Mid-Term Review of the UNEP/GEF Project

Inclusive Sustainable Rice Landscapes in Thailand
GEF Project ID: 10268 PIMS 191236

2023 – 2027



UNEP Ecosystems Division/Biodiversity and Land Branch/GEF Biodiversity and Land Degradation Unit

May/2025

Photos Credits:
Front cover: Rice lots that are levelled, Mae Chan – Pa Teng, Chiang Rai Province.
Trond Norheim 2025
PAGE 11: Strong gender participation in the project. Visit to female farmer group in Phan – Charoen Mueang, Chiang Rai Province. Trond Norheim 2025.
Page 56 (Annex VII): Example of the Project's Communication and Outreach: Poster that shows the project's broad partner engagement, Wiang Pa Pao – Wiang Kalong, Chiang Rai Province. Trond Norheim 2025

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This report has been prepared by an external consultant as part of a Mid-Term Review, which is a management-led process to assess performance at the project's mid-point. The UNEP Evaluation Office provides templates and tools to support the review process. The findings and conclusions expressed herein do not necessarily reflect the views of Member States or the UN Environment Programme Senior Management.

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Inclusive Sustainable Rice Landscapes in Thailand (ISRL)
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ABOUT THE REVIEW

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Brief Description: This report is a management-led Mid-term Review of the UNEP/GEF project 'Inclusive Sustainable Rice Landscapes in Thailand' (ISRL), GEF ID 10268. The project's overall objective is to transform the Thai rice value chain for environmental sustainability by upscaling the Sustainable Rice Platform (SRP) Standard through an Integrated Landscape Management approach. It is executed by GIZ and the Thai Rice Department in cooperation with many partners from the public and private sector, as well as IRRI and SRP. The project aims to transform Thailand's rice production sector with integrated landscape management approaches, aligning with the Sustainable Rice Platform (SRP) standards. It addresses critical environmental challenges such as land degradation, biodiversity loss, greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions, and water pollution, while also improving farmer livelihoods and promoting climate resilience. The ISRL project is implemented on national level and locally in the Chiang Rai and Ubon Ratchathani provinces, and engages government agencies, private sector actors, and farming communities.

Key words: Biodiversity; Rice; Landscape management; Climate Change; Climate Resilience, Governance, Thailand, MOAC, MNRE, UNEP, GEF, GIZ, IRRI, SRP.

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LIST OF ACRONYMS AND ABBREVIATIONS

ACFS	Agricultural Commodity and Food Standard
ADB	Asian Development Bank
AgriCRF	Innovative Climate Risk Financing for the Agricultural Sector in the ASEAN Region
ASEAN	Association of Southeast Asian Nations
AWD	Alternate Wetting and Drying
BAAC	Bank for Agriculture and Agricultural Cooperatives
BD	Biodiversity
BMZ	German Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development
CBD	Convention on Biological Diversity
CBO	Community-based Organization
CCM	Climate Change Mitigation
CEO	Chief Executive Officer
COVID-19	Corona virus disease of 2019
CR	Chiang Rai
DAC	Development Assistance Committee (of OECD)
DCCE	Department of Climate Change and Environment
DNP	Department of National Parks, Wildlife and Plant Conservation
DOAE	Department of Agricultural Extension
EA	Executing Agency
EPR	Extended Producer Responsibility
ES	Ecosystems Services
EU	European Union
FAO	Food and Agricultural Organization of United Nations
FOLUR	Food Systems, Land Use and Restoration
GAP	Good Agricultural Practices
GCF	Green Climate Fund
GEF	Global Environment Facility
GEO	Global Environment Outlook
GHG	Greenhouse Gas
GIZ	*Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit* (German Technical Cooperation)
GRM	Grievances Redress Mechanism
HCVF	High Conservation Value Forest
HRDI	Highland Research and Development Institute
IA	Implementing Agency
LD	Land Degradation
LDD	Land Development Department
IPBES	Intergovernmental Science-Policy Platform on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services
IRRI	International Rice Research Institute
ISRL	Inclusive Sustainable Rice Landscapes
KAP	Knowledge, Attitudes and Practices
M&E	Monitoring and Evaluation
MNRE	Ministry of Natural Resources and Environment
MOAC	Ministry of Agriculture and Cooperatives
MRV	Monitoring, Reporting and Verification
MSVC	Market-Oriented Smallholder Value Chain
MTR	Mid Term Review
MTS	Medium Term Strategy (UNEP)

N/A	Not Applicable
NAMA	Nationally Appropriate Mitigation Action
NBSAP	National Biodiversity Strategy and Action Plan
NDC	Nationally Determined Contributions
NGO	Non-Governmental Organization
Norad	Norwegian Agency for International Development
NPD	National Project Director
NPSC	National Project Steering Committee
OECD	Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development
OFP	Operational Focal Point
ONEP	Office of Natural Resources and Environmental Policy and Planning
OTOP	One Tambon One Product (Government initiative)
PA	Protected Area
PIR	Project Implementation Report
PM	Project Manager
PMU	Project Management Unit
PoW	Programme of Work (UNEP)
PPG	Project Preparation Grant
PPP	Public Private Partnership
ProDoc	Project Document
PS	Permanent Secretary
Q	Quality (standard)
RD	Rice Department
REDD+	Reduced Emissions from Deforestation and Forest Degradation
RFD	Royal Forest Department
RID	Royal Irrigation Department
SDG	Sustainable Development Goals
SLM	Sustainable Land Management
SMART	Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Relevant/Results-oriented and Time-oriented
SRP	Sustainable Rice Platform
SRIF	Safeguard Risk Identification Form
TAS	Thai Agriculture Standard
TM	Task Manager (in UNEP)
ToC	Theory of Change
ToR	Terms of Reference
TOT	Training of Trainers
UN	United Nations
UNCCD	United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification
UNEG	United Nations Evaluation Group
UNEP	United Nations Environment Programme
UNFCCC	United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change
UR	Ubon Ratchathani
USD	United States Dollar

PROJECT IDENTIFICATION TABLE

Table 1: Project Summary

UNEP PIMS ID/SMA ID:	GEF ID 10268 / SMA 191236	Grant ID (if applicable):	S1-32GFL-000729
UNEP Management (Division/Branch/Unit):	Ecosystems Division / Biodiversity and Land Branch / GEF Biodiversity and Land Degradation Unit		
Implementing Partners:	Rice Department (RD) of the Ministry of Agriculture and Cooperatives (MoAC) German International Cooperation (GIZ)		
Sources of Funding:	*Country (ies):* Thailand, Germany	*Institution Name/Type: a federally owned enterprise*	
Relevant SDG(s):	Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) of the UN 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development (2015), particularly: SDG 12 (Sustainable Consumption and Production), SDG 13 (Climate action), SDG 15 (Sustainable Use of Terrestrial Ecosystems and Forest Management) and SDG 17 Partnerships for the goals		
MTS (all that apply):		UNEP approval date:	5 January 2023
POW Direct Outcome(s) number/reference *(applicable for projects approved from 2022):* **OR** POW Output(s) number/reference *(applicable for projects approved pre-2022)*	*POW Direct Outcome: Healthy and Productive Ecosystems - contributes to the PoW 2018-2019 EAa, Indicator 2* *POW Output: Healthy and Productive Ecosystems - contributes to the PoW 2018-2019 EAa, Indicator 2*	MTS 2025 Outcome(s) number/reference *(applicable for projects approved from 2022):* **OR** POW Expected Accomplishment(s) number/reference *(applicable for projects approved pre-2022):*	*MTS 2025 Outcome: N/A* *POW Expected Accomplishment: Healthy and Productive Ecosystems - contributes to the PoW 2018-2019 EAa, Indicator 2*
Sub-programme:	Ecosystems Management	Programme Coordination Project:	Conservation, Restoration and Sustainable Use of Biodiversity
CEO endorsement date:	27 September 2021	Actual start date:	19 Jan 2023
Planned completion date:	30 Nov 2026	Actual operational completion date:	N/A
Planned total project budget at approval:	US$5,535,963	Actual total expenditures reported as of [30 June 24]:	USD 264,518
Planned Extra-budgetary Funds:	*Cash:* USD *14,600,000* *In-kind:* USD 32,700,000 Loan* / investment mobilized 20,000,000	Secured Extra-budgetary Funds:	*Cash:* USD *14,600,000* *In-kind:* USD 32,700,000 Loan* / investment mobilized 20,000,000
		Actual Extra-budgetary Funds expenditures reported as of [31 Dec 23]:	*Cash: 3,654,955* *In-Kind- 1,419,274*
First disbursement:	20 April 2023 USD 500,000	Planned date of financial closure:	*Estimated 1 year after operational completion. 30 Nov 2027*
No. of formal project revisions:	N/A	Date of last approved project revision:	CEO-Approved
No. of Steering Committee meetings:	2	Date of Last Steering Committee meeting:	14 Nov 2024
Mid-term Review/ Evaluation *(planned date):*	23 Dec 2024	Mid-term Review/ Evaluation (actual date):	N/A
Terminal Evaluation *(planned date):*	May 2026	Terminal Evaluation (actual date):	N/A
Coverage – Implementing Country(ies):	Thailand	Coverage – Implementing Region:	Asia
Dates of previous project phases:	N/A	Status of future project phases:	N/A

I. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Project Background

1. Thailand is a global leader in rice production (20.7 million tons) and exports 11.7 million tons. However, increased rice production over the past decades without a sustainable landscape approach has resulted in significant GHG emissions and declines in biodiversity and ecosystem services (e.g. freshwater provision, soil retention, and flood control functions). The Inclusive Sustainable Rice Landscapes (ISRL) in Thailand (GEF Project 10268) is a UNEP/GEF-funded initiative executed by GIZ and the Thai Rice Department to respond to these challenges. The project objective is to transform the Thai rice value chain for environmental sustainability by upscaling adoption of the SRP Standard through an integrated landscape management approach. It addresses critical environmental challenges such as land degradation, biodiversity loss, greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions, and water pollution, while also improving farmer livelihoods and promoting climate resilience. The ISRL project is implemented on national level and locally in the Chiang Rai and Ubon Ratchathani provinces, and engages government agencies, private sector actors, and farming communities.

2. The project was designed in the context of UNEP's Programme of Work (PoW) 2018-19 and 2020-21 with the priority areas: (i) *Climate change*; (ii) Resilience to Disasters and conflicts; (iii) *Healthy and productive Ecosystems*; (iv) *Environmental governance*; (v) *Chemicals, waste and air quality*; (vi) *Resource efficiency*; (vii) *Environment under review*. It is expected to contribute to the PoW by promoting inclusive systems, structures, and processes to advance sustainable, people-centered, equitable development in Thailand. It aims to achieve this through capacity building at local levels for environmental management, more sustainable resource use, and cleaner energy. The project also seeks to support enhanced policymaking and collaboration to strengthen participation in national development by civil society and private sector cooperation. The project aligns with key global policy drivers such as the UNFCCC Thailand Climate Change Master Plan, ASEAN Guidelines on Soil and Nutrient Management, and the New York Declaration of Forests.

This Review

3. The Mid-Term Review (MTR) was conducted to assess the project's relevance, coherence, effectiveness, efficiency, impact, financial management, and sustainability at its midpoint. The review covers the period from January 2023 to December 2025 and follows UNEP and GEF evaluation standards. The MTR examined:
   - Strategic alignment with national and international environmental policies
   - Project design quality and adaptive management approaches
   - Financial performance and resource utilization
   - Progress towards achieving expected outputs and outcomes
   - Expected impact and sustainability
   - Stakeholder engagement, communication strategies, and partnership effectiveness.

Key Findings

4. **Strengths:** The project aligns strongly with Thailand's national policies on sustainable agriculture, as well as international frameworks such as the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), especially SDG 2 (Zero Hunger), SDG 13 (Climate Action), and SDG 15 (Life on Land), as well as the Paris Agreement, UNCCD and the GEF focal areas on biodiversity and climate change. It effectively integrates multi-stakeholder collaboration, including public-private partnerships and community engagement, to drive sustainable rice production. Compared to other criteria, strategic relevance scored highest because of its clear policy coherence and strong institutional buy-in, which provides a solid foundation for long-term success.

5. The project was well-conceived, integrating sustainability principles and an inclusive governance model. Key project activities have made notable progress in delivering key outputs, particularly in SRP adoption and policy engagement.

6. The project's potential impact remains strong due to its alignment with national policy priorities, private sector engagement, and the scaling-up of SRP standards. By establishing sustainable rice landscapes across 22,286 hectares and advancing financial mechanisms for sustainable farming, the project demonstrates tangible progress toward achieving long-term sectoral transformation.

7. The project has maintained robust financial management with well-documented resource utilization, effective allocation of co-financing contributions, and compliance with UNEP/GEF financial policies. Despite some administrative delays in the initial disbursement, budget execution has remained well-aligned with the project's needs.

8. The project has demonstrated flexibility in responding to challenges, including adjusting strategies to enhance stakeholder collaboration and reallocating resources to address delays. Further improvements in streamlining decision-making and refining operational coordination are needed to maximize efficiency.

9. Stakeholders' roles and responsibilities are well-defined and mostly well understood. Not all are used to working together with other agencies and even less with the private sector. The RD was onboarded first due to its intended role in project management and implementation. Other agencies under the MoAC and MNRE were then engaged – such as DOAE, ACFS, DNP, and RFD, who all are seeing the clear linkages between ISRL work and the financial support packages for joint activities.

10. In the two priority provinces Ubon Ratchathani and Chiang Rai the project has local staff and is also working through the partner agencies to reach local stakeholders on community- and grantee level. There are many positive examples of local activities and satisfaction among the beneficiaries, where the majority is women.

11. The project has established strong foundations for sustainability through government engagement, private sector partnerships, and community participation. However, continued efforts are needed to secure long-term financial mechanisms and policy integration. Strengthening institutional capacity and embedding project learnings into national frameworks will be essential to ensuring the project's lasting impact and sustainability, including adjusting strategies to enhance stakeholder collaboration and reallocating resources to address delays. Further improvements in streamlining decision-making and refining operational coordination are needed to maximize efficiency.

12. **Weaknesses:** Challenges in balancing ambitious objectives with realistic timelines and ensuring efficient coordination among stakeholders have required continuous adaptive management. Some aspects of the project design could benefit from simplification to enhance efficiency.

13. Delays in establishing full coordination among executing partners and delayed implementation in several target areas have hindered the overall effectiveness of the project, while delays in decision-making and administrative bottlenecks have impacted overall efficiency. Coordination challenges among stakeholders and delayed procurement processes have affected timely implementation. Strengthening monitoring systems and ensuring timely stakeholder actions will be essential for achieving projected outcomes.

14. **Cross-cutting issues**, including attention to human rights gender, and minorities, are adequately addressed in the project design. Areas with minorities, known as hilltribes, are found in the mountains of the Chiang Rai Province, supported by the project partner HRDI. Targeted efforts are made to address gender-specific needs and gender mainstreaming has enhanced women's empowerment and participation in the project activities.

15. The type of activities supported by the project are not expected to lead to any adverse environmental or social impacts but would rather reduce the negative impacts on the water and air related with traditional rice production, combined with positive socioeconomic impacts and improved resilience for local communities.

16. The Country ownership is reflected through national leadership in project governance, coordination and consultations, and strong alignment with national policies and strategies for the agriculture and rice sector. Country-level systems are utilized for project planning, management and monitoring, combined with the GIZ management systems.

17. Communication and public awareness campaigns to promote certified rice are conducted by the Government and private sector in TV, trade fairs and other events. The outreach and partnership strategy aims to create a common vision for stakeholder engagement, ownership, and sustainability.

18. On local level, the Rice Department and other partners are actively involved in creating awareness among the rice farmers on soil and water conservation, not burning the rise husks and straws to avoid forest fires and maintain soil organic matter. There is also introduction of fruit trees, crop diversification, and management with better crop systems that increase yield, and avoid the encroachment into forest areas and protected areas. The integrated landscape planning is reducing net GHG emissions while generating environmental and socio-economic benefits.

Conclusions with response to the key strategic review questions

19. There is evidence from the project's monitoring and reporting, combined with stakeholder interviews during the review, that the project is contributing to integrating ecosystem services and biodiversity into rice landscapes and value chains in Thailand. It demonstrates performance at a **Moderately Satisfactory level**. The project performance ratings table is found on page 39. The project has demonstrated strong performance in the areas of Strategic Relevance, Financial management, Exit Strategy and Sustainability, and Factors that could affect performance.

20. Reports from training events, progress reports and stakeholder interviews confirm that the project has increased the capacity and trained human resources for sustainable rice production amongst local communities and stakeholders. However, areas that would benefit from further attention are Project Monitoring and Reporting, Effectiveness, and Efficiency. The main concern that requires attention of Senior Management is to finalize and improve the quality of the Results Framework, to be able to use it as an efficient tool for planning, monitoring and reporting.

21. Key Strategic Questions:

22. *What evidence is available that the project activities are contributing to integrating ecosystem services and biodiversity into rice landscapes and value chains in Thailand?* The project has tested appropriate technologies for an integrated landscape approach as economically viable, with positive impacts on landscape ecology including biodiversity according to performance indicators. Farm books contribute to implementation of the SRP integrated landscape approach and monitoring of environmental impacts.

23. *What evidence is available to suggest that the project has increased the capacity and trained human resources for sustainable rice production amongst local communities and stakeholders?* Two draft capacity development plans have been designed, and their implementation has started. Approx. 20,000 farmers have been trained through extension services and farmer field schools, which has expanded 22,286 ha of rice areas under SRP standard practices. Two partner institutions confirm that their capacity has been strengthened in directing investments towards scaling up sustainable rice value chains and landscapes.

24. Despite only a moderate performance at mid-term, the project is expected to improve during the second part of the implementation period and could be able to achieve most of its goals.

