Yingbo	2021.8.12	Project Manager of GEF	18943975255	
11)	Project Management Office	Jia Zhiguo	2021.8.12	Technical Supervision Expert of GEF Project	13074311097	
12)	Project Management Office	Zhang Wenjie	2021.8.13	Finance Manager of GEF Project	13944891970	

13)	Jilin Department of Finance	Wang Zhenyu	2021.8.12	Jilin Department of Finance	15943262078	PSC member
14)	Jilin Department of Ecology & Environment	Duan Lijie	2021.8.12	Sr. Engineer	13584336158	
15)	Jilin Department of Agriculture	Tang Xiusong	2021.8.12	Division chief	18243052723	
16)	Project Management Office	Ma Jichao	2021.8.12	Policy and Regulatory expert		Project expert
17)	Project Management Office	Wang Zhichun	2021.8.12	Saline-alkaline improvement expert	15843076972	
18)	Project Management Office	Wang Lin	2021.8.12	Bird expert	15948338167	
19)	Northeast Institute of Geography and Agroecology, Chinese Academy of Sciences	Lv Xianguo	2021.8.12	Leading expert	13943195012	Institutional Service Contractor for component2 /3
	Online interview with Da'an city and Qian'guo County of Baicheng/ Songyuan city					
20)	Da'an Irrigated Area Administration Bureau	Wang Duo	2021.8.17	Deputy Director General		Project site
21)	Niuxintaobao National Wetland Park Management Center	Li Yan	2021.8.17	Director of Jilin Niuxintaobao National Wetland Park Management Center	15043639666	
22)	Dagangzi Town Government	Zhang Shaoqian	2021.8.17	Deputy Secretary of the Party Committee of Dagangzi Town Government	15843652225	
23)	Shenjingzi Pasture	Cui Yanbin	2021.8.17	Deputy Director of Shenjingzi Ranch Co. Ltd.	18304432999	
	Online interview with beneficiaries					
24)	Hongqi Farm in Qian'guo Irrigated Area	Cui Mancheng	2021.8.17	General Manager of Hongqi farm that grows Paddy rice, peanut, corn, soy bean, purchased by Beixian Rice Base		Project beneficiaries
25)	Farmers in Dagagnzi Town	Wen Guoqing	2021.8.17	Corn farmer of 10 ha.	13843650419	

26)	Farmer of rice in Qian'guo irrigated area	Mo Anbo	2021.8.17	Rice farmer of 72 ha. Paddy, with rice purchased by Shenjingzi Ranch		
27)	Farmer of reed, crab and rice in Niuxintaobao	Cheng Cheng	2021.8.17	Crab and fish farmer in Niuxintaobao on 900 ha. wetlands	1376616101	
28)	Rice farmer in Niuxintaobao	Zhang Jianmin	2021.8.17	Rice farmer of 400 ha. paddy	18304432999	
29)	Qianjin Village, Hailuo Town, Da'an Irrigated Area	Chen Zhimin	2021.8.17	Owner-manager of household mill Paddy		

Annex IV. MTR matrix (review questions and sub-questions)

Evaluation Questions	Indicator	Source	Methodology
Strategic Relevance			
1. To what extent FAO and GEF's support to targeted province has been relevant? How did the project design respond to the needs, priorities and capacities of the project's main counterparts?	Relevant to address issues of the province so directly related to needs, priorities and capacities of counterparts.	Project document, Annual/ quarterly reports and key informant interviews	Comparison of project design (outcomes, theory of change) with country/province needs and priorities.
2. How did the project design respond to the priorities of the FAO country programming Framework and the GEF focal areas/operational project strategies?	Relevant to FAO country programme framework and GEF focal area programme strategies.	Project Document, FAO country Programme, GEF focal areas/operational programme strategy document. Interview with FAO and GEF staffs.	Comparison of project design (outcomes, theory of change) with FAO country program, GEF focal areas/operational programme strategy.
3. Is project expected outcomes congruent to the needs and priorities of the targeted beneficiaries (local communities, men and women, indigenous communities etc.)	Outcome congruent to the needs and priorities of beneficiaries.	Project document, annual reports, Interview with key informants.	Comparison of project outcomes with the needs and priorities of the beneficiaries. Comparison of activities and outcomes with issues of the area.
4. To what extent was the technical support provided by FAO relevant to the country?	FAO technical support relevant to address issues of the country.	Baseline information technical status from the project document, role of technical support from FAO to various activities and achievement information from	Comparison of technical support provided by FAO with the baseline technical status of the country and changes after such support from FAO.

		annual and quarterly reports. Key Informant Interviews	
5. To what extent were FAO's comparative advantages and existing complementarities with other partners taken into account in the project design?	Consideration of FAO comparative advantages and existing complementarities with other partners in project design.	Project document, Key Informant Interviews.	Analysis of project design (project document) to find out use of knowledge/lessons from FAO and other partners to address the gaps in the relevant sectors.
6. To what extent were gender equality considerations and Human Rights reflected in project design?	Gender consideration in decision making, project design and benefit distribution.	Project document, annual and quarterly reports. Interview with informants.	Analysis of the project design and implementation plans to see gender and human right considerations.
7. Has there been any changes in the relevance of the project since its formulations? Is there any need to make change in the design/activities to make it more relevant?	Changes in program and inappropriateness of design/activities.	Country document. Project document. Information from Questionnaire survey and key informant interviews	Analysis of the baseline situation (climate change impact, vulnerability, policy, economic situation, technical capacity, knowledge base, CC effect to Agro and water sector etc.) of the targeted province.
8. To what extent is the project's results framework/log-frame (i.e. theory of change, intervention logic, indicators etc.) appropriate to reach the project's goal and objectives?	Relevance of outputs and outcomes to attain objectives.	Log-frame and theory of change information from Project document and other reports of the project.	Analysis of indicators (if they are SMART), baselines, analysis of internal and external coherence of RF design and the ToC; testing the ToC logic and assumptions
Effectiveness – progress towards results			
9. Has an integrated model for Sustainable Land and Water Management (SLWM) in saline-alkaline productive landscapes been developed and demonstrated?	SLWM model document, information related to implementation of the model.	Project document; annual reports, Key Informant Interviews	Assessment of integrated model and implementation reports, analysis of project activities, outputs and outcomes and effectiveness of model to address water and

			land sector.
10. Has an SLWM model been included in the policy, legal and regulatory framework? (component 1)	Policy, legal and regulatory framework acknowledged SLWM model.	Key Informant Interviews; project documents; annual reports, quarterly reports,	Review of the quarterly and annual reports to generate information on inclusion of SLWM model in the policy, legal and regulatory frameworks.
11. Has the capacity of decision makers, government and technical staff and local communities and farmer been improved? (component 1)	Improved capacity of decision maker, government and technical staffs and local communities and farmers.	Post training evaluation report, quarterly and annual reports, Interview with trainees.	Training reports, post training evaluation information.
12. Has water management guidelines for agriculture use been developed and used? (component 2)	Water management guidelines for agriculture use.	Progress reports, water management guidelines document. Key informant interviews.	Study water management guidelines if developed and acquire information about its use.
13. Has sustainable agriculture practices for water and land use been designed, tested and adopted? (Component 2)	Sustainable agriculture practices for water and land use,	Work-plans, Annual reports, Quarterly reports, sustainable agriculture practices for water and land use document, key informant interviews.	Review work plans, progress reports, sustainable agriculture practices for water and land use document, discussion with the stakeholders on the subject.
14. Has local agreement on integrated land and water management plan (ILWMP) been developed? (Component2)	Agreement paper indicating local agreement on ILWMN.	Work plans, Annual reports, Quarterly reports, agreement document, key informant interviews.	Review work plans, progress reports, and agreement document, discuss with the stakeholders on the subject, and discuss with the key informants.