Table 2: Summary Ratings table

Criterion	Summary assessment	Rating
Strategic Relevance	Summary rating	**HS - 6**
1. Alignment to UNEP's, Donors and Country (global, regional, sub-regional and national) Strategic Priorities	The project is strongly aligned to UNEP's, GEF's and Thailand's Strategic Priorities	HS
2. Complementarity with existing interventions/ Coherence	The project has strong coherence and complementarity to national strategies, projects and initiatives in the Thai and regional rice sector	HS
Quality of Project Design	The project design is built on an integrated landscape approach. Main strengths are relevance and partnerships; The main weakness is intended results and causality due to a deficient Results Framework.	**MS - 4**
Effectiveness	Summary rating	**MS - 4**
1. Theory of Change	The ToC analysis and diagram include the process from outputs to outcomes to impacts, and assumptions, barriers, drivers, and threats, but not clearly the relation between components.	MS

Criterion	Summary assessment	Rating
2. Availability of outputs	Only 6 of 16 mid-term output target achieved	MU
3. Progress towards project outcomes	Only one mid-term outcome target fully achieved	MU
4. Likelihood of impact	Likely positive impact despite delays at mid-term because of the strong relation with national institutions, policies and strategies.	L
5. Adaptive management	The project adjusted strategies based on lessons learned, monitoring data, government priorities, and private sector feedback.	S
Financial Management	**Highly Satisfactory**	**HS**
Efficiency	Efficiency is promoted through an appropriate governance structure, but some partners are not accustomed to cross-organizational collaboration	**MS - 4**
Monitoring and Reporting	Summary rating	**MS - 4**
1. Monitoring of project implementation	The project's M&E is affected by weak targets and still not having complete baseline studies.	MS
2. Project reporting	Compliance with report deliveries but results reporting is affected by M&E weaknesses	MS
Exit Strategy and Sustainability	Strong ownership and government commitment	**L - 5**
Factors Affecting Performance	Summary rating	**S - 5**
1. Project inception	Not finalized partner agreements and baselines	MS
2. Quality of project management and supervision	Satisfactory	S
2.1 UNEP/Implementing Agency:	In-country monitoring and field inspection	S
2.2 Partners/Executing Agency:	Positive achievements despite M&E weaknesses	S
3. Stakeholders' participation and cooperation	Strong multi-partner participation	HS
4. Responsiveness to human rights and gender equality	HR and gender adequately addressed. Women are satisfied with project support.	HS
5. Environmental and social safeguards	Safeguards Monitoring mechanism in place	S
6. Country ownership and driven-ness	Strong country ownership	HS
7. Communication and public awareness	Awareness campaigns, PR, branding, media strategies	S
Overall Project Performance Rating at Mid-Point	**Moderately Satisfactory**	**MS - 4**

[1] HS = Highly Satisfactory; S = Satisfactory; MS = Moderately Satisfactory; MU = Moderately Unsatisfactory; U = Unsatisfactory; HU = Highly Unsatisfactory. For Impact and Sustainability: HL = Highly Likely; L = Likely; ML = Moderately Likely; MU = Moderately Unlikely; U = Unlikely; HU = Highly Unlikely.

Lessons Learned

25. Lesson 1: Strong alignment with the national government and its policies increases expectation of project impact and sustainability.
26. Lesson 2: Early engagement with key stakeholders is essential to avoid bureaucratic delays.
27. Lesson 3: Risk mitigation and adaptive project management is critical to accommodate changing circumstances.
28. Lesson 4: Strengthening private sector partnerships enhances the scalability of sustainable rice practices.
29. Lesson 5: High quality Results Framework enhances project planning, monitoring and evaluation.
30. Lesson 6: A sustainable rice value chain would sustain livelihoods and advance gender equality and economic development.
31. Lesson 7: Human rights can be strengthened through support to minorities and poor stakeholders.

Recommendations

32. Recommendation 1: **Enhance Data Collection, Monitoring and Reporting:** Finalize the Results Framework with coherent baselines and SMART indicators/targets to improve performance tracking.

33. Recommendation 2: **Accelerate Private Sector Engagement:** Facilitate stronger participation of agribusiness investors and market players.

34. Recommendation 3: **Expand Knowledge Management Strategies:** Strengthen digital platforms for knowledge sharing and outreach.

35. Recommendation 4: **Encourage and support linkages to carbon credit initiatives** under UNFCCC and/or voluntary carbon markets with the focus of supporting farmer access to carbon revenues.

36. Recommendation 5: **Study and implement measures to improve provincial level coordination.**

37. Recommendation 6: **Transfer more budget resources to field resources**, including local level farmer integration with gender participation.

38. Recommendation 7: **Consider a No-Cost Extension:** Given the project delays, explore an extension beyond 2026 to ensure that project objectives are met.

I. INTRODUCTION

39. In line with the UNEP Evaluation Policy (revised 2022)[1] and the UNEP Evaluation Manual (2022)[2], a Mid-Term Review (MTR)/evaluation is conducted immediately before the mid-point of the planned project duration. The evaluation should analyze whether a project is on track, what problems and challenges the project is encountering and which corrective actions are required. This MTR reviews the Inclusive Sustainable Rice Landscapes (ISRL) project in Thailand funded by the Global Environment Facility (GEF) through a multi-focal area grant to address Biodiversity, Land Degradation, Climate Mitigation, and Food Systems, Land Use and Restoration (FOLUR) and by Germany's Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development (BMZ), to transform agricultural production landscapes in Thailand to balance social, economic, and environmental interests.

40. The review covered the implementation period from the start date 19 January 2023 until the moment of the review. The purpose of the MTR was to assess the overall achievements and challenges faced of the project at midterm, as well as engage with project counterparts to overcome the issues through effective corrections in project activities and outputs, monitoring & evaluation (M&E), resource allocations and related GEF- and co-financing. The review was carried out in line with the UN Evaluation Group (UNEG) Norms and Standards for Evaluation (2016), the GEF Monitoring and Evaluation Policy (2021), UNEP Evaluation Policy, UNEP Evaluation Manual, and UNEP Programme and Project Management Manual (2023)[3].

Photo: Strong gender participation in the project. Visit to female farmer group in Phan – Charoen Mueang, Chiang Rai Province



[1] https://wedocs.unep.org/xmlui/handle/20.500.11822/41114
[2] https://wedocs.unep.org/xmlui/handle/20.500.11822/42025
[3] UNEP Programme and Project Management Manual - 2023 Edition

II. PROJECT OVERVIEW

41. UNEP is the GEF Agency in charge of the project implementation through the Ecosystems, Biodiversity and Land Degradation Unit in the Asia & Pacific Office in Bangkok, where the Task Manager (TM) is situated. UNEP's GEF unit in Nairobi is responsible for clearance and transmission of financial and progress reports to the GEF. UNEP is the implementing agency and has partnered with GIZ Thailand to execute this project.

42. UNEP is monitoring the activities during the execution, providing the overall coordination and ensuring that the project is in line with UNEP's Medium-Term Strategy (MTS) and its Programme of Work (PoW), as approved by the UNEP Governing Council. Considering the moment of design and initiation of the project, the review should be carried out in the context of the MTS 2018-2021, which provided a vision comprising of the seven proposed outcomes: (i) Transitioning to low-emission economic development, enhancing adaptation and building resilience to climate change; (ii) Preventing and reducing environmental impacts of disasters and conflicts, while building resilience to future crises; (iii) Managing ecosystems to protect and restore their long-term functioning and supply of goods and services; (iv) Promoting policy coherence and strong legal and institutional frameworks to achieve environmental goals in the context of sustainable development; (v) Promoting the sound management of chemicals and waste, and improving air quality for a better environment and improved human health; (vi) Promoting sustainable consumption and production and supporting the transition to inclusive green economies; and (vii) Keeping the environment under review to empower stakeholders to deliver the environmental dimension of sustainable development.

43. The project has been implemented since 19 January 2023, with the expected end date of 30 November 2026. The project design period coincided with UNEP Programme of Work (PoW) 2018-19 and 2020-21. These two PoW had the same seven priority areas: (i) *Climate change*; (ii) Resilience to Disasters and conflicts; (iii) *Healthy and productive Ecosystems*; (iv) *Environmental governance*; (v) *Chemicals, waste and air quality*; (vi) *Resource efficiency*; (vii) *Environment under review*. The project responds to six of these seven areas and could also have elements of area number ii.

44. The project is expected to contribute to the PoW in several areas, including promoting inclusive systems, structures, and processes to advance sustainable, people-centered, equitable development in Thailand. It aims to achieve this through capacity building at local levels for environmental management, more sustainable resource use, and cleaner energy. The project also seeks to support enhanced policymaking and collaboration to strengthen participation in national development by civil society and private sector cooperation. Review of the Theory of Change and reformulations of the results statements to comply with UNEP definitions are provided in Section IV. The project aligns with key global policy drivers such as the UNFCCC Thailand Climate Change Master Plan, ASEAN Guidelines on Soil and Nutrient Management, the New York Declaration of Forests, etc.

Table 3: Priority areas in UNEP PoW 2018-2019 and 2020-21 and relevant priorities covered

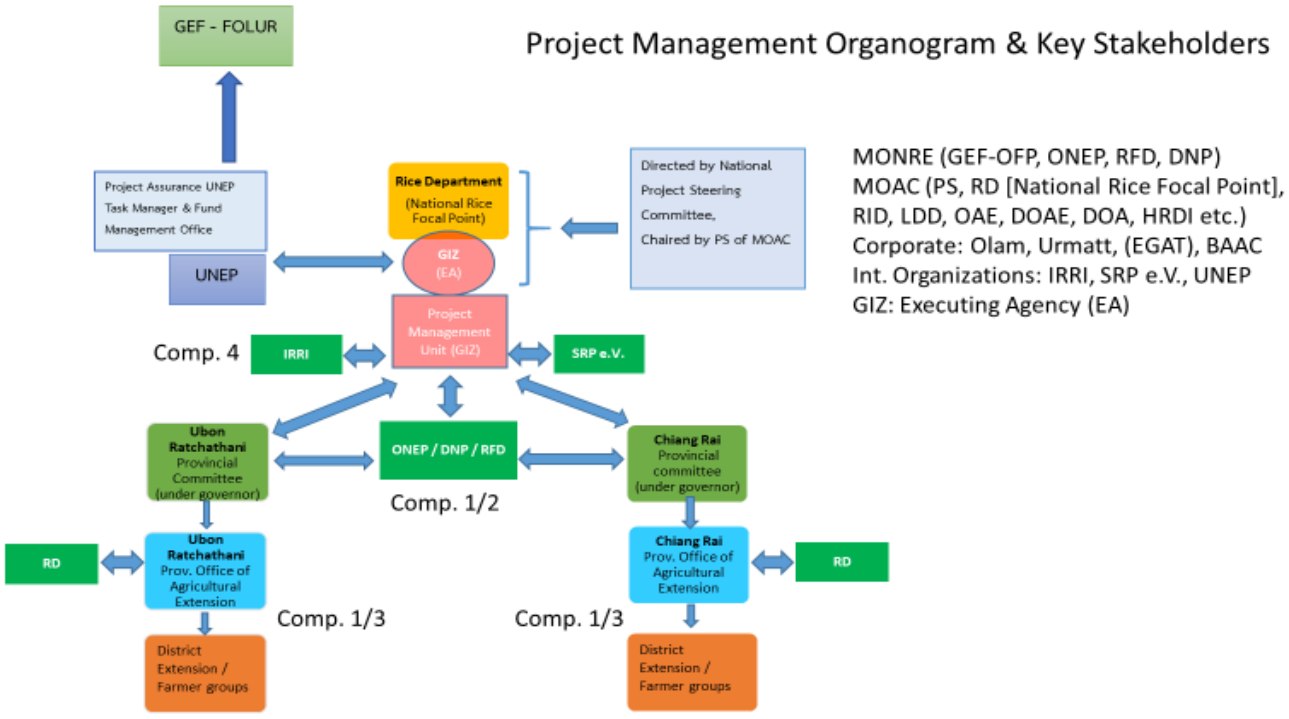
Priority area	Most relevant priorities covered by the project
Climate change	Reduced emissions through climate-smart agriculture, Alternate Wetting and Drying (AWD), and carbon sequestration in forests. Climate change adaptation supporting green recovery and future resilience.
Healthy and productive ecosystems	Improve soil health, reduce erosion and water pollution, support sustainable rice farming, restore forests, reduce forest degradation, and improve ecosystem services (ES) to sustain food production.
Environmental governance	Engaging with provincial technical working groups to review existing landscape management plans, identify restoration opportunities, and assess strategy to comply with Sustainable Rice Platform (SRP) Standard. Inform policymaking and knowledge management by disseminating applied research.
Chemicals, waste and air quality	Reduce the use of agrochemicals and water pollution and improve soil health by sustainable rice farming. Ensure proper disposal of hazardous waste to minimize human health risks and environmental impact.
Resource efficiency	Sustainable land management, diversify crops and enhance resilience of land to drought and flood. Engage with the private sector to support SRP and an inclusive landscape approach, aiming to ensure sustainable financing.
Environment under review	Track project performance and sustainable rice production with a gender-sensitive M&E system. Implement a knowledge management approach, including database and the sharing of knowledge products.

45. The Executing agencies (EA) are the German Technical Cooperation - Gesellschaft für International Zusammenarbeit GmbH (GIZ) on behalf of the Bundesministerium für Wirtschaftliche Zusammenarbeit und Entwicklung (BMZ) and the Thai Rice Department, which is part of the Ministry of Agriculture and Cooperatives (MOAC). The Rice Department is responsible for:
    - Research and Development: Focusing on improving rice varieties, enhancing cultivation practices, and promoting sustainable agricultural methods.
    - Farmer Support: Providing training, resources, and assistance to rice farmers in Thailand.
    - Policy Implementation: Working to implement government policies related to rice production, quality improvement, and export promotion.
    - Sustainability Initiatives: Supporting environmentally sustainable rice farming practices, including initiatives aligned with the SRP.

46. The Project Management Unit (PMU) is physically hosted by the Rice Department. The PMU consists of the co-financed National Project Director (NPD), the Project Manager (PM), an Assistant Manager for Administration and Finance, two provincial program coordination and agriculture development specialists, and other staff. The NPD is the senior officer of the Rice Department that acts as the National Project Director with overall fiduciary responsibility and leading the National Project Steering Committee (NPSC). The PM is responsible for the day-to-day management of project activities and provides expertise in integrated landscape management and agriculture.

47. The PMU includes an Assistant Manager for Administration and Finance provided by GIZ. This agency also participates with provincial program coordination and agriculture development specialists and other staff. GIZ's food and agriculture cluster for Thailand established in Bangkok promotes SRP certification and has strong relationships within the rice sector.

Figure 1. ISRL project organogram (Source: Project document)



48. The National Project Steering Committee (NPSC) consists of policy decision stakeholders from both national and provincial levels, as well as representatives from technical, governance, and academic institutions. The NPSC is convened by the National Project Director and provides overall strategic guidance to the project, including through co-financing partnerships. The two ministries MOAC and Ministry of Natural Resources and Environment (MNRE) are the key national players in the NPSC. A complete list of the current representatives will be provided in the draft Final Evaluation Report. Other stakeholders may also be invited to participate in meetings of the NPSC, during which strategic guidelines and work plans are discussed, negotiated, and approved by executing parties.

49. The project should adhere to the UNEP standard monitoring, reporting, and evaluation processes and procedures. The NPSC receives the annual progress reports and make recommendations to UNEP

of possible revision of the Results Framework or M&E Plan. Day-to-day project monitoring is the responsibility of the PMU, but some project partners participate in recollection of specific information to be able to track indicators. The PM should inform UNEP about any challenges or delays during the implementation. The UNEP TM reviews the progress and quality of project outputs and provides feedback to the project partners. Appendix 7 of the ProDoc presents the financial project reporting requirements, included a Costed M&E plan, which is consisted with the GEF M&E policy. The project has been affected by external challenges such as a slow start due to COVID-19 and unexpected national elections in 2023 and related political changes in 2023-2024. The partners IRRI and SRP have still not initiated activities due to late signing of their agreements with the project.

50. **Problem statement:** The project's problem statement is centered around addressing persistent environmental problems and barriers that need to be overcome to systematically address various environmental challenges in Thailand. The main problems in the rice sector that the project aims to confront include: (i) Land degradation; (ii) Significant GHG emissions; (iii) Air and water pollution; (iv) Declining biodiversity and ecosystem services; (v) Intensive crop monoculture, and expansion of cultivated land, deforestation and reduced connectivity of protected areas (PA); (vi) Lack of institutional and policy coordination at national and local levels; and (vii) Lack of market incentives for farmers to engage in sustainable production.

51. **Justification:** One key message in UNEP's sixth Global Environment Outlook report (GEO-6) was that unsustainable production and consumption patterns and trends and inequality, when combined with increases in the use of resources that are driven by population growth, put at risk the healthy planet needed to attain sustainable development. Those trends are leading to a deterioration in planetary health at unprecedented rates and increasingly serious consequences for poorer people and regions.

52. The Project Document (2020) highlights the need to address the significant environmental problems and barriers in Thailand's rice sector, such as greenhouse gas emissions, pollution, declines in biodiversity, and destructive agricultural expansion. The project also aims to overcome challenges related to the lack of institutional and policy coordination at national and local levels, and the absence of market incentives for sustainable rice production. The project therefore seeks to work across sectors in a multi-stakeholder setting (see table 4) to address changes in policies and governance to support scaling-up of sustainable practices, the importance of public and community participation in the management of community forests and improvements in the buffer function of areas surrounding protected forests. The project is locally implemented in the two provinces of Ubon Ratchathani and Chiang Rai. There are so far no agreed major changes to the project.

Table 4: Main stakeholders in the ISRL project

Stakeholder	Role	Influence	Interest
UNEP	Lead implementing agency (IA) responsible for oversight and technical guidance.	High: UNEP oversees implementation strategy and aligns the project with UNEP's and GEF's broader mandates.	Ensuring contributions to global environmental goals
GIZ Thailand	Executing agency responsible for the day-to-day management	High; GIZ has responsibility for the project's activities, providing technical expertise and monitoring progress.	Promoting sustainable agricultural practices and local governance.
Rice Department (in MOAC)	Co-executing agency coordin-ating at national/local levels	High: Leads the Steering Committee of 20 partners and hosts the PMU.	Promoting sustainable rice practices.
IRRI	Technical partner for research and innovation.	High: Provide the scientific foundation for the sustainable farming methods.	Advancing sustainable rice production science.
MNRE	GEF focal point, aligning GEF projects with national priorities.	High during the design phase, medium during the implementation.	Leverage GEF resources, comply with CBD/UNFCCC.
Local Government Units	Provide local project support and farmer training.	Medium: Help local-level activities and farmers' adequate support.	Enhance sustainability and farmer incomes.
Farmer Cooperatives and CBOs	Represent farming communities in relation with the project.	Medium: Intermediaries between farmers and implementation agencies.	Ensure sustainable practices to improve livelihoods.
National NGOs	Advocate for environmental sustainability and awareness.	Low. No national NGOs mentioned in the Project Inception Report.	Promote sustainable agriculture in communities.
Smallholder Rice Farmers	Primary beneficiaries of the project.	High: Adoption of new farming techniques giving project impact.	Improve productivity, reduce costs, increasing resilience.
Vulnerable and Disadvantaged Groups	Indigenous farmers and migrant workers with little resources.	Medium: Their involvement could ensure inclusive community benefits.	Gaining access to sustainable practices.
Rural Women Farmers	Heavily involved in rice farming at the household level.	Medium: Women's empowerment is crucial for sustainable farming.	Training, better working conditions and income.
Sustainable Rice Platform (SRP)	Provide international best practices and SRP standards.	Medium: Implementing partner to align with global frameworks.	Advancing sustainable rice practices globally.