15. Has the wetlands in the project sites been rehabilitated? (component 3)	Area of wetland rehabilitated.	Work-plans, annual reports, quarterly reports with information on rehabilitated wetland area and key informant interviews.	Review work plans, progress reports, make site visits to acquire first-hand information and discuss with the key informants.
16. Has the comprehensive monitoring system to monitor salinity, biodiversity etc. been designed and established? (Component 3)	Document with information on designed monitoring system and establishment.	Work-plan, progress reports, monitoring report, Monitoring system plan document and key informant interviews.	Review work plans, progress reports, M&E plans, monitoring reports and discuss with key informants.
17. Has the long-term management system to protect rehabilitated wetlands and conserve wetland biodiversity in project sites been designed? (Component 3)	Management plan to protect rehabilitated wetland and its biodiversity. Information from key informant on its use.	wetland management plans, key informant interview.	Review progress reports, work plans, wetland and biodiversity management plans and institutional arrangement for wetland management.
18. Are there any unintended consequences of the project's actions (positive and or negative)?	Issues identified in PIR and monitoring reports.	Progress reports, PIR and interview with key informants.	Review of progress reports, PIR and discussion with the key informants.
19. Are there any barriers or other risks that may prevent future progress towards and the achievement of the project's outcomes and objectives?	Risk assessment report, PIR and M&E report with information on barriers or risks.	Risk and assumption review, PIR, M&E reports, key informants interview.	Review of risk and assumption review report, PIR and M&E reports, interview with key informants.
Efficiency			

20. To what extent the programme implemented efficiently and cost effectively?	PIR report with implementation information.	Work-plan, PIR, M&E reports. key informant interviews.	Assessment of the planned activities against the accomplishments and quality of the work and financial reports. Discussion with the key informants.
21. To what extent did the programme implementation mechanism contribute to efficient implementation of main outputs?	Program implementation information and information from the PMO staffs.	Annual project reports, work plans, PIR and key informant interviews	Analysis of Annual Reports and PIR against the work plans and interview with key informants
22. Has project management been able to adopt to any changing conditions to improve the efficiency of programme implementation?	Change in management to adopt the changing condition.	Annual report, M&E reports, work plans and interview with the project staffs.	Assessment of work plans against the progress reports, study of justifications for the change in activities and interaction with key informants
23. Is the co-financing being made available to the project as planned to contribute to meeting project outputs, outcomes and objectives?	Co-financing information in the financial statements.	Project document, financial statements and interview with project staffs.	Assessment of Project document and financial statements and discussion with the project team.
24. How does the project's cost efficiency (cost/time) compare to that of similar projects?	Project implementation information from PIR and annual reports. Information on cost of implementation.	Annual reports, PIR financial statements.	Assessment of project achievement, actual costs and budget provisioned for the activities. Interview with key informants.
25. To what extent has the project built on synergies and complementarities with other biodiversity projects, partnerships, etc. and avoided duplication of similar activities by other groups and initiatives?	Information of synergies and complementarities in the project document, PIR, and annual reports.	Project document, progress reports, M&E reports.	Assessment of Project document, progress reports, M&E reports and interview with key informants.

26. Has the Operational Partners Agreement been applied efficiently?	Implementation of agreed activities in annual report and PIR.	Work plans, PIR, agreement documents, progress reports. Interview with key project staffs.	Assessment of work plan, PIR, agreement documents, progress reports. Interview with partners.
Sustainability (It is earlier to analyze sustainability but MTR will analyze if any commitment to continue technical or financial support to continue outcome of this project or up scaling of the lessons).			
27. What is the likelihood that the project results can be sustained after the end of the project?	Information on acknowledgement of project outcomes and provision for replication, continuation of technical and institutional supports. Information of replication of outcomes of the project and financial arrangements.	Annual reports, commitment documents from government or other institutions.	Analyse the government or other institutions commitments, replication plans, institutional structure developed by the project and capacity enhancement by the project. Interview the FAO, government partners and other partners to find out if they have any project in pipeline or already approved that replicate results from this project.
28. What are the key risks that may affect the sustainability of the project results and its benefits (financial, socio-economic, institutional and governance, and environmental aspects, as well as risks identified in the project document?	Risk identified during risk review or experienced during implementation.	Annual reports, risk review information, new risks identified in PIR and Key informant interview.	Analysis of the partnership strategy in the project document, financial and/or technical support from the partners, annual reports and information from the partners.
29. Has any project results, lessons or experiences have been replicated (in different geographic areas) or scaled up (in the same geographic area, but on a much larger scale and funded by other sources)? What results, lessons or experiences are likely to be replicated or scaled up in the near future?	Information on replication of project results.	M&E reports, annual reports, work plans and key informant (project staff) interview	M&E reports, annual reports, PIR will be analyzed to see if lessons from the project is replicated to other areas or not. Similarly information on replication will also be acquired from key

			informants.
30. Has the project established sustainable institutional arrangements or cross-sector partnerships?	Information on sustainable institutional arrangement or partnerships.	Same as above	Same as above
31. Did the OPIM contribute to increase national, regional and sub-regional ownership to support better sustainability of results? And to strengthen capacities of regional, sub-regional and/or national entities?	Information on contribution from OPIM to increase ownership .	Annual report, PIR and interview with project team.	Analyse annual reports, PIR and interview with project team to find out information of contribution of OPIM to increase ownership at different levels.
Factors affecting Progress			
31. Is the project design suited to delivering the expected outcomes?	Theory of change, result framework and flow chart.	Project document (Theory of change, Result framework and flow chart.	Analysis of theory of change, result framework and flow chart to see the connection of activities and issues.
32. Is the project's casual logic coherent and clear?	Theory of change, result framework and flow chart	Same as above	Same as above.
33. To what extent are the project's objectives and components clear, practical and feasible within the timeframe allowed?	Same as above	Same as above.	Same as above.
34. How do the various stakeholders see their own engagement with the project?	Work plan with division of work, information about the expertise of stakeholders. Information from interview of stakeholders.	Work –plan and Interview with stakeholders.	Analysis of work-plan against the expertise of the stakeholders and their capacity, Interview with stakeholders for their views on their engagement.
35. Were local actors – civil society or private sector – involved in project design or implementation and what was	Stakeholder engagement plan,	Project document, PIR, Annual report, work	Review of project document, work plans, stakeholder

the effect on project results?	Work-plan with information on activities and responsible institution, Annual reports and PIR with progress information.	plans, interview with stakeholders.	engagement plan and interview with stakeholders and see achievement of tasks allocated to different stakeholders.
36. Is project on track as it was originally designed or have there been delays in the project approval, implementation and reporting process? What are the major reasons of the delay?	Information on project progress and planned activities.	Work-plans, PIR, annual reports and interview with key informants.	Review of work plan, PIR and annual report. Interaction with the project staffs regarding project implementation issues.
37. To what extent did the executing agency effectively discharge its role and responsibilities in managing and administering the project?	Information on project execution and role and responsibilities performed by the executing agency. Performance information in PIR and annual reports.	Same as above	Same as above
38. How well is the PMO functioning?	Information on achievement in PIR, annual reports. Information from stakeholder on PMO function.	PIR, Annual reports and Interview with stakeholders regarding performance of PMO.	Information from the PIR, Annual reports on performance will be cross checked with the stakeholders to find out the role of PMO.
39. Is there sufficient human resources, financial resources, etc. for the PMO operation and does it have the capacity to support project implementation?	Information on human, financial and physical resources with the PMO.	Management structure report, human, financial and physical resources information, M&E reports. Interview with project staffs.	Analysis of administration structure, technical and financial capacity and technical assistance from different sector to the PMO to analyse the capacity of PMO. Information from key informants will add to this analysis.
40. What have been the main challenges in terms of the project management administration?	Information on challenges in PIR,	Same as above	Same as above and analysis of challenges and adaptation made

	Annual reports and from stakeholders.		by the project to address them.
41. How well have risks been identified and managed?	Information on risk analysis and mitigation measures adopted.	Project document, PIR and key informant interview.	Review of risks in the project document, PIR and annual reports. Information will be acquired from the implementing agencies on mitigation measures adopted to address risks.
42. What have been the financial-management challenges of the project? To what extent has pledged co-financing been delivered? Has any additional leveraged co-financing been provide since implementation?	Information on financial management co-financing in project document and in annual reports.	Project documents, annual reports, interview with finance staffs.	Financial information from annual reports will be analysed against the project document. Financial statement regarding co-financing and delivery of committed amount will be analysed and issues related to this will be acquired from relevant staff.
43. To what extent has FAO delivered oversight and supervision and backstopping (technical, administrative and operational) during the project identification, formulation, approval, start-up and execution? What kind of support or changes is expected from FAO by the execution partners?	Oversight and supervision information in annual reports and PIR. Information from stakeholders.	Same as above	Role of FAO in project implementation will be analysed against the provision of FAO's responsibility in the project document. Stakeholders view on this regards will also be collected.
44. How effective has the project been in communicating and promoting its key messages and results to partners, stakeholders and a general audience?	Communication materials, communication program information, effectiveness, views of partners, stakeholders and general audience.	Communication plan, communication materials, news on program in local news papers, views of partners and stakeholders.	Analysis of the communication plan, communication materials, information on effectiveness of the communication activities from news coverage in news papers and from partners and stakeholders views.
45. Is the project's M&E system practical and sufficient? How has stakeholder engagement and gender assessment been integrated into the M&E system?	Information on M&E system and gender assessment provision in Project document and M&E system.	M&E document, progress reports, interview with key informants.	Review M&E document and analyse M&E reports. Generate information from key informants.

46. Was the project M&E system operating as per the M&E plan? Has information been gathered in systematic manner, using appropriate methodologies?	M&E plan and M&E report.	M&E plan, M&E reports and interview with key informants.	Analysis of project M&E plan and M&E reports. Information from key informants on M&E implementation.
47. To what extent were gender considerations taken into account in designing and implementing the project? Has the project been designed and implemented in a manner that ensures gender-equitable participation and benefits? Was a gender analysis done? Gender in decision making?	Gender information in Project document, Implementation plan, gender analysis report,	Project document, Annual reports and PIR. Interview with key informants.	Analysis project document to see if gender analysis was conducted or not, similarly gender participation in project design, implementation, benefit sharing and decision making. Activities will also be analysed in light of FAO gender equality policy and GEF gender policy.
48. To what extent were environmental and social concerns were taken into consideration in the design and implementation of the project? Has the project been implemented in a manner that ensures the ESS Mitigation Plan (if one exits) has been adhere to?	Social and environmental consideration in project document and implementation plans,	Project document, annual reports and interview with key informants	Analysis of environmental and social concerns in project document and in project implementation. Information on this regards will also be acquired from key informants.
49. Does project contributes to SDGs? How other biodiversity project complementing the objectives of this project?	Information on activities that contributes to SDG in Project document and annual reports. Information regarding linkages of activities of this project with other biodiversity project.	Annual Reports, SDGs document, Information from key informants.	Analysis of project outcomes in light of SDGs. Similarly, linkages of the biodiversity objectives of this project with other biodiversity projects will be analysed.

Annex V. List of document consulted (Reference list)

1. PIF
2. GEF Secretariat Comments and FAO Response
3. Concept Note
4. PPRC review
5. Request for CEO endorsement
6. PPG Document
7. PD Revision Annex 1 Jilin Technical Assessment Report FAO 20181220
8. PD Revision Annex 6 Drawing 2-Model
9. PD Revision Justification report Version 4 Jun 2019
10. Project Document
11. Inception Report
12. PPR 201907-12
13. PPR 202001-06
14. PPR 202007-12
15. AWPB 2019
16. AWPB 2020
17. AWPB 2021
18. PIR 2019
19. PIR 2020
20. PIR 2021
21. List of stakeholders
22. Project Sites Ch
23. EA Amendment 1
24. EA Amendment 2
25. EA Amendment 3
26. EA
27. BTOR Kentaro 201704
28. BTOR YAO 202010
29. BTOR YAO 201908
30. BTOR YAO 202103
31. BTORLi Ling 201809
32. BTOR Li HE 201703
33. BTOR Kentaro 201707
34. PSC 2019 meeting minutes
35. PSC 2020 meeting minutes
36. PSC 2021 meeting minutes
37. ESS checklist
38. Fiduciary assessment
39. Newsletter 2020
40. FAO Policy on Gender Equality
41. FAO Strategic Objectives
42. Jilin Wetlands Tracking Tool BD2015
43. Jilin Wetlands Tracking Tool LD 2015
44. Financial Report 2019. 1-6
45. Financial Report 2020, 1-6

46. Financial Report 2020, 7-12
47. 2017 GEF-Gender Equality Policy
48. 2018 GEF Gender Implementation Strategy-EN
49. FAO CPF China 2016 2020
50. FAO ESS Guideline
51. FAO Free Prior and Informed Consent
52. FAO Project Cycle Guide Jan 2020

Project Strategy	Indicator	Baseline level	Level at first PIR (self reported)	Mid-term target[1]	End-of-project target	Mid-term level achievement & assessment	MTR rating	Justification for rating
Objective: Improvement of the policy, legal and regulatory framework for an SLWM model in productive landscapes, including capacity development	1. Integrated SLWM model including biodiversity conservation developed and implemented. 2. Integrated SLWM model including biodiversity conservation adopted by the local governments. 3. Necessary policy formulation and implementation guidelines prepared and adopted. 4. Capacity of government officials and farmers enhanced.	Baselines described below for each outputs	Preparatory works under outcome 1.1 are done.	Mid-term level target is not set in log frame.	A) Policy and guidelines related to sustainable water and land management are developed and endorsed by local governments B) SLWM models including biodiversity conservation developed and implemented successfully and impacts being seen. C) Capacity of the relevant officials and farmers strengthened.	• Consultation on regulations initiated. • Working on SLWM model • 160 wetland administrators from 46 work units were trained on wetland protection/restoration technology.	MS	In an average between 35-40 % of the final targets are met so it is moderately satisfactory.
Outcome 1.1: Adoption of integrated SLWM model including biodiversity conservation by local governments and drafting of corresponding policy implementation guidelines.	Adoption of and clear political commitment to the integration of the SLWM model including biodiversity conservation by local governments and relevant line agencies at country level in primary and replicate areas (Saline-alkaline landscape with similar ecosystem through west Jilin) b) Drafting and approval of county level policy implementation guidelines b)outlining the details of the rollout of the SLWM model including specific	a) No local adoption of integrated SLWM model in West Jilin b) Theoretical design of model exists based on limited empirical testing and hydrological and ecosystem modeling in Songyuan irrigation system c) No local implementation of integrated SLWM model inwest Jilin.	- 5 farmer field schools established in 4 pilot sites. - Baseline study initiated	Target not set	a) Model adopted by two additional counties and one additional prefecture b) SLWM Model for Western Jilin piloted in primary project areas and adopted for implementation by Da'an and Zhenlai county governments and Baicheng prefecture. c) SLWM Model for Western Jilin piloted in primary project areas and adopted for implementation by Quin'an and Zhenlai county governments and Baicheng prefecture.	a) Consultation on regulations with relevant departments performed. b) The SLWM is not completed officially but relevant practices are already applied in Baicheng and Songyuan Prefectures including Chagan Lake and Qianguo county as required by "Jifa 2020(26)" namely No.26 policy of Jilin Provincial Government-"Opinion on Supporting Qianguo County of Songyuan Prefecture build demonstration zone of ecologically prioritized green development" c) "Jifa2020 (35) namely No.35 policy of Jilin Provincial Government- "Opinion on Supporting Da'an City of Baicheng Prefecture build Demonstration	MS	SLWM model is not developed yet.