Private Sector Partners (Olam, PepsiCo, CropLife)	Drive demand for sustainable rice in global markets.	Medium: Influence market trends and scale up of sustainable rice value chains.	Ensuring sustainable rice supply for the international markets.

53. **Project Financing**: Financial tables (tables 10-12) are provided below in para. 110-115. The low expenditure reporting rate at the Mid-point of the project (USD 264,518 as of 30 June 2024) reflects the delays in negotiating and signing of contracts between GIZ and the two international partners IRRI and SRP, and then the set-up and approval process for the first fund disbursement, as well as activities carried out by partners that have not yet received disbursements because of bottlenecks for public sector agencies for receiving international funding. In response, some budget adjustments have been made to reflect changes in project activities, particularly due to delays of approval after the concept design (e.g., Covid-19 delays) and delays of project start as previously mentioned, and in the meantime changing circumstances leading to slightly changed needs and adjusted demands of the partners. It is expected that the picture will be quite different towards the end of 2025.

54. The MTR format requests cofinancing reported as of 31 December 2023, which was less than 35%. However, as of 31 December 2024, co-financing is on track and has so far reached 47.5% of what was pledged. Co-financing commitments are tracked, with three reports presented so far indicating compliance and no discrepancies. Only the private sector has however pledged cash co-financing. It is somewhat complex to monitor in-kind contributions when the project activities are so integrated in the partners' daily work and includes some activities that would have been carried out with or without the project.

III. REVIEW METHODS

55. The review methods were in line with the OECD-DAC, UNEP and GEF evaluation standards, where the following considerations were applied: (i) Free and open review process, transparent and independent from Project management and policymaking, to enhance credibility; (ii) Evaluation ethics that abided by professional and ethical guidelines and codes of conduct, while the review was undertaken with integrity and honesty; (iii) Partnership approach, to build development ownership and mutual accountability for results; (iv) Co-ordination and alignment, making use of key communication channels and consider national and local data/reviews and help strengthen country systems, plans, activities and policies; (v) Capacity development of partners by improving evaluation knowledge and skills, stimulating demand for and use of review findings, and supporting accountability and learning; and (vi) Quality control throughout the review process.

56. The project is implemented on national level in Thailand through the key Government partners and locally in the sites of Chiang Rai and Ubon Ratchathani. A programme for field visits in Chiang Rai was prepared with support from GIZ, while information from Ubon Ratchathani was covered through online interviews with the local project staff there and complimentary information from GIZ. Meetings in Bangkok included the PMU, main government agencies and other project partners.

57. The Reviewer achieved information about the implementation progress and results from the updated results framework, progress reports and other written sources, combined with interviews and field observations to assess the effects and impacts, and the contribution of the project to the overall goals of UNEP and the GEF focal areas on Biodiversity and Climate Change, and also the relation with other important policy and strategy goals, first of all for Sustainable Land Management with focus on rice production, but also for sustainable forest management, social and environmental impact, poverty reduction, equity, and value chain development. Additional to the mission, online stakeholder interviews were carried out, with follow-up through e-mail when needed.

58. The review used both quantitative and qualitative sources of information, where most quantitative data came from the updated Results Framework and progress reports. Sources of information can be divided into the following categories: (i) Background information received from UNEP and project partners; (ii) Complementary information collected through the Internet, networking and other sources, including websites of GEF, UNEP, GIZ, the Government, and project partners; (iii) Written and audio-visual material obtained from UNEP, PMU, partner organizations and other sources during the mission; (iv) Online interviews with persons from UNEP, project staff, project partners, and other key stakeholders; (v) Face-to face interviews and focus groups during the mission; and (vi) Information obtained during participatory workshops and meetings. During the analysis, all available sources were used to triangulate the information and achieve reliable findings and conclusions. In cases of doubt, the same question was repeated in an increased number of interviews.

59. The specific questions for each interview were selected from the data collection matrix according to what is most relevant for each stakeholder group, however, with flexibility based on available time, education level of stakeholders, translation, etc. All interviewees were registered by gender, with the final result that 65% of the 103 people met were women (see table 5). Interview information was recollected with the use of semi-structured questionnaires to allow the systematization of data. The Reviewer gave emphasis to interview local stakeholders in an informal way, so it was not felt like a register of personal data or an exam. For both face-to-face interviews and focus group discussions the interviewer used “Open-ended" questions, which are those that allow the informants to express responses using their own words. The open-endedness is what makes the interview qualitative in nature. When possible, the stakeholder group that was interviewed helped with translation to English and in some cases GIZ supported the translation.

60. The field visits included local communities, field workers, partners and beneficiaries related with the Project, as well as sites where local project activities and results could be observed. For local interviews it was considered important to detect local ownership and if the methods and project interventions promoted are sufficiently accepted.

61. Information from field visits and interviews were organized and processed to give reliable data for the MTR report. The collected data was filled into matrices to facilitate extraction of common findings. In the following, it was analyzed, systematized, and served to formulate the report. If any information was unclear or seemed contradictory to other sources, the Reviewer consulted with

additional sources or alternatively GIZ. A meeting was held with GIZ after the mission to present preliminary findings and receive feedback and complementary information.

62. When there was coherence between the information achieved through written sources (documents, internet) and persons/focus groups, the information was considered as reliable. The information achieved with a combination of sources is presented in this report according to the evaluation questions, with focus on findings that could lead to conclusions and recommendations.

63. The interview information and its use was the following: Interview information → Summarized information by topic (interview question) → Analysis of common issues, on national and local level and overall → Findings, by stakeholder group and overall → Conclusions based on findings → Recommendations based on the conclusions.

Figure 2. Process from interviews to recommendations



64. The limitations of the review were (i) the relatively short mission to Thailand where only one of the two project regions was visited; (ii) language barriers, where it was most often necessary to rely on translation. Even though translation worked, it takes up more time and is never the same as communicating in the same language; and (iii) the updated results framework (including complete baselines) that only was presented a few days before finalizing the draft review report. This information is a key source to assess project effectiveness.

65. The Reviewer maintained clear impartiality and independence at all stages of the review process. This was applicable towards activities related to planning, gathering, organization, processing and assessment of information; as well as facilitation of the review results according to the UNEP review/evaluation rules. It was therefore necessary to find a balance between the review independence and the necessary support from GIZ and participatory approach with involvement of the key stakeholders. The principle was however always ensured that even though GIZ and other stakeholders have their opinions, these were considered but the interviewer prepared the analysis impartially with the use of these and other sources.

66. The UN principles of human rights was mainstreamed in the review through the focus on poor smallholders, inclusion of ethnic minorities (the disadvantaged group hilltribes), and requesting a high percentage of women among the interviewees during the mission to be able to assess gender equality and women's empowerment. Anonymity was ensured throughout the review process, and this was explained to the interviewees in the beginning of each interview.

67. Throughout this review process and in the compilation of the Final MTR Report efforts have been made to represent the views of both mainstream and more marginalized groups. Data were collected with respect for ethics and human rights issues. All pictures were taken, and other information gathered after prior informed consent from people, all discussions remain anonymous, and all information was collected according to the UN Standards of Conduct.

Table 5: Interviewees during the MTR by organization and gender

Implementing agency			**Executing partner**			**Project partners**			**Beneficiaries, other**			**Total**			
Interviews	♂	♀	Interviews	♂	♀	Interviews	♂	♀	Interviews	♂	♀	♂	%	♀	%
UNEP	1	3	GIZ	3	2	RD	2	4	CR Research	2	1				
						RFD	2	3	CR demo farm	2					
						DOAE	1		CR-MC Adm.	1					
						DNP	1	2	Agric. Extension	2	5				
						ACFS		3	Province W.Group	7	12				
						IRRI	1	2	Phan Female farmer group		7				
						SRP	1		WPP female farmer group		8				
						Olam		1	WPP Potato farmers	3	2				
						HRDI	4	7	WPP District Agric. Office	1	2				
									Mae Pik CR	2	3				
Total	**1**	**3**		**3**	**2**		**12**	**22**		**20**	**40**	**36**	**35**	**67**	**65**

IV. THEORY OF CHANGE

Theory of Change at Review

68. The Project document includes the project's Theory of Change (ToC) and a ToC diagram (see figure 3). It demonstrates that the Thai rice sector gives adverse environmental and social impacts due to unsustainable production practices, which are undermining the resilience of the landscape and livelihoods, leading to negative externalities such as land degradation, forest encroachment, biodiversity loss, etc. The alternative that is presented by the project is to work towards a sustainable rice value chain that would sustain livelihoods and advance gender equality and economic development, as well as maintain the environmental integrity of the rice landscapes. Assumptions/ drivers on human rights are only indirectly addressed, through focus on poor communities and indigenous hilltribes as project beneficiaries. The long-term goal is to improve global sustainability of the rice sector through the Food Systems, Land Use and Restoration (FOLUR) global platform.

69. This project expects to contribute to transform the Thai rice value chain for environmental sustainability by upscaling the Sustainable Rice Platform (SRP) Standard through an Integrated Landscape Management approach. In order for the project to achieve this, it is critical to integrate multi-sectoral management of sustainable rice landscapes in the national policy and institutional development and applied at local level, to be scaled up on national and regional level. The four project outcomes reflect this in a satisfactory way based on the key assumption of multi-stakeholder commitment of the public and private sectors and rice producing communities. In order to move beyond the project scope to a broader adoption of the SRP standards and multiple benefits for the Thai rice sector and other countries, several threats should in the long term be reduced, including spatial conflicts and inefficiencies, gender inequalities, encroachment, and unsustainable farming systems that lead to degradation of land, forest, and biodiversity. The project goals would be achieved through four causal pathways.

70. Causal Pathway 1: Strengthen national policy, improve inter-ministerial collaboration, and achieve environmental outcomes under the framework of a New Theory Farming Policy. In this pathway the project will implement a national outreach campaign to strengthen governmental and farmer adoption of sustainable rice value chains and integrated landscape management for multiple services. Both the Government and the private sector will be mobilized for adopting and replicating the SRP Standard and sustainable sourcing of "Quality Thai Rice" under the New Theory Farming Policy. The Concept of integrating the SRP Standard into sustainable rice value chains is planned to be extended to two other Asian countries under the SRP partnership and South – South mechanisms. The same pathway also involves implementation of a gender sensitive M&E system to track project performance and level of adoption of the SRP standard and Integrated Landscape Management approach.

71. Causal Pathway 2: Improve the management of forested landscapes to enhance environmental integrity and productivity of neighboring agricultural areas, including rice, by the governments of the Chiang Rai and Ubon Ratchathani provinces. Under this pathway, two spatial landscape management plans will be agreed at provincial level to integrate sustainable agriculture with improved landscape conservation and restoration of ecosystem services and biodiversity. These plans will be implemented by Government partners through investments that reduce negative environmental impacts and restore high conservation value forest (HCVF) ecosystems and their water services for agricultural areas such as Mega Farms. Complementary, a gender-inclusive agriculture diversification and development program will be designed and agreed in upland HCVF of the two pilot provinces.

72. Causal Pathway 3: Obtain environmental and social benefits on- and off-farm by deploying the SRP Standard and diversify agricultural production widely by the small farmers in selected provinces. To achieve this, the area under SRP Standard practices will be expanded through capacity building, extension, and farmer field schools to service 45,000 farmers. The project will support feasibility design and agree with the local farmers on investments to diversify agricultural production in 10,000 ha of low-land sub-optimal rice systems. Financial instruments for green investments will be mobilized and agreed with the private sector, government partners and the rice producers for scaling up sustainable rice value chains and landscapes, combined with economic and technical feasibility studies of new technology and incentive mechanisms for linking the SRP Standard with an integrated

landscape approach. Value chain actors would promote market-based solutions to drive demand for sustainable rice systems and products.

73. Causal Pathway 4: Achieve that the environmental, technical and socio-economic benefits from implementation of the SRP standards and integrated landscape approaches are understood by government agencies and private companies, and that farmers are willing to replicate this scheme at national and regional level. For that purpose, it is planned to implement a national outreach campaign to strengthen governmental and farmer adoption of sustainable rice value chains and integrated landscape management for multiple services. The public and private sector will be mobilized to adopt and replicate the SRP Standard and sustainable sourcing of "Quality Thai Rice" under the New Theory Farming Policy. It is also planned to extend the concept of integrating the SRP Standard into sustainable rice value chains in two other Asian countries, under the SRP partnership and South – South mechanisms. To track project performance and the level of adoption of the SRP standard and Integrated Landscape Management approach, a gender sensitive M&E system is implemented.

74. The mentioned ToC analysis and diagram are complete in the sense that they include the process from outputs to outcomes to impacts, as well as assumptions, barriers, drivers, and threats. The expected roles of key actors are not included in the diagram but is satisfactorily described in the ToC analysis of the ProDoc. A strength is also that the ToC is clearly related to the cause-and-effect structure of the Results Framework. A weakness is however that the TOC diagram does not present the direct relation between the components, e.g., outputs from one component that could be required as inputs for processes in one or more other components. The diagram therefore appears more as a program consisting of parallel processes than as an integrated project of mutually supporting components. There is, however, a strong inter-relation between the four pathways, but the diagram represents this only by horizontal arrows on each level. Despite this weakness, the Reviewer considers that it is a good ToC analysis, and it was therefore already during the inception phase considered as not justified to reconstruct the TOC.

75. The results framework that is mirroring the ToC diagram reflects mostly the project scope and ambitions, but the indicators are mentioned as "SMART"[4], which is not always the case. The TOR for the review indicate that the Review Consultant will confirm that all results statements conform to UNEP's definitions and make recommendations for adjustments where necessary. In this case, UNEP's definitions have often not been followed and are re-phrased in Table 6 (see definitions below the table). The reason for UNEP to give emphasis on this topic is that the Results Framework should be an important tool for project planning, monitoring, reporting and evaluation. If the wrong definitions are used there could be a lack of clarity in the process from baselines (before project) through activities, to outputs, outcomes and impact, which would negatively affect project planning, efficiency and effectiveness. A major weakness with the Results Framework is also that several baselines were not established from the start of the project and were presented to the reviewer during a dynamic dialogue only when this report was under preparation, while other baselines are still missing, partly because IRRI have not yet finished their tasks and partly because GIZ plans to review existing provincial level plans/budgets together with the Provincial Steering Committees in a participatory manner during 2025. Another weakness in the results framework is that baselines, indicators and targets often are using different units, even though the UNEP definition of target includes the statement that "the baseline and target should use the same unit of measurement as the indicator". If the recommendations about changes in the results framework will be followed (or only partially) is up to UNEP in consultation with GIZ to decide.

[4] Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Relevant/Results-oriented and Time-oriented

Table 6: Corrections recommended in the results framework, including re-phrasing of terms in accordance with UNEP's definitions (see also tables 7-8)

Outcome, output	Text in Results Framework	Re-phrased text*	Justification
GEF Core Indicator 9 Reduction, disposal/ destruction, phase out, elimination and avoidance of chemicals of global concern and their waste in the environment and in process, materials and products	Baseline: 333 tons active ingredients of hazardous herbicides & pesticides used on 90K ha rice) Mid-term target: 50 metric tons toxic chemicals reduced End target: 100 metric tons toxic chemicals reduced.	Baseline: 333 metric tons of toxic chemicals used on 90K ha rice Mid-term target: 50 metric tons toxic chemicals reduced on 90K ha rice [require change of baseline text] End target: 100 metric tons toxic chemicals reduced on 90K rice [require change of baseline text]	Baseline and targets must use same unit of measurement, which should be metric tons (ton is a US unit). GIZ informs that the project does not measure active ingredients but chemicals. Mid-term target and end target were adjusted to use the same wording as in the updated baseline.
GEF Core Indicator 11 Number of direct beneficiaries disaggregated by gender as co-benefit of GEF investment	Mid-term target: 20,000 beneficiaries End target: 45,000 beneficiaries (50% female beneficiaries)	Mid-term targets: 20,000 direct beneficiaries At least 50% female direct beneficiaries End targets: 45,000 direct beneficiaries At least 50% female direct beneficiaries	Mid-term targets: It should say 'direct beneficiaries' in line with the GEF Core Indicator text and also: Gender target: (i) Should say *at least* 50% female; (ii) There should be separate targets of number of direct beneficiaries and % female direct beneficiaries because it is possible to comply with one and not the other. End targets: Same as for mid-term
Outcome 1. National policy strengthened, inter-ministerial collaboration improved, and environmental outcomes achieved under the framework of New Theory Farming Policy	Outcome indicator: Number of policies and regulatory approaches adopted by the government, to implement a national roadmap for sustainable rice landscapes, enable restoration of biodiversity and ecosystems services. There is no baseline or mid-term target, only an end target.	Same outcome indicator. Baseline: 0 Mid-term target: 0	The Outcome need a baseline and mid-term target. An end target was already established at the moment of approval but should not exist without a baseline.
Output 1.1 The positive economic and environmental benefits of an integrated SRP and landscape approach have been demonstrated to and are acknowledged by national governmental agencies	Indicator 1.1 a. Number of coordinated Government agencies and stakeholders that adopt integrated SRP & Landscape Approaches. Indicator 1.1 b. Number of capacity development plans designed and implemented Baseline: 0. At present no government agencies have validated and adopted an Integrated SRP & Landscape Approach for increasing their management capacity to support multi-sectoral and multi-agency policy-making processes. Mid-term target 1.1 a. 50% of involved / relevant government agencies Mid-term target 1.1. b. Draft plans designed and tested [no number specified] End target 1.1 a. All involved / relevant government agencies End Target 1.1 b. At least 2 capacity development programs implemented to improve government agencies' management capacity for supporting multi-sectoral and multi-agency policy-making processes for a landscape approach	(Indicators maintained) Mid-term target 1.1 a. 50% of involved or relevant government agencies have validated and adopted an Integrated SRP & Landscape Approach. Mid-term target 1.1. b. X draft capacity development plans designed and tested [number must be specified] End Target 1.1 a. All involved or relevant government agencies have validated and adopted an Integrated SRP & Landscape Approach. End target 1.1. b. At least 2 capacity development plans implemented for supporting multi-sectoral and multi-agency policy-making processes for a landscape approach	-Indicators and targets must clearly measure the same. -Indicator and mid-term target say 'plans'; but end target says 'programs'. They must measure the same.