[1]Some indicators may not identify mid-term targets at the design stage (refer to approved results framework) therefore this column should only be filled when relevant.

	responsibilities of stakeholders.					Zone of innovative development of ecological economy" has already integrated requirements to apply the SLWM model.		
Outcome 1.2: Adjustments of policy plans, legal provisions and regulations to mandate the SLWM model implementation and replication (including location-specific environmental standards for salinity and agrochemical levels)				**Target not set**	a) At least a 40% increase in BD-2 TT score; 40-60% in LD AMAT score; incorporation of SLWM and BD conservation recommendations into five years development plans in 4 counties and at least one investment program for western Jilin province b) 6,060 ha of saline alkaline landscapes are managed under the application of wet-lands biodiversity conservation and SLWM practices at the end of the project and 319,253 ha 5 years after the end of the project	a) 3 field investigations for data collection for SLWM modeling and for integration of biodiversity conservation and SWLM into sectoral policy, planning of agriculture sector. 30% increase in BD-2 TT score, 40% in LD PMAT scores, incorporation of SWLM and biodiversity conservation into 14th Five Year Plan of 4 counties in West Jilin and in governmental investment project "River-Lake Connection Programme in West Jilin:" b) Formulation of "Chagan lake Governance & Conservation Plan (2018-2030) was supported by SLWM modeling practices. b) 3400ha (45%) of saline alkaline landscapes are managed under the application of wetlands biodiversity conservation and SLWM practices. (detail provide in output section)	MS	Achievement is below the MTR target.
Outcome 1.3: Training of decision makers, government and technical staff as well as local communities, extension workers and individual farmers (training in SLWM agricultural practices)				**Target not set**	a) 60 technicians and decision makers from relevant line agencies of Da'an and Zhenlai County are trained in procedures and technologies included in SLWM and BDC models b) 80 decision makers from provincial, prefecture and county levels attended the SLWM and BDC related policy consultation workshop and built agreement on how to replicate	a) 3 trainings conducted. 160 wetland administrators from 46 work units were trained on wetland protection/restoration technology; 300 farmers (30% women) received Eco-agriculture training.	**S**	Decision makers training still not conducted.

					c) 400 farmers and 70 extension workers trained.			
Outcome 2.1: Water management guidelines for agricultural use (based on and adjustable to the information gathered by the comprehensive water monitoring system)				**Target not set**	a) Water management guidelines for agricultural water use as well as use of chemicals and pesticides formulated and implemented in all project sites b) Groundwater level no lower than 7 meter in the project area, which is the minimum required eco-indicator for sustaining the underground water reserve.	a) Development of water management guidelines is under way, with outline completed. b) Groundwater monitoring conducted for two years. Ground water level was between 6-7m.	**MS**	Water management guidelines is not completed.
Outcome 2.2: Design, testing and adoption of sustainable agricultural practices for water and land use in coherence with the overarching SLWM model including the development of technical guidelines for implementation				**Target not set**	a) Degradation and desertification processes reversed in 47,690 ha rehabilitated saline-alkaline land by the end of the project, and 125,290 ha will be improved by 2025 depending on the construction process of the relevant irrigation projects b) SLWM practices adopted in 47690 ha at end of the project, and scaled to 170,780 ha covering the total saline-alkalaine land in the Songyuan especially in Da'an irrigation district and Qianguo irrigation district c)Technical guidelines in i) salinity management for irrigated fields (including 'green/ecological' paddy production, irrigation area conservation agriculture and reducing agrochemicals, ii) reclaiming saline irrigation areas (reclaiming saline alkaline wastelands by	a) Monitoring system established and monitoring findings indicated that the degradation is reversed after restoration efforts in Shenjingzi Pasture and saline-alkaline improvement of paddy Niuxintaobao National Wetland Park in Da'an irrigation area. b) New type compound soil conditioner use improved in yield to 3471kg/ha (details of area and benefits provide in output section) c) The technical guideline preparation was not completed but going on. d) Details in output section.	**MS**	Technical guidelines not completed. Target not met.

					washing out the salt), iii) rain-fed farmland (conservation agriculture), and iv) rehabilitation of native grassland (irrigation and enclosure). d) 27,000 farmer's households (4,000 in Da'an, Qian'an and 23,000 in Qian'guo) adopt SLWM practices and Land productivity increased to: • 9,750 kg/ha for ca. 200ha of paddy rice fields (scaled to 45,000ha in PY4 to PY4+5) • 10,500 kg/ha and 11760 CNY/ha for ca. 200ha of corn in rain-fed land (scaled to 45,000ha in PY4 to PY4+5) • 13,500 kg/ha and 8505 CNY/ha for 2000ha rehabilitated grassland • Fish: 350kg/ha and 800 Yuan /ha net income for 3,060 ha in Xinmiaopao and Dakouzipao, 3,000ha in Niuxintaobao and 2,668ha in Dagangzipao and Xiaoximipao			
Outcome 2.3: Establish and gain local agreement on Integrated Land and Water Management Plans (ILWMP) for agricultural use in coherence with the overarching SLWM model				**Target not set**	a) One Integrated land and water management plan (ILWMP) for Songyuan area covering 220,000 ha agreed with stakeholders. b) One Integrated land and water management plan (ILWMP) for Songyuan area covering 220,000 ha agreed with stakeholders. c) Implementation of ILWMP in 167,000 ha by the end of the project and 220,000 ha 5 years after the end of the	a) Literature review and outline of ILWMP model developed. b) Only after drafting ILWMP, consultation with stakeholders could be conducted. c) Yet to be done.	**MS**	ILWMP is not developed yet.

					project.			
Outcome 3.1: Rehabilitation of wetlands in project sites 1&2 and improved biodiversity conservation leveraging the baseline irrigation infrastructure; water flow management in-formed by monitoring system (see 3.2)				**Target not set**	a) Rehabilitation and conservation of 8,728 ha wetland (direct impact pilot area) and replication measures under way for entire 49,883ha of wetlands in the project landscape b) Population and number of IUCN red listed Crane species (Siberian, Hooded, White-naped, and Red crowned), plus other migratory species mentioned in the baseline table4, maintained or in-creased in pilot sites by the end of the project (<5% variance)	a) 8728ha wetlands conserved and restored. c) Observed increase in population/number of IUCN red listed species (detail in output section).	**S**	Satisfactory achievement of the Mid-term point target.
Outcome 3.2: Design and establishment of a comprehensive monitoring system to monitor salinity as well as pollutant levels, water flow quantities, and biodiversity development (early warning system to inform adjustments of water management and farming practices throughout the project).				**Target not set**	a) Water quality and quantity measurement system (including protocols, databases and reporting formats) installed in pilot areas of Xinmiaopao and Water quality and quantity measurement system (including protocols, databases and reporting formats) installed in pilot areas of Xinmiaopao and Niuxintaobao, will be functioning by the end of PY1 and PY2 respectively and information will be incorporated into the ILWMP by the beginning of PY4 b) Measurements for agriculture non-point source below required values c) One model developed and will be incorporated into the SLWM Model b y end of Y4.	a) Monitoring points has been set at water inlet, wetland and water outlet of the project sites. Sampling and monitoring were conducted on a monthly basis. Data collectors equipped with project procured sampling apparatus. Monitored the surface water quality indicators including pH, COD, BOD, DO, TP, TN, TK, total salt, typical pesticides, etc. b) Monitored the wetland capacity of agricultural non-point source pollution. in Niuxintaobao wetland, the capacity of wetland per unit area is being tested and calculated c) Water Monitoring carried out on four wetlands. d) The draft of risk warning manual had been completed. Investigated the biodiversity three times in different seasons. -3monitoring reports prepared. ILWMP is not developed yet to incorporate information from the	**MS**	As ILWMP is not developed yet, incorporation of information from water quality and quantity measurements system is delayed. The risk warning manual draft was completed .

					d)Systematic monitoring, early warning system and inflow and outflow operation strategy in place by Y2 and providing monitoring information and data in Y2,Y4 and Y5.	water quality and quantity measurement system.		
Outcome 3.3 : Long-term management system to protect rehabilitated wetlands and conserve wetland bio-diversity; includes a wetland co-management approach for local communities as well as awareness raising efforts wetland biodiversity conservation.				**Target not set**	a) 3 wetlands co-management committees established, 3 biodiversity co-management plan for the wetlands and buffer zone developed and under implementation b) Campaign implemented reaching 6 communities and at least 40% of the families are aware of wetlands biodiversity and habitat conservation needs (evaluated though campaign impact survey)	a) Two wetland co-management committees with local county were established in Dagangzi and Niuxintaobao wetland, respectively and their management plan were also prepared. b) Two booklets on bird and wetland were developed and distributed to community/farmers adjacent to wetland. World Environment day, Wetland day, Bird-loving week and Crab festival were organized to raise awareness of communities.	**S**	Almost target met with few shortcomings.
Outcome 4: Design and piloting of sustainable land and water management and conservation agriculture practices in production landscapes around Chagan Lake				**Target not set**	a) 8 six-monthly progress reports and financial reports; regular monitoring missions conducted by PMO M&E staff b) 2 Evaluations conducted c) 1 up-to-date project website and 8 six-monthly project newsletters.	- 2 AWP/B, 3 PPR and 2PIR submitted. - Semi-annual financial reports submitted. - 3 PSC meetings conducted. - promotion through television, print and electronic media done.	**S**	Target met with minor shortcoming.
Output1.1.1:	Adoption of and clear political commitment to the integration of the SLWM model including biodiversity conservation by local governments and relevant line agencies at county level in primary and	a) No local adoption of integrated SLWM Model in West Jilin b) Theoretical design of model exists based on		Target not set	a) Model adopted by Da'an, Qianguo counties and Songyuan prefecture b) SLWM Model for Western Jilin piloted in primary	• National, provincial and local laws and regulations on protected areas, wetlands and agriculture were reviewed. • Though SLWM model has not officially completed yet, but relevant practices are already applied in Baicheng and Songyuan		

	replicate areas (saline-alkaline landscapes with similar ecosystem throughout West Jilin)	limited empirical testing and hydrological and ecosystem modelling in Songyuan irrigation system			project areas[2] and adopted for implementation by Qian'an and Zhenlai county governments and Baicheng prefecture, especially in Da'an irrigation district and Qianguo irrigation district	Prefectures, including Chagan Lake and Qianguo County, as required by "Jifa 2020 [26]", namely, No.26 policy of Jilin Provincial Government- "Opinion on Supporting Qianguo County of Songyuan Prefecture build ecologically prioritized green development demonstration zone" • As an State-owned Enterprise, Hongqi Farm located in Qianguo Irrigated Area, Songyuan Prefecture having benefitted from FAO project's modelling practices and scientific data that makes water supply both timely and ample, which is vitally important for the farm to grow rice (1800ha.), peanut (1400ha.) , corn and soy. Undertaking social safeguards, a total of 4400 employees (all from local and 2100 retired) are on the payroll of the farm that also apply measures such as conservation tillage, returning straw to the field, nature-based solutions as introduced by the FAO project; • Beixian Rice Base, a private company has been buying from the Hongqi farm. Better rice quality due to enhanced water supply based on SLWM modelling is conducive to higher market price. • Development of SLWM model is in progress (building up with data acquired from project pilots and monitoring sites) and expected to complete by the end of Year 2021; • FAO project will avail itself of the opportunities of current national policies enacted and provincial		

[2]Niuxintaobao, Dagangzipao and Xiaoximipao in Da'an County, Baicheng Prefecture; and Xinmiaopao in Qian'guo County, Songyuan Prefecture.

						projects implemented in West Jilin to gradually apply FAO project results in the replication processes and endeavors.		
Output1.1.2:	a)Drafting and approval of county level policy implementation guidelines b)Outlining the details of the rollout of the SLWM model including specific responsibilities of stakeholders	No local implementation of integrated SLWM Model in West Jilin		Target not set	SLWM Model for Western Jilin piloted in primary project areas and adopted for implementation by Qian'an and Zhenlai county governments and Baicheng prefecture	• It was told that at the end of 2021 and in the beginning of 2022, PMO will organize 2 consultation meetings with stakeholders in Da'an irrigated area, with trainings on SLWM model provided on the same occasions. • "Jifa 2020 [35]", namely, No. 35 policy of Jilin Provincial Government, known as " Opinion on Supporting Da'an City build Demonstration Zone of Innovative Development of Ecological Economy" has already integrated the requirement to apply the SLWM model • "Jifa 2020 [35]" is a government policy dedicated to implementing the deployment of ecological economic zone in Western Jiin and high-quality development of Da'an Irrigated Area, (in Baicheng) with green transformation achieved, which leveraged FAO project results into policy level, a sustainability credit to the project. • It was learned that by the end of 2021, "SLWM Operational Guide" will be completed; and by mid-2022, "SLWM Policy Implementation Guideline" will be completed, to provide support in promotion of county-level governments in Western Jilin.		
Output1.2.1:	Wetlands biodiversity conservation and SLWM model incorporated into policies, plans, and	a) Existing body of laws and regulations on water use efficiency,		Target not set	At least a 40% increase in BD-2 TT score; 40-60% in LD PMAT score; incorporation of SLWM and BD conservation	• 3 field investigations have been conducted in 2020 to collect data for SLWM modeling and integration of biodiversity conservation and		

	regulations for the agriculture and water resource management sectors (including land and water use planning and management) in western Jilin province	water quality in the agricultural sector without clear landscape perspective integrating questions of biodiversity and land degradation in an integrated way b) Individual projects have addressed saline alkaline soil degradation, but no coordinated and sector integrated landscape approach for western Jilin province has been applied			recommendations into five years development plans in 4 counties and at least one investment program for western Jilin province	SLWM into sectoral policy, planning of agricultural sector; • 30% increase in BD-2 TT score; 40% in LD PMAT score; incorporation of SLWM and biodiversity conservation recommendations into "14th Five Year Plan" of 4 counties in West Jilin, and into governmental investment project- "River- Lake Connection Programme in West Jilin "		
Output 1.2.2:	Wetlands biodiversity conservation and SLWM model replication in saline alkaline landscapes in western Jilin province	About 2,489,500 ha saline alkaline land under desertification and degradation process and wetlands drying up in western Jilin province			About 6,060 ha[3] of saline alkaline landscapes has managed under the application of wetlands biodiversity conservation and SLWM practices at the end of the project and 319,253 ha[4]5 years after the end of the project	• Formulation of "Chagan Lake Governance &Conservation Plan (2018-2030)" was supported by SLWM modeling practices; Chagan Lake remains a core to the implementation of governmental investment project-" River- Lake Connection Programme in West Jilin "; • 3400 ha (45%) of saline alkaline landscapes are managed under the application of wetlands biodiversity conservation and SLWM practices including: 1) Paddy in Beixian Rice Base, 1000ha.		

[3]3,060 ha in Xinmiaopao and 3,000 ha in Niuxintaobao.
[4] Composed of 220,00 ha for Songyuan Irrigation Area and 99,253 ha for Zhenlai and Da'an (Tao'erhe) irrigation areas.

						2）Paddy in Niuxintaobao 2200 ha. (200 inside the national wetlands park, 2000 outside) 3) Paddy in Dagangzipao wetlands (200ha.), applied with Compound Conditioner and organic fertilizer • Government Policies as "Jifa 2020 [35]" , "Jifa 2020 [26]" ， "Chagan Lake Governance &Conservation Plan (2018-2030)" and government projects as "River- Lake Connection Programme in West Jilin", "Channel Nenjiang River into Baicheng Prefecture" and Niuxintaobao National Wetland Park, as well as outline of Northeast black soil protection planning (2017-2030), sectoral planning on developing ecofriendly agriculture, & • of agricultural technology application as proclaimed by the 14th Five Year Plan etc. altogether created an empowering and enabling environment and laid a foundation for GEF/FAO project to pick up a speed in implementation at demonstration sites (will finish by the end of 2021) and promotion work at replication sites (will start in the beginning, 2022). • By the end of 2021, "SLWM Operational Guide" will be completed, however some training materials are already used for training practitioners from different field of work; • By mid. 2022, "SLWM Policy Implementation Guideline" will be completed, to provide support in promotion of county-level governments in Western Jilin.		