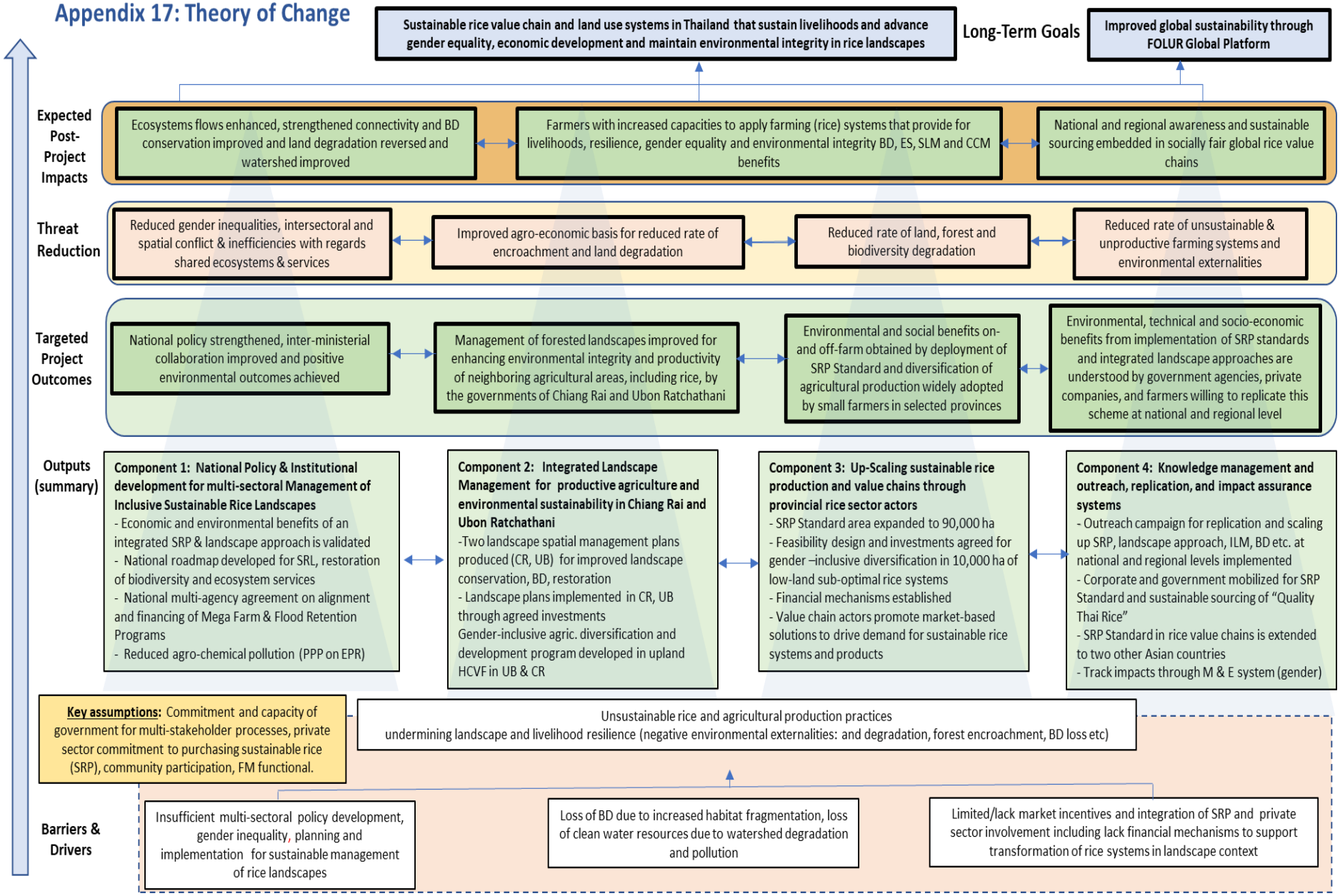
Output 1.2 A national roadmap is developed and agreed for integrated target setting, investments, management, and monitoring for sustainable rice landscapes as well as to enable restoration of biodiversity and ecosystem services at provincial level in Chiang Rai and Ubon Ratchathani	Indicator 1.2 A national roadmap document for SLM has been developed and is endorsed by the relevant authorities Baseline: No road map Mid-term target: A draft proposal ready End target: Final roadmap document	Output 1.2 An agreed national roadmap for integrated target setting, investments, management, and monitoring of sustainable rice landscapes, as well as to enable restoration of biodiversity and ecosystem services at provincial level in Chiang Rai and Ubon Ratchathani Indicator 1.2 Number of agreed national roadmaps for integrated target setting, investments, management, and monitoring sustainable rice landscapes as well as to enable restoration of biodiversity and ecosystem services at provincial level in Chiang Rai and Ubon Ratchathani	-See definition of Output below the table. -Indicator mentions a document for SLM but the output is not exactly the same
Output 1.3 National multi-agency agreement reached and applied on better alignment of the Mega Farm and Flood Retention Development Programs for meeting the interests of both the rice sector with the financing and protection of lowland and upland hydrological and forest BD services	Indicator 1.3. Number of national multi-agency, multi-stakeholder policy documents Baseline: At present there is no policy document on integrated landscape management, sustainable food production, conservation and restoration of habitats. Furthermore, there is no strategy of financing of related Mid-term target: Draft available for peer review and consultations End target: Policy document available	Output 1.3 National multi-agency agreement on better alignment of the Mega Farm and Flood Retention Development Programs Indicator 1.3: Number of national multi-agency agreements on Mega Farm and Flood Retention Development Programs Baseline: 0 Mid-term target: Draft national multi-agency agreement available for peer review and consultations End target: National multi-agency agreement reached and applied	-See definition of Output below the table. Also, note that additional information in the RFW is not required – it is better to mention in the text. -Baseline should be zero because before the project there was no policy document. -Mid-term target and end target were specified and aligned with the output text (note: agreement – not policy document)
Output 1.4 Reduced agrochemical pollution through regulatory approaches and collaboration with the private sector (PPP) on Extended Producer Responsibility (EPR) (e.g. proper disposal of contaminated containers)	Indicator 1.4 Number of agreements with private sector established that pertain to reduction, disposal/destruction, phase out, elimination and avoidance of chemicals of global concern and their waste in the environment and in process, materials and products. Baseline; Same as for GEF Core indicator 9 (see above) Targets: Same as for GEF Core indicator 9 (see above)	Output 1.4. Regulatory approaches and collaboration with the private sector (PPP) on Extended Producer Responsibility. Baseline: See re-phrased text for GEF Core indicator 9 (above) Targets: See re-phrased text for GEF Core indicator 9 (above)	-See justification for re-phrased text to baseline and targets for GEF Core indicator 9 (above) -See definition of Output below the table. -Note that 'reduced agrochemical pollution' is an impact that is a result of the approaches and collaboration
Outcome 2. Management of forested landscapes improved for enhancing environmental integrity and productivity of neighboring agricultural areas, including rice, by the governments of Chiang Rai and Ubon Ratchathani	Baseline: (i) Land areas: 0 (ii) Farmers' welfare: Baselines to be established in year 1 Mid-term target: No mid-term target End targets: (i) For land area values see output indicators below; (ii) Farmers' welfare: 25% increase over baseline (disaggregated by gender, 50% women)	Baseline: (i) Land areas: 0 (ii) Farmers' welfare: [IRRI to provide baseline, not yet finished] Mid-term and End targets should be determined after the baseline.	Baselines should be ready before project start. There is also no mid-term target. The end target (25% increase of farmers' welfare) is not possible to measure without a baseline.
Output 2.1 Two spatial landscape management plans produced and agreed at provincial level that integrate sustainable agriculture with improved landscape conservation and restoration of ecosystem services and biodiversity	Baseline to be established in year 1 Mid-term target: 5% increase over baseline End target: 15% increase over baseline	Output 2.1. Two spatial landscape management plans that integrate sustainable agriculture with improved landscape conservation and restoration of ecosystem services and biodiversity. Baseline: To be finalized Mid-term and End targets should be determined after the baseline.	-See definition of Output below the table. -The RFW has no baseline, but still a mid-term target of 5 % and end target of 15% increase over baseline. Baseline must be finished and give information to define targets.
Output 2.2 Government partners (MoAC, RFD, provincial administrations of UR&CR) implement landscape management plans through investments that	Indicator 2.1 Percentage increase in government budget allocated for investments through implementing landscape management plans	Output 2.2 Landscape management plans with the purpose to reduce negative environmental impacts and restore HCVP ecosystem/water services.	See definition of Output, Outcome and Impact below. Availability of landscape management plans is an output; Implementation of these plans

reduce negative environmental impacts and restore ecosystem/ water services of HCVF for agricultural areas such as Mega Farms.	Indicator 2.2.1 – *GEF Core Indicator 3.2* Area of land restored Indicator 2.2.2 – *GEF Core Indicator 4.1* Area under improved management for BD, carbon and water services Indicator 2.2.3 – *GEF Core Indicator 4.3* Area of agroforests/ multiple crop systems under improved production (SLM) Indicator 2.2.4 – *GEF Core Indicator 4.4* Area under improved conservation management in HCVF and other key habitats	Indicator 2.1 Number of landscape management plans with the purpose to reduce negative environmental impacts and restore HCVP ecosystem/water services [indicators 2.2.1 to 2.2.4 should be taken out]	(including e.g., investments) is an outcome; reduced negative environmental impacts and restoration of ecosystem/ water services of HCVF for agricultural areas are impacts.
Output 2.3 Gender-inclusive agriculture diversification and development program designed and agreed (including coffee, fruit-crops, agroforestry) in upland HCVF in Ubon Ratchathani & Chiang Rai		Output 2.3 Gender-inclusive agriculture diversification and development program (including coffee, fruit-crops, agroforestry) in upland HCVF of Ubon Ratchathani & Chiang Rai	See definition of Output below.
Outcome 3. Environmental and social benefits on- and off-farm obtained by deployment of SRP Standard and diversification of agricultural production widely adopted by small farmers in selected provinces	Baseline: -Area under SRP Standard = 0; -Percentage of total amount targeted (USD 20 million) of (combined) financing generated and secured though the financing mechanisms = 0	Outcome 3: SRP Standard and diversification of agricultural production widely adopted by small farmers in selected provinces. Baseline: -Area under SRP Standard = 0 -Funding made available during the project = 0	See definition of Outcome below. The farmers' adoption is an outcome. Environmental and social benefits of this adoption are impacts. Second part of baseline text was simplified
Output 3.4 The economic and technical feasibility of new technology and incentive mechanisms for linking the SRP Standard with an integrated landscape approach is analyzed and proven		Output 3.4 The economic and technical feasibility of new technology and incentive mechanisms for linking the SRP Standard with an integrated landscape approach.	See definition of Output below
Output 3.5 Value chain actors promote market-based solutions that drive demand for sustainable rice systems and products		Output 3.5 Market-based solutions for sustainable rice systems and products.	See definition of Output below.
Outcome 4. Environmental, technical and socio-economic benefits from implementation of SRP standards and integrated landscape approaches are understood by government agencies, private companies, and farmers willing to replicate this scheme at national and regional level		Outcome 4. Application of SRP standards and integrated landscape approaches by government agencies, private companies, and farmers willing to replicate this scheme at national and regional level.	See definition of Outcome below. Application of SRP standards and approaches by Govt agencies etc. is the Outcome. Environmental, technical and socio-economic benefits are impacts of this application.
Output 4.1 A national outreach campaign implemented to strengthen governmental and farmer adoption of sustainable rice value chains and integrated landscape management for multiple services	Baseline: KAP (1-5) to be determined in year 1 disaggregated by group Mid-term target: Not included End target: 80% increase over baseline scores (target audiences including 50% women)	Output 4.1 A national outreach campaign to strengthen governmental and farmer adoption of sustainable rice value chains and integrated landscape management for multiple services Baseline: TBD Mid-term target: TBD after existence of baseline End target: TBD after existence of baseline	See definition of Output below. Baseline must be defined. There is also no mid-term target (OK due to lack of baseline), but the end target says 80% increase over baseline scores that needs a baseline to be determined.

Output 4.4 A gender sensitive M&E system is implemented to track project performance and the level of adoption of SRP/Integrated Landscape Management approach	Indicator 4.4.1 Farmer-based data collection systems (i.e.: farm books) are established to contribute to the SRP validation & quality assurance system, as well as monitoring of on-farm and off-farm environmental impacts of SRP practices Indicator 4.4.2 – same as indicator 2.4 Indicator 4.4.3 – *GEF Core Indicator 11* Number of direct beneficiaries disaggregated by gender as co-benefit of GEF investment (50% female)	Output 4.4 A gender sensitive M&E system to track project performance and the level of adoption of SRP/Integrated Landscape Management approach. Indicator 4.4 A gender sensitive M&E system established Baseline: 0 Mid-term target: Gender sensitive M&E system designed End target: Gender sensitive M&E system implemented [Indicators 4.4.1 – 4.4.3 to be taken out]	See definition of Output below. The output should have an indicator that is easy to monitor. Indicator 4.4.1 mentions activities that could be part of the project but do not need to be an indicator for this output. Indicator 4.4.2 says "same as indicator 2.4", but that indicator does not exist (see above). Indicator 4.4.3 is the same as GEF Core Indicator 11 (see above).

*UNEP's Glossary of Results Definitions (December 2023) defines the following terms as follows: **Baseline:** An integral part of a results indicator. It is the situation prior to an intervention, specific to the performance indicators against which progress on results can be assessed or comparisons made. **Target:** What the project wants to achieve within a certain period, in relation to one of the expected results. Since the indicator should be neutral, the indicator target is what signals the magnitude of the desired change and in what direction. The baseline and target should use the same unit of measurement as the indicator. **Activity**: An action taken, or work performed, through which inputs are utilized to realize specific results. **Output**: The availability (for intended beneficiaries/users) of new products and services and/or gains in knowledge, abilities and awareness of individuals or within institutions. **Outcome**: A change at institutional level, or changes in behaviors, attitudes or conditions achieved from the use (i.e., uptake, adoption, application) of outputs by intended beneficiaries. **Impact**: Long-lasting result arising, directly or indirectly from a project. Impacts are intended and positive changes and must relate to UNEP's mandate.

Fig. 3. Theory of Change diagram (from appendix 17 to ProDoc)



V. REVIEW FINDINGS

This chapter is organized according to the review criteria and reflected in the project performance ratings table.

A. Strategic Relevance

Alignment to UNEP's, Donors and Country (global, regional, sub-regional and national) Strategic Priorities

74. The project addresses Thailand's environmental concerns, including biodiversity loss, land degradation, water resource degradation, GHG emissions from rice cultivation, and adaptation to the impacts of climate change, and align with the Government's Economic and Social Development Plan, where the 12th Plan was considered during the design. Alignment with other national level instruments include NBSAP, NDC and SDG. The recent IPBES report (Dec. 2024) on interlinkages among biodiversity, water, food and health shows that the project has a highly relevant strategy. It is also considered to be aligned with the voluntary carbon markets, even though it is not mentioned in ProDoc. The project is further aligned with the Government's Master Plan on Water Resources Management (2018-2037) and MOAC's New Agriculture Theory Policy and its Policy for Diversification of Farmer Income & Reduction of Rice Farming in Dry Season, while the nationally prioritized "Mega Farm Program" is also considered in the project analysis.

75. The project is in line with the UNEP Medium-Term Strategy (MTS) 2018-2021 and Programme of Works (PoW) 2018-19 and 2020-21 with the priority areas: (i) *Climate change*; (ii) Resilience to Disasters and conflicts; (iii) *Healthy and productive Ecosystems*; (iv) *Environmental governance*; (v) *Chemicals, waste and air quality*; (vi) *Resource efficiency*; (vii) *Environment under review*. It will also facilitate South-South cooperation through SRP. It is aligned with the GEF instrument, policies and strategies, and in line with the Bali Strategic Plan through capacity-building activities, policy integration, and multi-stakeholder collaboration. It fosters regional cooperation by engaging various Thai government entities, private sector partners, and international organizations. The project objectives and outcomes are consistent with the MTS and PoW, focusing on sustainability and environmental management, especially "Healthy and Productive Ecosystems" that is focusing on sustainable agriculture. The project also supports the UNEP PoW through integrated land management, biodiversity conservation, and sustainable rice farming practices. The project links to PoW indicators related to biodiversity conservation, climate change mitigation, and land degradation neutrality. These linkages remain relevant as the project progresses towards sustainable rice landscapes.

76. The project aligns with GEF-7 strategic priorities, including Biodiversity (BD), Climate Change Mitigation (CCM), and Land Degradation (LD) under the FOLUR Impact Program. It therefore contributes to GEF Core Indicators such as GHG emissions reduction, biodiversity conservation, and sustainable land management practices, as well as FOLUR Global Platform Indicators. The project also supports the Sustainable Development Goals, especially SDG 2 (Zero Hunger), SDG 13 (Climate Action), and SDG 15 (Life on Land), and contributes to the objectives of the UNCCD by addressing land degradation. Quantitative contributions to the global agenda include improved agricultural practices over thousands of hectares and reductions in GHG emissions. While exact figures are evolving, the project targets include reducing GHG emissions in rice production, enhancing ecosystem services, and improving land productivity on approximately 90,000 ha.

Rating for Alignment to UNEP's, Donors and Country (global, regional, sub-regional and national) Strategic Priorities: Highly Satisfactory (HS)

Complementarity/Coherence with Existing Interventions

77. The project has been complementing the Thai Rice NAMA that ended in July 2024 and is now part of the official national policy and strategy for the rice sector. The ongoing project also complements other initiatives by integrating efforts from the Ministry of Agriculture and Cooperatives (MOAC), GIZ, IRRI, and local government programs in Chiang Rai and Ubon Ratchathani. The Market-Oriented Smallholder Value Chain (MSVC) project under the Germany funded DeveloPPP fund is financed by BMZ and implemented by GIZ. No examples of duplication of efforts in relation to on-going initiatives have been detected. Many government partners are however not so used to working together and it is a challenging process to ensure an efficient collaboration.

78. Even though there is already strong alignment with official Government policies, opportunities exist to align even better with Thailand's Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs) https://unfccc.int/documents/620602 under the Paris Agreement. The reviewer considers that an NDC priority that has been less addressed by GIZ and Thai partners is **Comprehensive Monitoring, Reporting, and Verification (MRV) Systems**. While Thailand has made efforts to monitor GHG emissions reductions, the

establishment of robust, nationwide MRV systems specifically tailored for the rice sector remains limited, which is therefore an area to consider based on the monitoring that the project is already doing.

79. Another area of coherence is the scaling up of best practices in sustainable agriculture with the framework of the SRP standard and initiative https://sustainablerice.org/, and leverage additional private sector partnerships for sustainable sourcing. The Thai agricultural standard, which is the main Government standard, is benchmarked to the SRP standard for rice production, where the Thai standard is focusing on the national market and SRP certification on the export market. Thai Agriculture Standard (TAS) is intended to be the standard for upscaling Sustainable Rice in Thailand as the domestic market is much larger than what is currently being exported from Thailand to the international rice market.

Rating for Complementarity/Coherence with Existing Interventions: Highly Satisfactory (HS)

Rating for Strategic Relevance: Highly Satisfactory (HS) – 6

B. Quality & Revision of Project Design

82. The project design has many strengths and a few weaknesses. The strengths are considered to be Strategic relevance (see chapter V.A) and relevance to the operating context; Governance and supervision arrangements; Partnerships; Learning, communication and outreach; Financial planning and budgeting; Risk identification and Safeguards; and Sustainability, Replication and Catalytic Effects. The project design is built on an integrated landscape approach, integration of sustainability principles in rice production, and focus on gender equality.

83. The project design has helped the project to move forward, but GIZ staff considers that the design sometimes is overly complex, and with too ambitious targets. Delay in the implementation process has however been mostly due to issues that are not directly related to the progress design, such as the general elections during the first year of implementation, public institutions that are not used to working together, different understanding of the term 'landscape' among the project partners, and a challenging dialogue between the project/GIZ and SRP. Some of these issues could however have been foreseen in the project design analysis and incorporated into the risk management, to aid adaptive management.

84. The project was appropriately designed in relation to duration and funding. It builds on pre-existing alliances between UNEP, GIZ and SRP for sustainable development of the rice sector, including established collaboration with the Thai Rice Department, creating synergies that could lead to faster results than from projects starting from scratch. The ProDoc chapter "Threats, root causes and barriers" presents a complete analysis. The stakeholder mapping and analysis present an interest-influx matrix for the project and the following stakeholder analysis includes the public and private sectors and civil society. Indigenous peoples are not included in the stakeholder analysis, but in Thailand it is more common to talk about ethnic minorities or "hilltribes". Broad stakeholder consultations were carried out during the PPG phase and there is a Stakeholder engagement plan and a Gender Mainstreaming Plan.

85. The project design has a good risk analysis with identification of 11 main risks and their mitigation strategies. It has also an analysis of the use of social and environmental safeguards, complemented by the Safeguard Risk identification Form (SRIF). The ProDoc defines six key barriers that mostly have to do with institutional capacity, insufficient coordination and finance. The project's partnership approach is therefore to work with the key public and private rice sector stakeholders. Component 4 is dedicated to knowledge management and outreach for national and regional replication and impact monitoring. Communication and outreach were planned to be carried out through the project website, social media and the different partner websites. No inconsistencies of the budgets and financial planning have been found. There is a very high level of pledged co-financing (91.7%), with most from the Thai Government (57.2%) and significant amounts from the German Government (BMZ through GIZ) and the private sector. Sustainability is mainstreamed in the ProDoc, and the project design addressed all main sustainability issues. The two chapters *Sustainability* and *Replication* present a credible sustainability strategy. The project has an appropriate design to finalize its purpose.

86. Weaknesses of the project design were found in the area of Intended results and causality due to weaknesses in the Results Framework that could negatively affect monitoring, reporting and evaluation, including a not finalized project baseline. A minor weakness is considered to be the complex coordination mechanisms, but that is partly due to the positive factor of a high number of partners involved. This could however have been resolved e.g. with a core group of fewer key partners for more frequent decision-making, as a complement to annual Steering Committee meetings.

87. Adjustments may be required, primarily to the Results Framework. Some adjustments may also be needed to enhance private sector engagement and refine financial mechanisms. This would probably only have to be agreed between GIZ and UNEP, but UNEP should consider if the changes would require formal donor approval.

Rating for Quality & Revision of Design: Moderately Satisfactory (MS) – 4

C. Effectiveness

Theory of Change

88. The ProDoc presents a Theory of Change (ToC) analysis and diagram that is coherent and realistic from a cause-and-effect perspective and outlines a logical progression from project inputs and activities to outputs, outcomes, and impacts (see Chapter V). It incorporates four key components focusing on policy development, integrated landscape management, scaling up SRP standards, and outreach. This structure supports the project's goal of transforming Thailand's rice landscapes sustainably. The ToC is supported by a comprehensive set of contributing conditions. Drivers, such as strong governmental commitment, active stakeholder participation, and financial mechanisms (e.g., green bonds), are well articulated. Assumptions include the continuous support of government policies, availability of funding, and stakeholder engagement throughout the project lifecycle. A weakness is that it does not present the relations between the components, e.g., outputs from certain project processes as inputs to others. This would have required a larger and more complex ToC diagram but could have been explained more detailed in the ProDoc.

89. The results framework reflects mostly the project scope and ambitions, but many indicators are not "SMART" and there are many examples of text that does not comply with the UNEP Glossary of Results Definitions for activity, output, outcome, and impact. A major weakness is that several baselines are not established. There is a costed M&E plan that defines activities, responsibilities, budget and timeframe.

90. The identified risks, including climate variability, stakeholder disengagement, and financial uncertainties, are realistic. Risk mitigation strategies, such as continuous stakeholder engagement and adaptive management practices, are in place. Periodic reviews during project implementation were recommended to adjust assumptions as necessary and has been done by the PMU and in relation with the Steering Committee Meetings. The assumptions are also considered realistic and include the commitment and capacity of government for multi-stakeholder processes, private sector commitment to purchase sustainable rice, community participation and functional financial management.

Rating for Theory of Change: Moderately Satisfactory (MS)

Availability of Outputs

91. The planned inputs, including capacity building, policy advocacy, and financial mechanisms, are appropriate and adequately sequenced to achieve the planned outputs. The integration of these strategies also facilitates progress towards the project outcomes. More details on the sequence of different sub-outputs to outputs would however improve project planning, effectiveness and efficiency.

92. The reviewer has been in frequent dialogue with GIZ to achieve updated baselines, relevant targets and mid-term results. As presented in table 7, some information is still lacking but could possibly be updated before the final report. For the moment it is not possible to calculate an average for availability of outputs.

Table 7: Compliance with output targets at mid-term

Outputs	Objectively Verifiable Indicators	Baseline	Mid-Term Target	Achieved	% of target achieved
Output 1.1 The positive economic and environmental benefits of an integrated SRP and landscape approach have been demonstrated to and are acknowledged by national governmental agencies The positive economic and environmental benefits of an integrated SRP and landscape approach have been demonstrated to and are acknowledged by national governmental agencies	**Indicator 1.1 a** Number of coordinated Government agencies and stakeholders that adopt integrated SRP & Landscape Approaches **Indicator 1.1.b** Number of capacity development plans designed and implemented	0 0	50% of involved relevant govt agencies 2 draft plans designed and started implement-tation	0 0	0 0
Output 1.2 A national roadmap is developed and agreed for integrated target setting, investments, management, and monitoring for sustainable rice landscapes as well as to enable restoration of biodiversity and ecosystem services at provincial level in Chiang Rai and Ubon Ratchathani	**Indicator 1.2** A national roadmap document for SLM has been developed and is endorsed by the relevant authorities	0	A draft proposal ready	0 (in develop-ment)	0
Output: 1.3 National multi-agency agreement reached and applied on better alignment of the	**Indicator 1.3** Number of national multi-agency, multi-stakeholder policy documents	0	In process: Draft policy document	0 (in develop-ment)	0

Mega Farm and Flood Retention Development Programs for meeting the interests of both the rice sector with the financing and protection of lowland and upland hydrological and forest BD services			available for peer review & consultations		
Output: 1.4 Reduced agrochemical pollution through regulatory approaches and collaboration with the private sector (PPP) on Extended Producer Responsibility (EPR) (e.g. proper disposal of contaminated containers)	**Indicator 1.4. – GEF Core Indicator 9** Number of agreements with private sector established that pertain to reduction, disposal/destruction, phase out, elimination and avoidance of chemicals of global concern and their waste in the environment and in process, materials and products.	333 metric tons of chemicals on 90K ha rice	50 metric tons of chemicals reduced on 90K ha rice	178.84 ton chemical reduction	357.7
Output 2.1 Two spatial landscape management plans produced and agreed at provincial level that integrate sustainable agriculture with improved landscape conservation and restoration of ecosystem services and biodiversity	**Indicator 2.1** Percentage increase in government budget allocated for investments through implementing landscape management plans	Baseline not ready	5 % increase over baseline	Baseline not ready	N/A
Output 2.2 Government partners (MoAC, RFD, provincial administrations of UR&CR) implement landscape management plans through investments that reduce negative environmental impacts and restore ecosystem/ water services of HCVF for agricultural areas such as Mega Farms.	**Indicator 2.2.1 – *GEF Core Indicator 3.2*** Area of land restored	0	10,000 ha (approx. 2,500 ha in lowland and 7,500 ha in highland)	Not yet reportable	N/A
	Indicator 2.2.2 – *GEF Core Indicator 4.1* Area under improved management for BD, carbon and water services	0	12,500 ha	24,298 ha	194.4
	Indicator 2.2.3 – *GEF Core Indicator 4.3* Area of agroforests/ multiple crop systems under improved production (SLM)	0	12,500 ha SLM for multiple crop systems and/or agroforestry	968 ha	7.7
	Indicator 2.2.4 – *GEF Core Indicator 4.4* Area under improved conservation management in HCVF and other key habitats	0	10,000 ha	0 ha	0
Output: 2.3 Gender-inclusive agriculture diversification and development program designed and agreed (including coffee, fruit-crops, agroforestry) in upland HCVF in Ubon Ratchathani & Chiang Rai	**Indicator 2.3** Number of programs developed regarding gender-inclusive agriculture diversification and development	0	0	0 (2 are in develop-ment)	100
Output 3.1 The area under Sustainable Rice Platform (SRP) Standard practices is expanded through capacity building, extension and farmer field schools servicing 45,000 farmers	**Indicator 3.1.1 – *GEF Core Indicator 4*** Area under SRP Standard is increased in the selected target areas	0	45,000 ha (approx. 20,000 farmers)	22,286 ha	49.5
	Indicator 3.1.2 – *GEF Core Indicator 6* Reduction tCO_2e from rice production following SRP standard with the integrated landscape management approach	0	1,314,802 tCO_2e by end of Year 2	Not yet reportable	N/A
Output 3.2 Feasibility design for diversification of agricultural production in 10,000 ha of low-land sub-optimal rice systems	**Indicator 3.2 - *GEF Core Indicator 4*** Number of plans agreed in UB & CR for transforming sub-optimal rice systems into sustainable & diversified systems and area of diversified cropping adopted within sub-optimal rice systems	0	2 (1 in UB, 1 in CR, covering approx. 5,000 ha)	0 (in develop-ment)	0
Output 3.3 The capacity of government partners and private sector partners has been strengthened in directing investments and financial instruments towards scaling up sustainable rice value chains and landscapes (including e.g. through Green loans and Green Bonds and other financial instruments)	**Indicator 3.3** 3.3 a) Engaging with financiers to mobilize investments for the private sector 3.3.b) 2 partner institutions (public and/or private sector) confirm their capacity has been strengthened in directing financial instruments and investments towards scaling up sustainable rice value chains and landscapes	0 0	Advanced discussions with at least 2 financiers for future funding post project	2 (ADB, GCF) 0	100 0
Output 3.4 The economic and technical feasibility of new technology and incentive mechanisms for linking the SRP Standard with an integrated landscape approach is analyzed and proven	**Indicator 3.4** Number of appropriate technologies that have been tested as economically viable and show positive impacts on landscape ecology according to performance indicators	0	1	1	100
Output 3.5 Value chain actors promote market-based solutions that drive demand for sustainable rice systems and products	**Indicator 3.5** Demand for sustainable rice systems and products increasing over life of project through corporate alliances and market-mechanisms	0	Target not yet defined	N/A	N/A
Output 4.1 A national outreach campaign implemented to strengthen governmental and farmer adoption of sustainable rice value chains and integrated landscape management for multiple services	**Indicator 4.1** Increased knowledge and awareness levels of targeted communities, government, corporate and civil society	Baseline KAP (1-5) to be defined	Target KAP to be defined for: -Government -Farmers	N/A	N/A
Output 4.2	**Indicator 4.2**	0	1	1	100

Corporate and government mobilized for adopting and replicating SRP Standard and sustainable sourcing of "Quality Thai Rice" under New Theory Farming Policy	Number of companies that source sustainably produced rice from the ISRL project				
Output 4.3 Concept of integrating the SRP Standard into sustainable rice value chains is extended to two other Asian countries (under the SRP partnership and South – South mechanisms).	**Indicator 4.3** SRP Standard with the integrated landscape approach is adopted in additional countries, including through ASEAN Forum	0	1 country	0	0
Output 4.4 A gender sensitive M&E system is implemented to track project performance and the level of adoption of SRP/Integrated Landscape Management approach	**Indicator 4.4.1** Farmer-based data collection systems (i.e.: farm books) are established to contribute to the SRP validation & quality assurance system, as well as monitoring of on-farm and off-farm environmental impacts of SRP practices.	0	1	1 (farm books)	100

93. Progress towards the output targets at mid-term for the indicators that have relevant baselines and targets are 70.6%, however five baselines and/or targets are not yet defined.

Rating for Availability of Outputs: Moderately Unsatisfactory (MU)

Progress Towards Project Outcomes

94. The progress towards the outcome targets is normally slower than towards the output targets, which is one of the reasons why some mid-term targets are defined as zero. This does not, however, justify the lack of baseline and targets for outcome 2. IRRI had a slow start and has made significant progress, but so far it is not finalized. A positive area where the project has made much progress is Outcome 3, with an increase of 22,286 ha under the SRP Standard so far. In this case there is no mid-term target, but the end of project target is 90,000 ha, which indicates a progress of 24.7% towards the end target.

Table 8: Compliance with outcome targets at mid-term

Outcomes	Objectively Verifiable Indicators	Baseline	Mid-Term Target	Achieved	% of target achieved
Outcome 1. National policy strengthened, inter-ministerial collaboration improved, and environmental outcomes achieved under the framework the New Theory Farming Policy	**Outcome Indicator 1.** Number of policies and regulatory approaches adopted by the government, to implement a national roadmap for sustainable rice landscapes, enable restoration of biodiversity and ecosystems services.	0	0 (outcome expected at end of project)	0	100
Outcome 2. Management of forested landscapes improved for enhancing environmental integrity and productivity of neighboring agricultural areas, including rice, by the governments of Chiang Rai and Ubon Ratchathani	**Outcome Indicator 2** Quantity of land under integrated landscape spatial management plans and gender inclusive, diversified agriculture practices-improved farmers' welfare in the selected provinces.	Land areas: 0 Farmers' welfare: IRRI to provide baseline, not yet finished	Not yet defined Not yet defined	N/A N/A	N/A N/A
Outcome 3. Environmental and social benefits on- and off-farm obtained by deployment of SRP Standard and diversification of agr. production widely adopted by small farmers in selected provinces	**Outcome Indicator 3** a) Increased area under SRP Standard and integrated landscape management approaches; and b) level of funding from financial mechanisms and investments made available to farmers	Area under SRP Standard = 0 Funding made available during the project = 0	0 (outcome expected at end of project) 0	22,286 ha Not yet defined	No mid-target, 24.7% of end target N/A
Outcome 4. Environmental, technical and socio-economic benefits from implementation of SRP standards and integrated landscape approaches are understood by govt agencies, private companies, and farmers willing to replicate this scheme at national and regional level	**Outcome Indicator 4** SRP Standard with integrated landscape approach is increasingly recognized and expanded at national and regional level	Baseline national: 2 provinces (UR and CR) Baseline regional: 0 countries	Target national: > 2 provinces Target regional: 1	2 0	0 0

95. The project has a delay estimated by RD of approximately one year in the process to meet its output targets and milestones and be able to move towards the outcome targets during the second part of project implementation. A no-cost extension might be necessary to make up for the initial delays, including the signing of agreements with IRRI and SRP. The last Steering Committee meeting (Nov. 2024) endorsed a request for a no-cost extension of one year, which was followed up with a letter of request from RD to UNEP on February 7, 2025. UNEP responded that this could be considered but to process the request the following documents are required from the Executing

Agency: (i) A justification letter for the extension, highlighting the reason for the request; (ii) Revised budget, until the new technical completion date; and (iii) Revised workplan, up to the new technical completion date.

96. An early approval of the no-cost extension would facilitate coherent project management during the rest of the project period. The revised workplan mentioned by UNEP may include an updated Results Framework with finalized baselines and relevant indicators to allow for more effective project planning, monitoring and evaluation in the rest of the project period.

Rating for Progress Towards Project Outcomes: Moderately Unsatisfactory (MU)

Likelihood of Impact

97. The main reasons for likelihood of impact of the project are being able to strengthen multi-sectoral and multi-agency collaboration based on a coherent policy framework; presenting successful demonstration models of sustainable rice production; and strong involvement of the private sector due to improved financial mechanisms, as well as stronger value chains to the national and international marked.

98. The impact would however potentially be affected by delays in the project outputs and outcomes, where the components under the responsibility of IRRI and SRP currently are most delayed. Replication and scaling up of the project activities and outcomes is treated under Sustainability.

99. To strengthen the likelihood of impact, the project could work further on financial literacy and improving access to and understanding by farmers as beneficiaries of the Green Loan programme, as well as advising BAAC on how to tailor their operations to farmers' needs. Other related issues are the support and advisory on linking the Green loans to SRP/TAS, especially on the task of ensuring quality rice seed, and to strengthen the linkage to the GCF Thai Rice financial component that is active in the same provinces.