Output 1.3.1 :	Decision makers and technicians from water resource, agriculture, forestry, environmental protection bureau at prefecture and county level and Chagan Lake Administration are trained	About 80 decision makers and technical staffs have participated in similar training; training needs to be complemented and extended		Target not set	a) 60 technicians and decision makers from relevant line agencies of Da'an, Qian Guo, Qian'an and Zhenlai Counties are trained in procedures and technologies included in SLWM and BDC models b) 80 decision makers from provincial, prefecture and county levels attended the SLWM and BDC related policy consultation workshop and built agreement on how to replicate the primary areas	• 3 wetlands trainings have been provided in 2020, including training for farmers living in nearby wetlands in Niuxintaobao; • Dec.11- 12, 2020, more 160 wetland administrators from 46 work units were trained on "wetland protection/ restoration technology course" in Changchun. • Eco-agriculture training was conducted at the end of 2019, with over 100 farmers from Shenjingzi Pasture attendance. • Designing of water/soil conservation and pasture rehab training course, and conducting training will be conducted at the end of 2021.		
Output 1.3.2:	Extension workers and farmers trained in application of SLWM practices including green/ecological, conservation, water saving and grassland restoration practices	About 120 farmers have participated in similar training; training needs to be complemented and extended		Target not set	a) 400 farmers and 70 extension workers trained	Over 200 farmers were trained in two sessions, with 30% women: 1) Oct. 2020, 100 farmers from Niuxintaobao, on wetlands conservation; 2) Dec. 12, 100 farmers from Shenjingzi Pasture, on eco agriculture. 4trained farmers interviewed in MTR, all claimed that their income improved with scientific water supply practices: i) household mil and paddy (148ha) in Da'an irrigated area, hired 2villagers including 2women; ii） Paddy (72ha) in Oianguo irrigated area; iii) Aquaculture of crab/fish in Niuxintaobao wetland (900ha) ; iv) Paddy (400ha). • Training for managers and technical staffs in project concept, laws and regulations, project		

						management method and the rules and regulations etc is planned to conduct in 2022, currently training course are being developed; • Training for practitioner and farmers on project management, laws and regulations etc is planned to conduct in 2022, currently training courseware are being developed		
Output 2.1.1:	Water management guidelines for agricultural water use as well as use of chemicals and pesticides formulated and implemented in all project sites	No water management guidelines		Target not set	Water management guidelines for agricultural water use as well as use of chemicals and pesticides formulated and implemented in all project sites	• Only outline of "agricultural irrigation water and water saving guidelines" completed, with highlights on soda saline alkali land treatment and conservation tillage technology		
Output 2.1.2:	Ground water levels stabilized in the project area and positive demonstration effects for the wider irrigation area	Current ground water 7～10m; Groundwater level declining		Target not set	Groundwater level no lower than 7 meter in the project area, which is the minimum required eco-indicator for sustaining the underground water reserve	• The groundwater level data has been monitored by the project for two years continuously. • Indicator of "ground water level no lower than 7 meters in project area" met, based on the 2-year continuous project monitoring, with pinpoint of Oct. data • Data collection completed, and claimed to complete assessment report by the end of 2020.		
Output 2.2.1:	Degradation and desertification processes stopped and reversed in saline-alkaline land with improved vegetation cover resulting in increased productivity and reduced vulnerability to climate variability	a)101,360 ha saline alkaline land under desertification and degradation process in Songyuan irrigation area. b)69,420 ha low-yield farmland		Target not set	Degradation and desertification processes reversed in 47,690 ha[5] rehabilitated saline-alkaline land by the end of the project, and 125,290 ha[6] will be improved by 2025 depending on the construction process of the relevant irrigation projects	• With restoration efforts in Shenjingzi Pasture (Ranch) and saline-alkaline improvement of paddy(water land for rice grow) in Niuxintaobao National Wetland Park in Da'an Irrigated Area, monitoring data showed that degradation had been reversed		

[5] Composed of 45,490 ha from existing Qian'guo irrigated area and 2,200 ha in Niuxintaobao.
[6] Total of 170,780 ha of saline-alkaline land in the Songyuan irrigation area minus 45,490 ha from Qian'guo.

						• It was told that project will start replication of SLWM model in early 2022 coving west Jilin province.		
Output 2.2.2:	SLWM agricultural practices adopted in Qian'an, Da'an and Qian'guo pilot sites and scaled to the total Songyuan irrigation area of integrated production landscape contributing to the conservation of wetlands biodiversity	Some experiments have been done with different SLWM practices in the Matsubara experimental station located in the Songyuan irrigation area, but no adoption by farmers irrigation area 5 years after the project		Target not set	SLWM practices adopted in 47,690 ha[7] at end of the project, and scaled to 170,780 ha covering the total saline-alkaline land in the Songyuan especially in Da'an irrigation district and Qianguo irrigation district	• SLWM modeling practices such as sustainable land/water management, biodiversity conservation, eco-system service, ecofriendly agriculture, low (no) tillage, grassland/wetland restoration, water bird protection, etc. and measures have been adopted in project demonstration sites, Shenjingzi pasture (Ranch) and Qian'guo irrigated area, and promoted to Da'an and other replication areas; • Project measure of new-type compound conditioner to treat saline-alkaline lands and improve paddy yield to 3471 kg/ha. Proved to be effective in combination of water-saving irrigation. • Agro-sector benefited from the SLWM modeling practices, especially in implementing the black soil protection policy and meeting requirement of 14th Five Year Plan in relation to application of agricultural technology and development eco-friendly green agro-food, as confirmed PSC member of Jilin Provincial Department of Agriculture.		
Output 2.2.3:	Develop technical guidelines	No technical guidelines		Target not set	Technical guidelines in i) salinity management for irrigated fields (including 'green/ecological' paddy production, irrigation area conservation agriculture and reducing agrochemicals, ii)	• Technical guidelines in 'green/ecological' paddy production, reclaiming saline alkaline wastelands conservation agriculture had been prepared		

[7] Composed of 45,490 ha from existing Qian'guo irrigated area and 2,200 ha in Niuxintaobao.

					reclaiming saline irrigation areas (reclaiming saline alkaline wastelands by washing out the salt), iii) rain-fed farmland (conservation agriculture), and iv) rehabilitation of native grassland (irrigation and enclosure)	• Project expert already discussed contents of the Agriculture and Wetland Management and planned to complete manual by the end of 2021.		
Output 2.2.4:	Farmer's households adopt SLWM practices and benefit from increased land productivity in the pilot sites and project landscape	No farmer's households have adopted SLWM practices and land and other input productivity are:i) 4,590 kg/ha and 12,400 CNY/ha for paddy fields ii) 5,625 kg/ha and xx11,000 CNY/ha for corn in rain-fed land iii) 1,500 kg/ha and 1,350 CNY/ha for grassland iv) 300kg/ha of fish and 75kg/ha of river crabs in Niuxintaobao		Target not set	27,000 farmer's households (4,000 in Da'an, Qian'an and 23,000 in Qian'guo) adopt SLWM practices and Land productivity increased to: • 9,750 kg/ha for ca. 200ha of paddy rice fields (scaled to 45,000ha[8] in PY4 to PY4+5) • 10,500 kg/ha and 11760 CNY/ha for ca. 200ha of corn in rain-fed land (scaled to 45,000ha[9] in PY4to PY4+5) • 13,500 kg/ha and 8505 CNY/ha for 2,000ha rehabilitated grassland • Fish: 350kg/ha and 800 Yuan/ha net income for 3,060 ha in Xinmiaopao,3,000 ha in Niuxintaobao and 2,668hain Dagangzipao and Xiaoximipao	• Local people applied the SLWM modeling practices/ measures, as a result, benefited from increased land productivity, fish income over 800RMB and carb income over 2000 RMB, especially in Niuxintaobao which is a comprehensive demonstration of the FAO project *Staffed with 428 local workers (20% women), Shenjingzi Pasture is a state-own enterprises ranch occupying 12600 ha. Land area, specialized in agriculture and husbandry of cow and sheep. In addition to production, Shenjingzi Pasture also buys from farmers in the adjacent areas and provide germplasm resources, seed and training to assist in improving yield and quality. It is a formation of farmer cooperative in a sense as observed by MTR team.* • Data collection in progress to develop statistics of paddy, rain-fed land and grassland areas.		
Output 2.3.1:	Prepare comprehensive and dynamic ILWMP for the project area that	No ILWMP		Target not set	One Integrated land and water management plan (ILWMP) for Songyuan area	• Data collected pertaining to climate, planting area of different		

[8]45,000 ha is the existing Qian'guo irrigation area.
[9]45,000 ha is the existing Qian'guo irrigation area.