100. The project has been building on the ongoing process of developing sustainable rice production, which is branded as SRP certified rice in the international market. An innovation in the framework of the project, related to the Government's rice policy, is supporting a national rice certification system under Thailand's Good Agricultural Practices (GAP) certification system "Q" (Quality), which ensure that the products meet strict safety and quality standards.

101. The Thai Agricultural Standard (TAS) for Sustainable Rice, developed by the National Bureau of Agricultural Commodity and Food Standards (ACFS), was officially endorsed as a voluntary standard on March 16, 2022. This standard aligns with the Sustainable Rice Platform (SRP) Standard for Sustainable Rice Cultivation[5], which considers both climate mitigation and adaptation issues, as well as the reduction of negative environmental impact. A Thai translation of the SRP Standard was completed in mid-2021, and the benchmarking process, led by Kasetsart University, was submitted to SRP in 2022. In 2023, SRP initiated a dialogue with ACFS to align certification processes under the SRP Assurance Scheme and the ACFS certification system.

102. The project design has defined five relevant GEF Core Indicators with mid-term and end targets. In the following table no average is presented since compliance with indicator 6 is not yet reported.

Table 9: Compliance with GEF Core Indicators at mid-term

GEF Core Indicators	Objectively Verifiable Indicators	Baseline	Mid-Term Target	Achieved	% of target achieved
Indicator 3	Area of land restored	0	10,000 ha	0 ha	0
Indicator 4	Areas of landscapes under improved practices (excluding Protected Areas)	0	85,000 ha	47,542 ha	55.9
Indicator 6	Greenhouse gas emissions mitigated	0	1,314,802 tCO_2e by end of Year 2	Not yet reportable	N/A
Indicator 9	Reduction, disposal/destruction, phase out, elimination and avoidance of chemicals of global concern and their waste in the environment and in process, materials and products	333 metric tons of chemicals used on 90K ha[1]	50 metric tons toxic chemicals reduced on 90K ha rice	178.84 ton of chemical reduction	357.7
Indicator 11	Number of direct beneficiaries disaggregated by gender as co-benefit of GEF investment (50% female)	0	20,000 direct beneficiaries (at least 50% female)	10,633 farmers (59% female)	53.2

[1]90K is the target for sustainable rice farming

103. It could be considered a contradiction to give a better rating for impact than for progress on outputs and outcomes, however in this case the delays are understandable, including some factors beyond project management's control. The main reason for expectation of a likely positive project impact is the strong relation

[5] Source: VGREEN, K. in collaboration with ACFS, Dept of Rice, and GIZ June 2023. National Interpretation Guideline – Sustainable Rice Platform (SRP) Standard for Sustainable Rice Cultivation (Version 2.1).

between the project design and national institutions and policies. The reviewer therefore considers that the project has the possibility of achieving most of the planned outcomes and its impact if there is enough time available to carry out the planned activities.

Rating for Likelihood of Impact: Likely (L)

Adaptive Management

104. The project demonstrated adaptive management by adjusting strategies based on lessons learned, monitoring data and field experiences, as well as demands and priorities of government agencies, combined with private sector feedback. Key lessons defined by GIZ are the need for early stakeholder engagement, flexibility in project design to accommodate unexpected challenges, and the need for strong local partnerships. These issues all have to do with the project design and preparation, including early discussions and agreements with partners and a good risk analysis that includes concrete mitigation measures. There are so far no lost opportunities, but the reviewer consider that the delays caused by long negotiation periods between GIZ and the international partners IRRI and SRP, respectively, could have been avoided or reduced significantly if these consultations had been more concrete on an earlier stage during the project planning phase and preferably agreed on the main terms before project approval.

105. The project management had to adapt to changes in external circumstances such as initial delays due to COVID-19, leading to a later start-up than originally expected and with a slower implementation pace than what would have been possible without the pandemic due to more work from home and less interaction with local stakeholders. The project was also delayed by the unexpected national elections in 2023 that affected the national context and the project partners at least until August 2024. The issues have affected progress, and some targets in the Results Framework have been modified. However, these changes are not only a result of delays but reflect that the framework was not clear and fully developed from the start of the project.

106. To achieve the project goals on time and within the budget it is important to consider the local context and enabling conditions. Successful implementation relies on strong government support, active community participation, and alignment with national sustainability policies. To avoid delays there is need for supporting the key partners in streamlining their administrative processes, especially in relation to the project. Other measures to reach the goals on time are enhancing local capacity-building and increasing resource allocation for field activities. However, despite these measures, there might be a need for a no-cost extension since the project has approximately one year delay. GIZ should present the arguments to UNEP on an early stage to facilitate planning and avoid the uncertainty towards the end of the project.

107. Suggested alternative strategies and activities to be considered by the project could include development and introduction of enhanced digital platforms for farmer training, expanding public-private partnerships, and incorporating climate-smart agricultural practices more explicitly. These strategies could strengthen local stakeholder engagement and thereby project sustainability. One strategy that already has initiated is to strengthen the local farmers' access to finance, especially from the Bank for Agriculture and Agricultural Cooperatives (BAAC).

108. Additionally, the project should consider encouraging carbon credit projects under REDD+ or the voluntary carbon marked. Such projects should however not be an additional project output but rather be carried out separately by the interested parties based on the project results such as reforestation, reduced deforestation and forest degradation.

109. A positive unexpected effect not specified in the ProDoc is the enhanced community cohesion. No unexpected negative effects of the project have been detected.

Rating for Adaptive Management: Satisfactory (S)

Rating for Effectiveness: Moderately Satisfactory (MS) - 4

D. Financial Management

Adherence to UNEP's/Donor Financial Policies and Procedures

110. The quality of financial management is efficiently supporting the project activities. Financial management aligns with UNEP's standards, with regular audits and transparent reporting mechanisms. The financial management also complies with the GEF policies and procedures.

111. Procurement processes comply with UNEP and national regulations that are designed to ensure fairness and transparency. The project is built on a partnership model and does not include any procurement of large additional contracts. There have not been any examples of procurement issues.

Rating for Adherence to UNEP's/Donor Financial Policies and Procedures: Highly Satisfactory (HS)

Completeness of Financial Information

112. The project financial information is complete, and UNEP's financial managers are satisfied with the project's performance. UNEP is however managing the expenditures according to budget lines and not components, as in the project budget. Monitoring of activities and costs has been used as the source of information to shift budget resources according to the work plan, but not at the level of "budget revisions" and always under the same outcome. Effective financial management has supported timely implementation, though the delay of the first fund transfer occurred because the project could only be set up in the system once the agreement was signed, and then the set-up, approvals, etc. delayed the process.

Table 10: Quarterly expenditures at mid-term

QUARTERLY EXPENDITURE STATEMENT (US$)											
Project title:		Inclusive Sustainable Rice Landscapes in Thailand									
Project number:		GFL-11207-14AC0003- S1-32GFL-000729-SB-013191									
Project executing partner:		Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit (GIZ)									
Project implementation period:		From:	01-Dec-22				To:	30-Nov-26			
Reporting period:		From:	01-Oct-24				To:	31-Dec-24			
UNEP Budget Line		GEF-approved budget		Actual expenditures incurred*							Cummulative unspent balance to-date
		Total project budget	Current year budget	Cummulative expenditures from previous period	Jan-Mar Qtr 1	Apr-Jun Qtr 2	Jul-Sep Qtr 3	Oct-Dec Qtr 4	Current year total	Cummulative expenditures to-date	
		A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H=D+E+F+G	I=C+H	J=A-I
1100	Project personnel	1.130.452	169.209	85.199	30.518	51.080	27.627	53.148	162.373	247.572	882.880
1200	Consultants	1.116.000	96.217	10.516	2.773	7.140	14.554	9.775	34.241	44.757	1.071.243
1300	Administrative support	257.609	42.227	28.668	4.838	14.525	7.925	8.608	35.896	64.564	193.045
1600	Travel on official business	52.780	11.075	206	1.118	1.526	1.050	1.462	5.156	5.362	47.418
2100	Sub-contracts (co-operating agencies and government)	1.537.315	96.518	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1.537.315
2200	Sub-contracts (commercial service providers)	219.095	12.065	199	281	0	0	1.299	1.580	1.779	217.316
3200	Group training	189.800	9.652	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	189.800
3300	Meetings/Conferences	282.665	93.435	1.146	53	21.149	5.949	12.335	39.486	40.633	242.032
4100	Expendable equipment	280.545	4.366	1.859	1.361	1.925	1.233	-371	4.148	6.007	274.538
4200	Non-expendable equipment	136.802	6.636	4.768	995	656	9.001	996	11.649	16.416	120.386
4300	Premises	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
5100	Operation and maintenance of equipment	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
5200	Reporting costs	37.000	1.206	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	37.000
5300	Sundry	88.900	6.032	1.705	1.056	853	2.164	570	4.642	6.347	82.553
5400	Hospitality and entertainment	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
5500	Monitoring and Evaluation	207.000	1.206	0	0	0	0	15.269	15.269	15.269	191.731
xxxx	Interest Received			-11.593	0	0	0	-11.762	-11.762	-23.355	23.355
GRAND TOTAL		**5.535.963**	**549.846**	**122.672**	**42.992**	**98.854**	**69.502**	**91.330**	**302.678**	**425.350**	**5.110.613**

113. Until now, 85% of the expenditures have been in the personnel component. This reflects the delays in negotiating and signing the contracts between GIZ and the two international partners IRRI and SRP, as well as activities carried out by partners that have not yet received disbursements because of bottlenecks for public sector agencies for receiving international funding. It is therefore expected that the picture would be quite different already towards the end of 2025.

114. Some budget adjustments have been made to reflect changes in project activities, particularly due to delays of approval after the concept design (e.g., Covid-19 delays) and delays of project start as previously mentioned, and in the meantime changing circumstances leading to slightly changed needs and adjusted demands of the partners. Only SRP had a budget cut compared with the initial budget, because the Government wanted to use more of the resources give more support to the national Thai Rice standard body. This issue was raised by SRP in an interview during the MTR but not raised by SRP in the project Steering Committee as the changes had been agreed by all Steering Committee members. The only significant delay of the project was in relation with SRP, and according to GIZ the willingness of SRP to share relevant information to the audit company. SRP on the other hand mentions that they could not do the relevant adjustments without seeing the report on observations. The agreement with IRRI was also delayed but IRRI has advanced many tasks so far with use of its own funds.

115. Regarding the grant process, it is not easy for the Thai Government to receive international funds because it is not often carried out, so all takes time. It requires many levels of approval, and it is therefore good that the project had Parliament approval before its initiation. The bottlenecks for each public sector agency that is receiving international funding are:

- The difficulty to put together a project in alignment with the Thai Government system;
- Management → Legal review → Ministry → Ministry of Foreign Affairs → Office of Attorney General → Back to Management.

Table 11: Expenditures of the project by components at mid-term

UNEP Budget line (GIZ executing agency)			Project Budget	Expenditure by project component/output (US$)						Expenditure by calendar year (US$)		
				Component 1 - Policy	Component 2 - Landscape Managemt.	Component 3 - Upscaling SRP	Component 4 - KM and M&E	PMC	TOTAL	2023	2024	TOTAL
10	PERSONNEL COMPONENT											
	1100	Project personnel	1,130,452	72,425	90,691	54,001	30,455	0	247,572	85,199	162,373	247,572
	1200	Consultants	1,116,000	6,337	5,534	27,672	5,214	0	44,757	10,516	34,241	44,757
	1300	Project-administrative support	257,609	0	0	0	0	64,564	64,564	28,668	35,896	64,564
	1600	Project travel (project admin, outreach, and on-site logistics in CR&UR)	52,780	1,473	1,524	1,132	1,233	0	5,362	206	5,156	5,362
	Component TOTAL		2,556,841	80,235	97,750	82,805	36,901	64,564	362,254	124,589	237,665	362,254
20	SUB-CONTRACT COMPONENT											
	2100	Sub-contract (co-operating agencies and government)	1,537,315	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
	2200	Sub-contract (commercial service providers)	219,095	0	0	1,779	0	0	1,779	199	1,580	1,779
	Component TOTAL		1,756,410	0	0	1,779	0	0	1,779	199	1,580	1,779
30	TRAINING COMPONENT											
	3200	Group training	189,800	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
	3300	Meetings/conferences (partly through local logistics services)	282,665	7,201	17,598	6,155	8,194	1,485	40,633	1,146	39,486	40,633
	Component TOTAL		472,465	7,201	17,598	6,155	8,194	1,485	40,633	1,146	39,486	40,633
40	EQUIPMENT AND PREMISES COMPONENT											
	4100	Expendables (supplies)	280,545	0	2,957	2,741	0	309	6,007	1,859	4,148	6,007
	4200	Non-expendables (equipment)	136,802	0	5,976	0	9,600	840	16,416	4,768	11,649	16,416
	4300	Premises	0						0	0	0	0
	Component TOTAL		417,347	0	8,933	2,741	9,600	1,149	22,423	6,626	15,797	22,423
50	MISCELLANEOUS COMPONENT											
	5200	Reporting	37,000	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
	5300	Sundries	88,900	1,408	1,408	1,408	2,122	0	6,347	1,705	4,642	6,347
	5500	Monitoring & evaluation, inception	207,000	0	0	0	11,729	3,541	15,269	0	15,269	15,269
	Component TOTAL		332,900	1,408	1,408	1,408	13,851	3,541	21,616	1,705	19,912	21,616
	xxxx	Interest received						-23,355	-23,355	-11,593	-11,762	-23,355
TOTAL (ALL COMPONENTS)			5,535,963	88,844	125,689	94,888	68,546	47,383	425,350	122,672	302,678	425,350

116. Co-financing is on track and has so far reached 47.5% of what was pledged. Co-financing commitments are tracked, with three reports presented so far indicating compliance and no discrepancies. Only the private sector has however pledged cash co-financing. It is somewhat complex to monitor in-kind contributions when the project activities are so integrated in the partners' daily work and includes some activities that would have been carried out with or without the project.

117. UNEP is not directly involved in procurement since the procurement plan was agreed and the procurement follows the national system aligned with UNEP regulations, and there have been no issues. One audit was carried out and cleared without observations, while a second audit would be in June 2025.

Rating for Completeness of Financial Information: Highly Satisfactory (HS)

Table 12: Approved co-financing and disbursed until mid-term

Sources of co-financing	Cash pledged		Cash final		In-kind pledged		In-kind final		Total final	
	US$	%	US$	%	US$	%	US$	%	US$	%
GIZ	0		0	0	8,500,000	26	3,770,185	44	3,770,185	44
Olam	13,600,000	93	7,443,791	55	0		632,243	100	8,076,034	59
Rice Department	0		0	0	10,500,00	32	3,190,706	30	3,190,706	30
Office of Natural Resources and Environment Policy	0		0	0	4,000,000	12	0	100	0	0
Department of National Parks	0		0	0	500,000	2	0	100	0	0
Royal Forestry Department	0		0	0	500,000	2	0	100	0	0
Governments of Chiang Rai and Ubon Ratchathani	0		0	0	3,000,000	9	0	100	0	0
IRRI	0		0	0	3,000,000	9	0	100	0	0
Sustainable Rice Platform (SRP)	0		0	0	2,500,000	8	0	100	0	0
UNEP	0		0	0	200,000	1	100,000	100	100,000	50
Urmatt Ltd	1,000,000	7	0	100	0		0		0	0
Total pledged	**14,600,000**				**32,700,000**				**47,300,000**	
Total final			**7,443,791**				**15,136,925**		**22,580,716**	

118. Communication between finance and project management staff has been excellent, with regular meetings and fast clarification on any questions without any issues.

Rating for communication between finance and project management staff: Highly Satisfactory (HS)

Rating for Financial Management: Highly Satisfactory (HS)

E. Efficiency

119. Expenditures align with the workplan, ensuring cost-effectiveness and value for money. The expenditures have been appropriate until the moment of the MTR. Resource utilization seems to be efficient and equitable, promoting value for money that is also needed for financial sustainability.

120. The governance structure is appropriate, with coordination mechanisms among project partners. Not all partners are, however, used to collaboration outside their own organization and co-financing activities, which is a process still under improvement. The large number of representatives in the National Project Steering Committee (NPSC) might be a reason for that only two SC meetings have been held so far, one informal meeting in December 2023 and one formal meeting in December 2024. The few meetings could reduce the efficiency of decision-making at national level.

121. The provincial steering committees include the key actors at a provincial level. However, it seems that this structure has been operationalized more effectively in Ubon Ratchathani than in Chiang Rai, which may be an opportunity to study the differences and transfer lessons learned.

122. The project was to a high degree built on institutions and initiatives that existed long before the project was approved. It leverages existing institutions and integrates lessons from past projects to enhance efficiency and effectiveness. GIZ is building upon the Thai Rice NAMA, its partnership with OLAM (that was upscaled), the PPP project, a crop rotation project, and female empowerment programs. There are also synergies with the upcoming GIZ-GCF Thai rice project, which had its inception workshop in February 26-27, 2025. The ProDoc mentions also that the project should work with OTOP, which is an error. The project however works with DOAE that is similar to OTOP.

123. In 2023 the project conducted a workshop that could improve project efficiency, focused on sharing lessons learned on the process of creating an agriculture diversification and development program, as well as deciding on implementation and possible co-management arrangements for multi-actor and multi-sectoral decision-making processes.

124. The delay in achieving project targets mentioned under Effectiveness gives a relatively low indicator of efficiency so far (results compared with time and resources used). This is however to certain degree due to factors outside project management's control, such as the political turbulence before and after the national elections and its effect on efficiency of partners. The efficiency ratio is expected to improve, e.g., due to that the partners are getting more used to inter-agency collaboration. Improved workflow planning and clearer delegation of responsibilities would enhance operational efficiency. Most partners would be able to continue supporting the project goals, especially because these are integrated in the government structures (this is further covered under Sustainability).

Rating for Efficiency: Moderately Satisfactory (MS) - 4

F. Monitoring and Reporting

Monitoring of Project Implementation

125. The baseline studies for the project were developed in 2020 by Jaques de Graf (Lead Consultant, Charlene Marek and Wilailak Suraphruk. Five years later and in the middle of implementation the baselines are still not complete. This is a fundamental factor for monitoring and evaluation of project outputs and outcomes. Some additional baseline data were finalized during the MTR and presented to the reviewer a few days before presentation of the draft report, but the following are still lacking:

- Baseline for indicator 2.1: Percentage increase in government budget allocated for investments through implementing landscape management plans. The baseline is not yet finalized, but the Results Framework still has a mid-term target of 5% increase over baseline.
- Baseline for indicator 3.5: Demand for sustainable rice systems and products increasing over life of project through corporate alliances and market-mechanisms. The original baseline did not reflect demand, so the baseline would probably be changed.
- Baseline for Indicator 4.1: Increased knowledge and awareness levels of targeted communities, government, corporate and civil society. The baseline should be Knowledge, Attitudes and Practices (KAP) scores in year 1 disaggregated by group on a 1-5 scale. It is not completely finalized and is undergoing adjustments.
- IRRI should establish part of the baseline for indicator 2 (farmers' welfare) 3.4 in year 1 based on the methodology for landscape performance indicators for environmental outcomes. Since the agreement was signed very late, IRRI has initiated the task with its own resources, but it is not finalized.

126. There are also several targets that are lacking. The reviewer concludes that the Results Framework has not been fully utilized as an effective tool for planning and monitoring of the project activities to contribute to the project results. It also makes it difficult to calculate an overall compliance rate for outputs and outcomes during the MTR (see Effectiveness).

127. Regular field missions are conducted, with comprehensive reports documenting progress and challenges. There are frequent missions from Bangkok to the two region provinces of Ubon Ratchathani and Chiang Rai, normally carried out each month and never longer than 6-8 weeks between them. There is also a monthly online meeting with each region.

128. Field teams (local partners) are constantly going out in the field. Depending on the topic, GIZ, HRDI, the Rice Department, and DOAE would participate. They sometimes go out alone and often they go out together, which is strengthening local synergies between the partners. Before these missions there are preparation meetings with discussion about tasks and organization, which would improve coordination and reduce the possibility that different partners come with different messages to the local stakeholders.

129. M&E mechanisms contribute significantly to planning of project activities, adaptive management and project improvements. There is however no software database for the project, and data is processed and stored on Excel sheets. Planning the sequence of activities is done through the workplans and tables in the form of Gantt charts. In this way the project monitor all data, and it allows to extract information to fill in the Results Framework and the progress reports. This is organized on province level, which is then reported to the project on a 6-monthly basis. There is no aggregated data information system shared with the project partners, but the partners still monitor the achievement of targets and inform it to the project, e.g., the number of people trained. People are gradually getting more comfortable with tracking of results, but it is need for a more robust system to define impact on landscape level, farm level, integration of agriculture and forestry data.

130. The ToC is the basis for understanding the project's logic and reflects the overall design, but it has not been actively used in the project monitoring. It is however not special for this project, since very few project teams visit the ToC between the approval and each review or evaluation. The Results Framework presents the theory of change from another perspective and should be used continuously as a planning tool and for monitoring of the project's progress, as well as reporting to UNEP and GEF, which is difficult when the Results Framework is not complete.

131. Project objectives and the ToC are integral to performance management and reporting. Monitoring of results are used to adjust strategies and improve project performance. Progress is reported to the Steering Committee and to UNEP. As mentioned, there have however been only two meetings in the SC. A formal request was sent from ACFS to GIZ after the informal SC meeting in December 2023. There have been no conflicts on resource allocation between partners, even though SRP was not satisfied with its budget reduction.

132. Some early results of monitoring led to adjustments of the project:

- The first information from partners was used to fill in the pipeline and track outputs. This was however identified as a shortcoming, including by the Steering Committee.
- Monitoring has been used as the source of information for budget adjustments (see financial management).

133. The monitoring budget seems to be utilized appropriately to support field monitoring and other data collection and analysis. The monitoring budget does not seem to be an issue, but the effectiveness of the resources would have been much higher if the monitoring was grounded on finalized baselines from the start of the project.

134. The ProDoc mentions that hand-over processes are in place to support continuity during staff transitions. GIZ has its own processes, but it is not only the same for the core staff team of the partners. Sometimes there are briefings during transitions, but not always. Rapid turnover of top managers in partner organizations could affect project efficiency because it leads to changes in procedures for staff below them. According to the GIZ staff there is a tendency in Thailand to change the person in a specific position every 2-3 years, especially at Director General (DG) level.

Rating for Monitoring of Project Implementation: Moderately Satisfactory (MS)

Project Reporting

135. The project has complied with its responsibilities for reporting to UNEP and GEF. However, the deficiencies in monitoring of project targets mentioned above may affect the quality of the progress reports and could have an impact on accountability and transparency. However, the reviewer does not have sufficient data to support this claim.

Rating for Project Reporting: Moderately Satisfactory (MS)

Rating for Monitoring and Reporting: Moderately Satisfactory (MS) - 4

G. Exit Strategy & Sustainability

Exit Strategy

136. An exit strategy is integrated into the project design, focusing on institutional capacity building and financial sustainability mechanisms based on the market opportunities. It should however be expected that the exit strategy would change closer to the end of the project. An important factor is also that GIZ has achieved approval from the Green Climate Fund (GCF) for a larger project that could continue the process that was initiated with the GEF project and sustain the project's benefits, which makes an "exit strategy" less relevant.

137. GIZ considers that it is important to carry out capacity building early during the project implementation to achieve good end results and positive exit. The project has been trying to engage promising persons in the partner organizations and give them visibility during the capacity building. The project has not had problems with people leaving after capacity building, they mostly stay within the same institution but might migrate to other positions.

Rating for Exit Strategy: Satisfactory (L)

Socio-political Sustainability

138. Social cohesion, political stability, and government commitment are critical factors for sustaining project outcomes. Main risks include political shifts and related changing of working counterpart staff within the partner organizations.

139. High national ownership is evident through strong involvement of the Ministry of Agriculture and Cooperatives and other government bodies. This is however not enough, because it could be changed political priorities after elections. Rice will continue to be a key crop in Thai agriculture, but new governments could potentially take other approaches.

140. Stakeholder collaboration mechanisms are robust, with regular consultations and feedback loops in place to sustain partnerships. The role of the project and its partnership model is well discussed and planned with each major stakeholder so that implementation expectations and linkages to other stakeholders are clear and understandable for all. Due to the high number of stakeholders on many levels, there are many challenges that arise, but the problem solving is a strength of the project that is relevant for a successful holistic and multi-dimensional landscape approach.

141. The project successfully integrates local farmers, including women, mostly through their organizations and communities. For increased expectations of sustainability, this aspect of the project should be further strengthened through high priority of resource allocation, including co-financing from local partners.

Rating for Socio-political Sustainability: Satisfactory (L)

Financial Sustainability

142. The financial mechanisms supported by the project were planned so far back as in 2018-2020. Of these mechanisms, the revolving fund is in its concluding stage and will be discontinued. BAAC is however continuing the revolving fund of the Thai Rice NAMA, and a green bond and green credit line have also been issued by BAAC. GIZ has established a broad, integrated cooperation with BAAC on climate and agricultural finance, with substantial commitments from BAAC towards these goals in the form of loans.

143. The rice producers have normally access to yearly credit for their production. On January 21, 2021, the BAAC made available the amount of USD 20 million in co-financing for the project to be used for SRP outcomes. The financing is however defined as "in-kind", and it is not clear what that would mean in practice. Key factors for the project outcomes' financial sustainability also include integration with existing financial policies and introduction of financial mechanisms like green bonds.

144. Financial sustainability of the project outcomes is also based on expectation of improved prices and marked share for certified sustainable rice through the national Q mechanism and the international SRP certificate.

145. The private sector's interest in the niche market of sustainable rice products is a key indicator for sustainability since it is based on the market opportunities. The private sector would never be interested if there are no perspectives for financial growth and sustainability, at least in the long term.

146. To ensure financial sustainability of the project outcomes, the initial project planning approaches need to be re-assessed and adjusted to the new realities. This includes (i) linkage to the new GCF-GIZ Thai Rice Project (incentive mechanism etc.); (ii) linkage to AgriCRF and risk financing work, financial literacy and access to green credit; and (iii) adjust the financial component of the GEF-UNEP-GIZ project to address the new realities.

Rating for Financial Sustainability: Satisfactory (L)

Institutional Sustainability

147. There is strong national ownership of the project and political will to achieve its planned outcomes and impact. The most important for sustainability of the project's outcomes is considered to be the strong relation between the project and national policy, as well as working directly with the ministries that are in charge of implementing the policy. Important factors include strong government support, integration with existing sector strategies, and active stakeholder engagement including the private sector. The project is monitoring opportunities to replicate, and scale-up project outcomes and data-based findings are important to convince decision makers.

148. The project is strengthening communication and collaboration between partners through a common SC and working together towards common goals. This is not always easy because the public agencies are used to work more separate based on their own budget and institutional goals.

149. The project demonstrates strong potential for sustainability through institutional capacity building and policy integration, with replicable models and support from policy frameworks, as well as in the Asia region through the private sector, donor supported activities and SRP. Replication and scaling up of the project activities and outcomes are however expected to occur closer to the end of the project and after its implementation.

Rating for Institutional Sustainability: Highly Satisfactory (HL)

Rating for Sustainability: Likely (S) - 5

H. Factors Affecting Performance and Cross-Cutting Issues

Project Inception

150. The PPG and inception period was utilized for comprehensive analyses, capacity-building activities, and conduction of an inception workshop.

151. There was initial ecosystem-based implementation trainings during this period in both target provinces with participants from all major stakeholders of the project. Further activities included support to the FOLUR Learning Platform in designing training offers, which resulted in global e-learning offers with simultaneous translation to national stakeholders.

152. There were also two SRP training-of-trainers (TOT) events held, as well as field implementation that included training of farmers in both provinces.

153. A weakness in the project inception period included not advancing enough in the negotiations with international partners (IRRI, SRP), which led to delays of the activities that they are responsible for. Another weakness (partly related with the other issue) was not finalizing the baseline studies before project start and having a Results Framework that was lacking much information and where the baselines and targets in many cases could not be compared.

Rating for Preparation and Readiness: Moderately Satisfactory (MS)

Quality of Project Management and Supervision

154. **UNEP/Implementing Agency** has been able to follow the project closely because the project is implemented in Thailand where UNEP has its regional office. This has given the opportunity for closer dialogue with the project executing agency GIZ than what is common in most other UNEP projects, and even a field trip where UNEP's TM travelled together with the PMU. The reviewer considers that some of the weaknesses in project design, monitoring and reporting mentioned above should have been detected by UNEP on an earlier stage, but it could have to do with the fact that the UNEP TM changed during the process.

155. **Partners/Executing Agency:** The ProDoc mentions both GIZ and the Rice Department as Executing Agencies, but the legal agreement for execution is between UNEP and GIZ. This arrangement was done per bilateral agreements between Ministry of Foreign Affairs Thailand and Ministry of Foreign Affairs Germany, nominating GIZ Thailand to undertake executing activities for the project in 2022. The Rice Department chairs the project steering committee and provides strategic direction to the project, ensuring that the project is integrated within the existing institutional mandates of the government, ensuring legitimacy to the project.

Rating for Quality of Project Management and Supervision: Satisfactory (S)

Stakeholders Participation and Cooperation

156. Stakeholder roles and responsibilities are well-defined and mostly well understood. Not all are used to working together with other agencies and even less with the private sector. The RD was onboarded first due to its intended role in project management and implementation. Other agencies under the MoAC and MNRE were then engaged – such as DOAE, ACFS, DNP, and RFD, who all are seeing the clear linkages between ISRL work and the financial support packages for joint activities. It has not been equally easy with agencies such as LDD, RID, ONEP, and DCCE, where there are no planned grant packages and therefore could potentially be less interest based on a "what's in it for us" perception of some partners.

157. In the two priority provinces Ubon Ratchathani and Chiang Rai the project has local staff and is also working through the partner agencies to reach local stakeholders on community- and grantee level. There are many positive examples of local activities and satisfaction among the beneficiaries, where the majority is women.

Rating for Stakeholders Participation and Cooperation: Highly Satisfactory (HS)

Responsiveness to Human Rights and Gender Equality

158. Cross-cutting issues, particularly gender, are adequately addressed in the project design, which also deals with human rights and minority roles. Areas with minorities (known as hilltribes) in the project area are the mountains and highlands of Chiang Rai Province only, which represent a very small fraction of the overall project area. The project partner Highland Research Development Institute (HRDI) is leading the project implementation in this area and is also the specialized agency for the topic on national level, ensuring inclusivity and addressing needs of different minorities, with expertise on each of the different hilltribes.

159. Both women and men benefit from the project, though targeted efforts are made to address gender-specific needs. Gender mainstreaming has enhanced women's empowerment and participation in the project activities. Specific resources and activities are allocated to ensure women's participation and benefits, which GIZ consider as sufficiently funded. In this regard it should be considered that DOAE has an explicit focus on women empowerment in their diversification activities, whereas in all other activities gender balance is promoted and as far as possible ensured. There are also specific women empowerment activities undertaken in partnership with PepsiCo, and a Women-focused SRP authorized TOT capacity development event took place. A gender mainstreaming manual will be developed by an external consultant in 2025 that is expected to further strengthen the project's positive impact on local women in the project areas.

160. The women met during the MTR mission express their satisfaction with the project support but gave little information to be able to assess their opinions about the project's gender equality initiatives. Women beneficiaries are often aware of their rights and the benefits provided through the project, but it depends on the degree of involvement and knowledge of the project's content.

161. Gender disaggregated data are collected for meetings, training, and farmer-level activity data (i.e., farmer record books) to calculate environmental, economic, and social impacts of on-farm practices.

Rating for Responsiveness to Human Rights and Gender Equality: Highly Satisfactory (HS)

Environmental and Social Safeguards

162. The type of activities supported by the project are not expected to lead to any adverse environmental or social impacts. The project is rather expected to reduce the negative environmental impacts on the water and air related with rice production, combined with positive impacts for local stakeholders such as improved income and strengthened resilience to climate change.

163. Environmental and Social Safeguards Monitoring mechanism is in place to ensure compliance with the project's safeguards measures. It is confirmed that the project design complies with UNEP's environmental and social safeguards. The project's *Safeguard Risk Identification* (Appendix 15 to ProDoc) found that there are low risks connected to project implementation, with no separate safeguards management plan required. The project applies a good practice approach, e.g., participatory and inclusive stakeholder engagement, gender-responsive approaches, and access to complaints and grievance processes. Until now, grievances may be addressed as part of the Tambon Administrative Organization at the local level, and no complaints have been received thus far. A Grievances Redress Mechanism (GRM) overseen by a qualified Environmental and Social Safeguards (ESS) Manager will be developed and rolled out in 2025 through the aligned new GIZ-GCF project, including for application in Chiang Rai and Ubon Ratchathani. The GRM will provide central channels that are accessible and credible for target audiences. A GRM Handbook will also be released for the project's staff and extensionists to support its dissemination and implementation.

Rating for Environmental and Social Safeguards: Satisfactory (S)

Country Ownership and Driven-ness

164. Country ownership is reflected through national leadership in project governance, coordination and consultations, and strong alignment with national policies and strategies, especially for development of the rice sector (see Sustainability).

165. Country-level systems are utilized for project planning, management and monitoring, combined with the GIZ management systems. The major national systems are the general reporting and structures of each government agency on national level and regional level, where information is extracted geared to the project. Further reporting is done in Provincial and National Steering Committees based on information in their own systems.

Rating for Country Ownership and Driven-ness: Highly Satisfactory (HS)

Communication and Public Awareness

166. The Government and private sector partners conduct awareness campaigns to promote Thai certified rice including SRP rice through promotion in local markets via trade fairs, TV campaigns and additional events. Output 3.5 directly contributes to this from the rice value chain perspective and economic models.

167. The outreach and partnership strategy under project output 4.1 aims to create a common vision for stakeholder engagement, ownership, and sustainability. A Knowledge Management system is documenting and sharing best practices and ensuring that lessons learned are accessible to the project beneficiaries and the general public. For this purpose, the strong communication and coordination among stakeholders, including government, corporate sectors, and communities, are crucial. The strategy also seeks to expand SRP partnerships in ASEAN and Thailand.

168. Key approaches include public awareness campaigns, public relations efforts, branding (Q, SRP), and media strategies to promote sustainable rice landscapes. Effective media relations and engagement is enhancing project visibility and support broader adoption of the project work models.

169. On local level, the RD and other partners are actively involved in creating awareness among the rice farmers on not burning the rise husks and straws to reduce the possibility of uncontrollable forest fires and maintain organic matter to improve plant growth. There is also continued training and information about soil and water conservation, introduction of fruit trees, crop diversification, and management with better crop systems that increase yield, as well as awareness raising in the communities to avoid or slow-down the encroachment into forest areas and protected areas.

170. The local stakeholders benefit from training, awareness-raising and technical assistance to scale-up sustainable rice production practices and integrated landscape planning to reduce net GHG emissions while at the same time generating environmental and socio-economic benefits. In that relation, the project is supporting the so-called Mega Farms for education and awareness creation in the communities about sustainable and environmental-friendly practices and forest conservation.

Rating for Communication and Public Awareness: Satisfactory (S)

Rating for Factors Affecting Performance and Cross Cutting Issues: Satisfactory (S) - 5

Overall Rating for the Project: Moderately Satisfactory (MS) - 4

VI. CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

A. Conclusions

171. There is evidence from the project's monitoring and reporting, combined with stakeholder interviews during the review, that the project is contributing to integrating ecosystem services and biodiversity into rice landscapes and value chains in Thailand. Reports from training events, progress reports and stakeholder interviews confirm that the project has increased the capacity and trained human resources for sustainable rice production amongst local communities and stakeholders. The project has many positive characteristics and achievements, which are built on the strong relationship with national and international partners and alignments with policy goals (par. 74).

172. **The project is highly relevant** because it addresses Thailand's key environmental challenges, including biodiversity loss, land degradation, water resource degradation, and GHG emissions from rice cultivation. It aligns with Thailand's Economic and Social Development Plan, National Biodiversity Strategy and Action Plan (NBSAP), Nationally Determined Contributions (NDC), the Thai Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), and other national policies, such as the Master Plan on Water Resources Management (2018-2037) and the Mega Farm Program (par. 74).

173. On international level, the initiative supports UNEP's Medium-Term Strategy (MTS) and Programme of Work (PoW), particularly in fostering sustainable agriculture, biodiversity conservation, and climate resilience. It promotes South-South cooperation through the Sustainable Rice Platform (SRP) and aligns with GEF policies and strategies, including the Bali Strategic Plan (par. 75).