	integrate agriculture, pasture management, biodiversity conservation and ecosystem service preservation with salinity and water management				covering 220,000 ha agreed with stakeholders	species, wetland area, water source, etc. • Daft of Da'an ILWMP is completed, covering 30,000 ha, (*PSC meeting decided to switch original site of Songyuan Prefecture to Da'an, based on the fact that Da'an resembles Songyuan in all aspects and replication from Da'an to Songyuan would be much easier*) • Draft of Da'an ILWMP has been completed, which could be easily replicated in Songyuan Prefecture because they are adjacent to each other and resemble in all aspects.		
Output 2.3.2:	Integrated land and water management plan (ILWMP) for the entire Songyuan Area consulted, validated and agreed with relevant stakeholders	" "		Target not set	One Integrated land and water management plan (ILWMP) for Songyuan area covering 220,000 ha agreed with stakeholders	• In progress, the action plan will be operationalized to replicate Songyuan and other areas, based on Da'an ILWMP which is already drafted • In progress, expected to complete in 2022.		
Output 2.3.3:	Integration of the ILWMP guidelines and principles into the training programs of the WRB and CAD (measured by the number of training packages updated)	" "		Target not set	Implementation of ILWMP in 167,000 ha[10] by the end of the project and 220,000 ha 5 years after the end of the project	In progress, the action plan will be operationalized to replicate Songyuan and other areas, based on Da'an ILWMP which is already finished		
Output 3.1.1:	Rehabilitation and conservation of wetlands managed as an integrated part of the freshwater fishery and irrigated crop and grassland production landscape providing important habitats for endangered migratory birds			Target not set	Rehabilitation and conservation of 8,728 ha wetland (direct impact pilot area) and replication measures underway for entire 49,883 ha of wetlands in the project landscape	• 8,728 ha. Wetlands conserved and restored, with direct credit ascribed to the FAO project, monitoring data shows biodiversity enhanced with eco-system (fish, bird, vegetation) services substantially improved on these wetlands, especially in Niuxintaobao and Ximiaopao, with project efforts in replenishing water in spring; 38,000,000m3 water, and about		

[10]167,000 ha represents the Songyuan Irrigation Area minus the area of grassland.

						939,000 fish have entered the wetland. • However progress with regards to Chagan Lake and other small/micro wetlands benefited from project has not yet been evaluated against the indicator (49883 ha.) • Experiment completed, species applied to restore wetland selected • Water-soil test and monitoring completed in 2020		
Output 3.1.2:	Improved biodiversity indicators for: population and number of IUCN red listed Crane species (Siberian, Hooded, White-naped, and Red crowned)			Target not set	Population and number of IUCN red listed Crane species (Siberian, Hooded, White-naped, and Red crowned), plus other migratory species mentioned in the baseline table4, maintained or increased in the project landscape by the end of the project (<5% variance)	• Increased in population/ number of IUCN red listed Crane species, e.g. Siberian, Hooded, White-napped, and Red crowned; 22 species of *Anseriformes* birds accounted for 23.66%, and 20 species of *Charadriiformes* and *Passerines* accounted for 21.51%, respectively. Two Class I national protected species were recorded. One wasIUCN Red List Critically Endangered species, which was*Grus leucogeranus* and another specieswasIUCN Red List Endangered species, which was *Ciconiaboyciana* • *"Jilin Provincial Biodiversity Conservation Strategy and Action Plan, BCSAP (2011-203)" drew on FAO project results/ data during the assessment of 10 years' BCSAP implementation, as confirmed by PSC member of Jilin Provincial Department of Ecology & Environment.*		
Output 3.2.1:	Establish comprehensive monitoring system measuring pollutants and salinity across the project area	Theoretical model for water management exist for the Songyuan irrigation system. Equipment for the		Target not set	Water quality and quantity measurement system (including protocols, databases and reporting formats) installed in pilot areas of Xinmiaopao and	• Sampling and monitoring were conducted once a month in different project areas; • Data collectors equipped with project procured sampling		

		control and measurement system are partly purchased, but need to be installed. Guidelines need to be developed according to the analyzed data from the system			Niuxintaobao, will be functioning by the end of PY1 and PY2 respectively and information will be incorporated into the ILWMP by the beginning of PY4	apparatus work periodically on these sampling points (over 10 in Niuxintaobao, over 10 in Xinmiaopao, etc.) • Monitored the surface water quality, which included pH, COD, BOD, DO, TP, TN, TK, total salt, typical pesticides, etc. Considered the hydrological dynamics of the wetlands and the surrounding agricultural activities, water quality monitoring were carried out four times. • HOBO and Water level gauge, flow meter and other equipment purchased, sufficient for project use • Monitoring points have been set at water inlet, wetland and water outlet of project sites • 3 monitoring reports prepared already and will continue the practice		
Output 3.2.2:	Agricultural non-point source pollution controlled and monitored within the project area			Target not set	Measurements for agriculture non-point source below required values	• FAO project has already obtained the agricultural boundary surrounding Niuxintaobao wetlands • Montioring continued, with capabality of wetlands to purify pollutants from paddy covered • Draft report of year 2020 was completed and will continue this practice for 2021 and 2022		
Output 3.2.3:	Model for water quality requirements and ecological water demand for rehabilitation of wetlands developed based on the data collected from buffer zone inflow and outflow water quality and quantity measurement			Target not set	One model developed and will be incorporated into the SLWM Model by the end of Y4	• Monitoring water quality and quantity in four wetlands, and will continue this practice • Calculation for Niuxintaobao & Dagangzipao wetlands was completed		

Output 3.2.4:	Buffer zone inflow and outflow water quality and quantity systematically monitored and analyzed, and pollution risk early warning system and inflow and outflow management strategy implemented			Target not set	Systematic monitoring, early warning system and inflow and outflow operation strategy in place by Y2 and providing monitoring information and data in Y2, Y4 and Y5	• Monitoring data for Niuxintaobao & Xinmiaopao wetlands for bout inlet and outlet are kept record and will continue this practice • Draft manual on risk early warning developed expect to complete by end of 2021.	S	
Output 3.2.5:	Establish comprehensive monitoring system measuring biodiversity across the project area	Initial BD monitoring in Chagan Lake Nature Reserve, no monitoring in surrounding areas (i.e. project area)		Target not set	Biodiversity monitoring system operating monitoring at least the species mentioned in outcome 3.1.2 and providing data on aquatic organism biodiversity changes in four wetland pilot areas (Xinmiao, Niuxintao, DagangziandXiaoximi) and giving monitoring feedback information and suggestions to modifying the irrigation and water supply strategy	• In 4 wetlands and Chagan Lake, the Expert has conducted bird migration and habitat surveys and will continue this practice highlighting biodiversity • Draft biodiversity monitoring plan developed. • 3 water bird diversity monitoring report completed.	S	
Output 3.3.1:	Wetlands co-management committees with local communities and county reed administration and biodiversity co-management plan for the wetlands and buffer zone prepared and under implementation			Target not set	a) 3 wetlands co-management committees established, 3 biodiversity co-management plans for the wetlands and buffer zone developed and under implementation	• 2 wetlands co-management committees established in Niuxintaobao and Dagangzipao • Drafting of 2 wetland development & management plans completed in Niuxintaobao and Dagangzipao, with focus on sustainable aquatic production of fish and crab *(Managed by Dagangzi County Government, all Dagangzipao wetlands are public, with partly leased to private company for aquaculture of fish)*		
Output 3.3.2:	Awareness raising campaign on wetlands biodiversity conservation implemented in rehabilitated and existing wetlands in the area of			Target not set	a) Campaign implemented reaching 6 communities and at least 40% of the families were aware of the wetlands biodiversity and habitat conservation needs	• 2 popular pamphlets focused on bird and wetland biology developed by IGA and have been distributed to community dwellers and farmers adjacent to wetlands, which reached		

	influence of the Songyuan irrigation area				(evaluated though campaign impact survey)	out to 40% famllies in 6 communities • Completed, significance of wetlands promoted with activities and campaigns such as June 5 World Environment Day, Feb 2nd Wetland Day, Bird-Loving Week and Crab Festival, etc. to raise awareness of communities and students at elementary/secondary schools in the neighborhood • FAO project will strengthen publicity in the remaining months of project cycle, e.g. video production to be shown on TV, publication of project reports, etc.		
Output 4.1:	Project monitoring system is set up and operated for ensuring the effective implementation of the planned project activities and providing six-monthly reports on progress in achieving project outputs and outcomes	N/A		Target not set	8 six-monthly progress reports and financial reports; regular monitoring missions conducted by PMO M&E staff	• 2 AWP/B, 3 PPR and 2 PIR submitted • 3 Semi-annual financial reports submitted		
Output 4.2:	Annual review and planning workshop carried out to ensure the achievements of the intended outputs and outcomes; Midterm and final evaluation reports	N/A		Target not set	3 Evaluations conducted	3 PSC meeting were conducted: i) In August 22~24, 2019, PSC meeting and experts training workshop was held in Changchun City. ii) On October 29-30, 2020, PSC meeting was held, PMO reported work progress, fund utilization and work plan in 2020. iii) On March19, 2021, PSC meeting was held in Changchun: a)overall project status assessment; b)report on implementation progress in 2020 and work plan in 2021; c) discussion of challenges in technical work;④FAO-GEF		

						project management training for project personnel 1 audit completed MTR preparation completed		
Output 4.3:	Project results and best practices disseminated	N/A		Target not set	1 up-to-date project website and 8 six-monthly project newsletters	• 12.5% project newsletter Completed • 13 bulletin boards (full project name clearly displayed) were produced and erected on project sites • Bird and wetland pamphlets produced/distributed • brief project report sent to member units of PSC • Promotion through CCTV, Jilin Daily and ScienceNet.cn		

Annex VI. Result matrix showing achievements at mid-term and MTR observations (Progress Towards Achieving Project Objectives and Outcomes)

Annex VII. Co-financing table

Source of Co-financing	Name of Co-financer	Type of Co-financing	Amount confirmed at CEO endorsement/approval		Actual amount materialised as of MTR		Actual amount materialised at the MTR	Expected total disbursement by the end of the project
			Cash	**Kind**	**Cash**	**Kind**		
GEF	GEF	Cash	2,627,000	-	602,797		602,797	Remaining amount
WRD Jilin	WRD Jilin	Kind	-	16,600,000		16,683,038	16,683,038	"" ""
FAO	FAO	Cash	200,000	-	?		?	"" ""
		Total	2,827,000	16,600,000		16,683,038		

Annex VIII. GEF evaluation criteria rating table and rating scheme

GEF criteria/sub-criteria	Rating	Summary comments
Strategic Relevance		
1. Overall strategic relevance	S	Relevant to the country's need.
1.1 Alignment with GEF & FAO strategic priorities	S	It is aligned with GEF and FAO strategic priorities.
1.2 Relevance to national, regional and global priorities and beneficiary needs	S	Relevant to national, regional and global priorities and beneficiary needs.

1.3 Complementarity with existing interventions	S	Contributes to government of China's effort since 1970s.
Effectiveness		
1. Overall assessment of project results	MS	Slightly below the target of MT level.
1.1 Delivery of project outputs	MS	Few MT level targets not achieved
1.2 Progress towards outcomes and project objectives	MS	Some progress made
Outcome 1	MS	Some progress made
Outcome 2	MS	Some progress made
Outcome 3	MS	Some progress made
Outcome 4	S	Progress made with minor shortcomings.
Overall rating of progress towards achieving objectives/outcomes	MS	Some progress made but need to work for more.
Efficiency		
Efficiency	MS	Efficient but some improvement needed
Sustainability of project outcomes		
i. Overall likelihood of risks to sustainability	ML	Relevant staffs trained, farmers trained and commitment made by relevant agency verbally.
ii. Financial risks	ML	Financial issues not seen.
iii. Sociopolitical risks	UA	
iv. Institutional governance risks	ML	Relevant local government institute in involved in implementation and they committed to continue results
v. Environmental risks	ML	With the arrangements it is unlikely but if any climate issues appear then could not say
vi. Catalysis and replication	ML	Policies influenced and there is replication plans in place.
Factors affecting performance		

i. Project design and readiness	MS	Appropriate but still some room for improvement
ii. Quality of project implementation	MS	Considering issues that is beyond the control of the PMO it is satisfactory
iii. Quality of project implementation by FAO (BH, LTO, PTF etc.)	S	Mission from regional office was limited due to Covid19. Synergy building is limited.
iv. Project oversight (PSC, project working group, etc)	MS	Could accelerate with leadership programs.
v. Quality of project execution	MS	Part time staffs affected project activities.
vi. Project execution and management (PMO and executing partner performance, administration, staffing etc.)	MS	Part time staffs affected project activities.
vii. Financial management and co-financing	S	Need to address disbursement issues
viii. Project partnerships and stakeholder engagement	MS	Should have included Department of environment/forestry, relevant department of the University.
ix. Communication, knowledge management and knowledge products	S	Still rooms for improvement
x. Overall quality of M&E	MS	Still rooms for improvement
xi. M&E design	S	Design is fine
xii. M&E plan implementation (including financial and human resources)	MS	Still room for improvement
xiii. Overall assessment of factors affecting performance	MS	Still room for improvement
Cross-cutting concerns		
i. Gender and other equity dimensions	MS	Could have leadership building programs
ii. Human rights issues	MS	No direct human right programs but indirectly supports human right

iii. Environmental and social safeguards	S	Supports local environment improvement and also social aspects were taken into consideration
Overall project rating	**MS**	Need to accelerate to achieve the target as there are a lot of work remained.

B, Assessing rating

Rating	Description
Highly satisfactory (HS)	Level of outcomes/performance achieved clearly exceeds expectations and/or there were no shortcomings
Satisfactory (S)	Level of outcomes/performance achieve was as expected and/or there were no or minor shortcomings
Moderately satisfactory (MS)	Level of outcomes/performance achieved more or less as expected and/or there moderate shortcomings
Moderately unsatisfactory (MU)	Level of outcomes/performance achieved some what lower than expected and/or there were significant shortcomings
Unsatisfactory (U)	Level of outcomes/performance achieved substantially lower than expected and/or there were major shortcomings
Highly unsatisfactory (HU)	Only a negligible level of outcomes/performance achieved and/or there were severe shortcomings
Unable to assess (UA)	The available information does not allow an assessment of the level of outcome/performance achievements

C. Criteria for rating factor affecting performance

Rating	Description
Highly satisfactory (HS)	There were no shortcomings and quality of design and readiness/project implementation/project execution/co-financing/ partnerships and stakeholder engagement/communication and knowledge management and results exceeded expectations

Satisfactory (S)	There were no or minor shortcomings and quality of design and readiness/project implementation/project execution/co-financing/ partnerships and stakeholder engagement/communication and knowledge management and results meet expectations
Moderately satisfactory (MS)	here were some shortcomings and quality of design and readiness/project implementation/project execution/co-financing/ partnerships and stakeholder engagement/communication and knowledge management and results more or less meet expectations
Moderately unsatisfactory (MU)	There were significant shortcomings and quality of design and readiness/project implementation/project execution/co-financing/ partnerships and stakeholder engagement/communication and knowledge management and results were somewhat lower than expected.
Unsatisfactory (U)	There were major shortcomings and quality of design and readiness/project implementation/project execution/co-financing/ partnerships and stakeholder engagement/communication and knowledge management and results were substantially lower than expected.
Highly unsatisfactory (HU)	There were severe shortcomings in quality of design and readiness/ project implementation/project execution/co-financing/partnerships and stakeholder engagement/communication and knowledge management.
Unable to assess (UA)	The available information does not allow an assessment of the quality of design and readiness/project implementation/project execution/ co-financing/partnerships and stakeholder engagement/ communication and knowledge management.

D. Monitoring and Evaluation design or implementation rating

Rating	**Description**
Highly satisfactory (HS)	There were no shortcomings and quality of M&E design or M&E implementation exceeded expectations.

Satisfactory (S)	There were no or minor shortcomings and quality of M&E design and implementation meet expectations
Moderately satisfactory (MS)	There were some shortcomings and quality of M&E design and implementation meet expectations
Moderately unsatisfactory (MU)	There were significant shortcomings and quality of M&E design and implementation somewhat lower than expected.
Unsatisfactory (U)	There were major shortcomings and quality of M&E design and implementation substantially lower than expected.
Highly unsatisfactory (HU)	There were severe shortcomings in quality of M&E design or M&E implementation.
Unable to assess (UA)	The available information does not allow an assessment of the quality of M&E design or implementation.

E. Sustainability

Rating	Description
Likely (L)	There is little or no risk to sustainability
Moderately Likely (ML)	There are moderate risks to sustainability
Moderately Unlikely (MU)	There are significant risks to sustainability
Unlikely (U)	There are severe risks to sustainability
Unable to asses (UA)	Unable to assess the expected incidence and magnitude to risks to sustainability