174. Aligned with GEF-7 strategic priorities, the project contributes to Biodiversity (BD), Climate Change Mitigation (CCM), and Land Degradation (LD) under the FOLUR Impact Program. It supports SDG 2 (Zero Hunger), SDG 13 (Climate Action), and SDG 15 (Life on Land) while addressing land degradation in line with UNCCD objectives. The project targets include reducing GHG emissions in rice production, improving ecosystem services, and enhancing land productivity across 90,000 hectares (par. 76).

175. The project is coherent with national strategies for the agricultural sector under leadership of the Ministry of Agriculture and Cooperatives (MOAC) and it complements initiatives like the Thai Rice NAMA and other agricultural programs. It is highly positive that the project has promoted inter-agency collaboration, but many government partners are not so used to working together which makes this a challenge. Opportunities exist to align even better with Thailand's NDCs, scale up best practices in sustainable agriculture under the SRP, and leverage additional private sector partnerships for sustainable sourcing (par. 77-78).

176. **The project design has many strengths and a few weaknesses**. The strengths are considered to be strategic relevance and relevance to the operating context; Governance and supervision arrangements; Partnerships; Learning, communication and outreach; Financial planning and budgeting; Risk identification and Safeguards; and Sustainability, Replication and Catalytic Effects. The project design is built on an integrated landscape approach, integration of sustainability principles in rice production, and focus on gender equality. The design's main weakness was found in the area of Intended results and causality due to a deficient Results Framework including not finalized baselines, which could negatively affect monitoring, reporting and evaluation. Another weakness is not having finalized international partner agreement on an early stage, which has led to project delays (par. 80-85).

177. **The project has significant delays** on compliance with both outputs and outcomes. GIZ estimates a delay of approximately one year in the process to meet its output targets and milestones and be able to move towards the outcome targets during the second part of project implementation. A no-cost extension might be necessary to make up for the initial delays (par. 91-93).

178. **Likely positive impact despite delays at mid-term** is expected because of the effect of the strong relation between the project design and the national institutions, policies and strategies. The project would therefore have the possibility of achieving most of the planned outcomes and its impact if there is enough time available to carry out the planned activities (par. 95-101).

179. **The project demonstrated adaptive management**, adjusting strategies based on lessons learned, monitoring data, government priorities, and private sector feedback. Project implementation faced delays due to the COVID-19 pandemic and the 2023 national elections, affecting the timeline and some project targets. Changes however reflect both factors outside project management's control and initial gaps in project design and planning (par. 102-104).

180. Alternative strategies suggested including enhanced digital platforms for farmer training, expanding public-private partnerships, and enhance climate-smart agriculture practices. Efforts to improve farmers' access to finance, particularly through the BAAC, have already begun. A positive unexpected effect of the project has been enhanced community cohesion, while no unforeseen negative impacts were detected (par. 105-107).

181. **The financial management complies with UNEP standards** and GEF policies, ensuring regular audits and transparent reporting. Procurement follows UNEP and national regulations, maintaining fairness and transparency, with no major procurement issues identified. Budget adjustments were made due to delays and changing partner needs and priorities. The only budget cut affected SRP, as the Thai Government allocated more funds to support the national Thai Rice Standard body (par. 110-116).

182. Project financing faced administrative bottlenecks, including delays in the first fund transfer from UNEP to GIZ and the complex grant approval process in Thailand. Co-financing is on track but monitoring in-kind contributions is challenging due to integration of project activities into partners' regular work (par. 113-114).

183. The project's expenditures align with the workplan, ensuring cost-effectiveness and financial sustainability. Resource utilization has been efficient and equitable up to the MTR (par. 117).

184. **The efficiency is promoted through an appropriate governance structure**, but some partners are not accustomed to cross-organizational collaboration and co-financing. The large number of representatives in the National Project Steering Committee (NPSC) may be causing inefficiencies, as only two SC meetings have been held, which could hinder national level decision-making. At the provincial level, coordination has been more effective in Ubon Ratchathani than in Chiang Rai (par. 118-119).

185. The project builds on existing institutions and past initiatives such as Thai Rice NAMA, OLAM partnership, the PPP project, crop rotation programs, and female empowerment programs. It has also established synergies with the upcoming GIZ-GCF Thai Rice Project. A 2023 workshop improved efficiency by sharing lessons on agricultural diversification and defining multi-actor decision-making processes. Delays in achieving project targets have lowered efficiency so far, though external factors have contributed to this. Efficiency is expected to improve as partners become more familiar with inter-agency collaboration (par. 120).

186. **The project's M&E is affected by still not having complete baseline studies**. The late signing of the agreement with IRRI has further delayed baseline data collection. Weaknesses in the Results Framework have reduced its effectiveness for planning and monitoring and making it difficult to assess overall project compliance. However, regular field missions are conducted, with frequent visits from Bangkok to the two project regions and monthly online meetings. Field teams, including GIZ, HRDI, the Rice Department, and DOAE, actively engage with local stakeholders, improving coordination (par. 123-126).

187. While data is reported every six months, an aggregated information system is missing, making it difficult to assess project-wide impact. A more robust system is needed to define impact at landscape and farm levels, particularly for agriculture-forestry integration. Early monitoring findings led to project adjustments, such as improving tracking of outputs and using monitoring data for budget adjustments. Staff transitions are supported by hand-over processes, but these are not always standardized. Frequent turnover at Director General level affects project efficiency, as it disrupts procedures and staff management (par. 132).

188. **Key Factors for achieving project sustainability** include capacity building, social cohesions and government commitment, and strong project ownership on national and local level. Stakeholder collaboration is well-structured with regular consultations, and the project's ability for problem-solving has strengthened its holistic landscape approach. Farmer integration, including women's participation, is emphasized, but additional resource allocation is needed to enhance sustainability (par. 136-147).

189. Financial Sustainability includes a revolving fund that is in its final stage that will be followed by BAAC through the revolving fund of the Thai Rice NAMA, while BAAC has issued green bonds and a green credit line. BAAC also committed $20 million in co-financing for SRP outcomes. The sustainability of project outcomes depends on improved market prices for certified sustainable rice, leveraging the national (Q) mechanism and the international SRP certificate (par. 140-144).

190. **The project has an integrated exit strategy** focused on institutional capacity building and financial sustainability, but it is expected to evolve closer to project completion. However, the approval of a larger Green Climate Fund (GCF) project to continue efforts initiated under this project reduces the need for a traditional exit strategy (par. 134-135).

191. **The Scaling Up and Replication of project outcomes** is closely integrated with national policies, ensuring alignment with government priorities. Data-driven insights are therefore used to convince Thai decision-makers of the project's long-term benefits. The project has strong potential for regional impact through private sector partnerships, donor-supported activities, and the SRP (par. 95-96 and 147).

192. **Despite only moderately satisfactory project inception, many factors positively affect project performance** e.g., highly satisfactory country ownership and driven-ness and highly satisfactory stakeholder participation and cooperation, with responsiveness to human rights and gender equality. There has also been satisfactory project management and supervision from UNEP's and GIZ's side, satisfactory use of environmental and social safeguards, as well as satisfactory communication and public awareness (par. 162-168).

193. **To summarize, at mid-term the project has a moderately satisfactory performance.** Available documentation, stakeholder interviews and field inspections is evidence to conclude that that the project activities are contributing to integrating ecosystem services and biodiversity into rice landscapes and value chains in the project areas. The project's strengths – multi-stakeholder collaboration and alignment with national policies -give expectation of positive impact during the rest of the implementation. The project's progress reports and reporting from training events confirm that the project has increased the institutional capacity of the Thai partner organizations and their staff for sustainable rice production amongst local communities and stakeholders. There is however so far insufficient baseline data to determine the degree change, which is required to attribute the outcomes and impacts to the project intervention, This is expected to improve during the second part of the implementation period. With adaptive management and refined implementation strategies, the project could achieve its intended outcomes and establish a model for sustainable rice landscapes in Thailand and beyond (par. 101).

194. **Answers to the key strategic Evaluation Questions:** *(i) What evidence is available that the project activities are contributing to integrating ecosystem services and biodiversity into rice landscapes and value chains in Thailand?* The project tested appropriate technologies for an integrated landscape approach as economically viable, with positive impacts on landscape ecology including biodiversity according to performance indicators. Farm books contribute to implementation of the SRP integrated landscape approach and monitoring of environmental impacts. The project has however so far not reached the target that 50% of involved relevant government agencies would adopt integrated SRP and landscape approaches (par. 86-92). *(ii) What evidence is available to suggest that the project has increased the capacity and trained human resources for sustainable rice production amongst local communities and stakeholders?* Two draft capacity development plans have been designed, and their implementation has started. Approx. 20,000 farmers have been trained through extension services and farmer field schools, which has expanded 22,286 ha of rice areas under SRP standard practices. Two partner institutions confirm that their capacity has been strengthened in directing financial instruments and investments towards scaling up sustainable rice value chains and landscapes (par. 88-90).

Table 13: Project Performance Ratings[6]

Criterion	Summary assessment	Rating
Strategic Relevance	Summary rating	**HS - 6**
3. Alignment to UNEP's, Donors and Country (global, regional, sub-regional and national) Strategic Priorities	The project is strongly aligned to UNEP's, GEF's and Thailand's Strategic Priorities	HS
4. Complementarity with existing interventions/ Coherence	The project has strong coherence and complementarity to national strategies, projects and initiatives in the Thai and regional rice sector	HS
Quality of Project Design	The project design is built on an integrated landscape approach. Main strengths are relevance and partnerships; The main weakness is intended results and causality due to a deficient Results Framework.	**MS - 4**
Effectiveness	Summary rating	**MS - 4**
6. Theory of Change	The ToC analysis and diagram include the process from outputs to outcomes to impacts, and assumptions, barriers, drivers, and threats, but not clearly the relation between components.	MS
7. Availability of outputs	Only 6 of 16 mid-term output target achieved	MU
8. Progress towards project outcomes	Only one mid-term outcome target fully achieved	MU
9. Likelihood of impact	Likely positive impact despite delays at mid-term because of the strong relation with national institutions, policies and strategies.	L
10. Adaptive management	The project adjusted strategies based on lessons learned, monitoring data, government priorities, and private sector feedback.	S
Financial Management	**Highly Satisfactory**	**HS**
Efficiency	Efficiency is promoted through an appropriate governance structure, but some partners are not accustomed to cross-organizational collaboration	**MS - 4**
Monitoring and Reporting	Summary rating	**MS - 4**
3. Monitoring of project implementation	The project's M&E is affected by weak targets and still not having complete baseline studies.	MS - 3
4. Project reporting	Compliance with report deliveries but results reporting is affected by M&E weaknesses	MS - 4
Exit Strategy and Sustainability	Strong ownership and government commitment	**L - 5**

[6] Most criteria will be rated on a six-point scale as follows: Highly Satisfactory (HS); Satisfactory (S); Moderately Satisfactory (MS); Moderately Unsatisfactory (MU); Unsatisfactory (U); Highly Unsatisfactory (HU). Sustainability and Likelihood of Impact are rated, also on a six-point scale, from Highly Likely (HL) down to Highly Unlikely (HU) and Nature of External Context is rated from Highly Favorable (HF) to Highly Unfavorable (HU).

Criterion	Summary assessment	Rating
Factors Affecting Performance	Summary rating	**S - 5**
8. Project inception	Not finalized partner agreements and baselines	MS
9. Quality of project management and supervision	Satisfactory	S
2.1 UNEP/Implementing Agency:	In-country monitoring and field inspection	S
2.2 Partners/Executing Agency:	Positive achievements despite M&E weaknesses	S
10. Stakeholders' participation and cooperation	Strong multi-partner participation	HS
11. Responsiveness to human rights and gender equality	HR and gender adequately addressed. Women are satisfied with project support.	HS
12. Environmental and social safeguards	Safeguards Monitoring mechanism in place	S
13. Country ownership and driven-ness	Strong country ownership	HS
14. Communication and public awareness	Awareness campaigns, PR, branding, media strategies	S
Overall Project Performance Rating at Mid-Point	**Moderately Satisfactory**	**MS**

B. Lessons learned

Lesson Learned #1:	Strong alignment with the national government and its policies increases expectation of project impact and sustainability
Context/comment:	One of the main strengths of the project that gives expectation of impact of sustainability is the strong alignment with national policies, strategies, and institutional framework.

Lesson Learned #2:	Early engagement with key stakeholders is essential to avoid bureaucratic delays.
Context/comment:	A significant reason for the delays in project implementation is not having agreed with IRRI and SRP on the main terms of partnership before the project started.

Lesson Learned #3:	Risk mitigation and adaptive project management is critical to accommodate changing circumstances.
Context/comment:	External factors such as COVID-19 and unexpected national elections, as well as changing national partners' priorities because of the long period that had passed, made it necessary to adjust project activities.

Lesson Learned #4:	Strengthening private sector partnerships enhances the scalability of sustainable rice practices
Context/comment:	The private sector partners are interested in scaling up the project outcomes, especially certification of sustainable rice products through the national Q brand and the international SRP certificate.

Lesson Learned #5:	High quality Results Framework enhances project planning, monitoring and evaluation.
Context/comment:	The Results Framework has serious weaknesses that do not make it possible to compare baselines, targets and results.

Lesson Learned #6:	A sustainable rice value chain would sustain livelihoods and advance gender equality and economic development
Context/comment:	The project is integrating rural women as rice producers and direct beneficiaries, which has led to their high interest and distribution of project benefits to communities and family members.

Lesson Learned #7:	Human rights can be strengthened through support to minorities and poor stakeholders.
Context/comment:	The project is indirectly dealing with human rights issues, through focus on poor communities and indigenous hilltribes as project beneficiaries.

C. Recommendations

195. All recommendations require actions from GIZ project management. Recommendations 1, 6, and 7 are of most substantive concern for the attention of UNEP Senior Management for further action.

Recommendation #1:	**Enhance Data Collection, Monitoring and Reporting:** Finalize the Results Framework with coherent baselines and SMART indicators/targets to improve performance tracking.
Challenge/problem to be addressed by the recommendation:	The project Results Framework is lacking many baselines and targets, and there is often not a coherent relation between the baseline and indicators and/or targets.
Priority Level:	High
Type of Recommendation	Operational
Responsibility:	GIZ - UNEP
Proposed implementation timeframe:	June - Aug 2025

196. Cross-reference(s) to rationale and supporting discussions:

- Par. 87, 91

Recommendation #2:	**Accelerate Private Sector Engagement:** Facilitate stronger participation of agribusiness investors and market players.
Challenge/problem to be addressed by the recommendation:	Private sector partners are already involved, but review findings indicate that these would be willing to give more technical and financial support if they are more involved in the discussions around the project strategies and priorities.
Priority Level:	Medium
Type of Recommendation	Strategic
Responsibility:	GIZ
Proposed implementation timeframe:	June 2025 – June 2026

197. Cross-reference(s) to rationale and supporting discussions:

- Par. 79, 82, 83, 85, 143, 145, 147

Recommendation #3:	**Expand Knowledge Management Strategies:** Strengthen digital platforms for knowledge sharing and outreach.
Challenge/problem to be addressed by the recommendation:	This is an opportunity that has been little explored on local level, which could accelerate the project's outreach and training of farmers. It has the potential to be a joint effort with GCF online learning and communication.
Priority Level:	Medium
Type of Recommendation	Technical
Responsibility:	GIZ
Proposed implementation timeframe:	June 2025 – December 2026

198. Cross-reference(s) to rationale and supporting discussions:

- Par. 105

Recommendation #4:	**Encourage carbon credit initiatives** under UNFCCC and/or voluntary carbon markets, though these should remain separate from the core project outputs.
Challenge/problem to be addressed by the recommendation:	This could give additional income to poor communities, especially in areas where forest conservation and reforestation is an option.
Priority Level:	Medium
Type of Recommendation	Financial

Responsibility:	GIZ
Proposed implementation timeframe:	June 2025 – December 2026

199. Cross-reference(s) to rationale and supporting discussions:

- Par. 106

Recommendation #5:	**Study and implement measures to improve provincial level coordination**.
Challenge/problem to be addressed by the recommendation:	At the provincial level, coordination has been more effective in Ubon Ratchathani than in Chiang Rai, offering an opportunity to study best practices and transfer lessons learned.
Priority Level:	Medium
Type of Recommendation	Institutional
Responsibility:	GIZ
Proposed implementation timeframe:	June – December 2025

200. Cross-reference(s) to rationale and supporting discussions:

- Par. 119

Recommendation #6:	**Transfer more budget resources to field resources**, to strengthen local level farmer integration (including indigenous hill tribes) with gender participation.
Challenge/problem to be addressed by the recommendation:	Farmer integration, including women's participation, is emphasized in the project, but additional resource allocation is needed to enhance sustainability. In line with human rights considerations, the disadvantaged group hilltribes could benefit from stronger project support through HRDI. More flexible funds could also finance initiatives by lowland farming communities to be supported initiatives of DoAE, RD, RFD Provincial, District or Subdistrict initiatives, and private sector.
Priority Level:	Medium
Type of Recommendation	Financial / Operational
Responsibility:	GIZ (with UNEP approval)
Proposed implementation timeframe:	June – August 2025

201. Cross-reference(s) to rationale and supporting discussions:

- Par. 66, 82, 156

Recommendation #7:	**Request No-Cost Extension** Given the project delays, request extension of the project period with one year to ensure that project objectives are met.
Challenge/problem to be addressed by the recommendation:	Given the project delay of approximately one year, a no-cost extension is required to meet most of the project targets. This has been discussed and mutually agreed upon in principle, and a formal request along with required documentation should be sent to UNEP at the earliest.
Priority Level:	High
Type of Recommendation	Operational
Responsibility:	GIZ - UNEP
Proposed implementation timeframe:	June – December 2025

202. Cross-reference(s) to rationale and supporting discussions:

- Par. 93-94

ANNEX I. RESPONSE TO STAKEHOLDER COMMENTS

Response to stakeholder comments received but not (fully) accepted by the reviewer, where appropriate

This standard annex was not included since the comments received were only from UNEP and the Executive Agency.

ANNEX II. PEOPLE CONSULTED DURING THE REVIEW

Organization	Name	Position	Role in the project	Gender
UNEP	Kavita Sharma	Regional Office for Asia & Pacific, Bangkok	UNEP Task Manager	F
UNEP	Mr. Peerayot Sidonrusmee	Programme Management Assistant, Office for Asia & Pacific, Bangkok	Assistant to Task Manager	M
UNEP	Serah Shaiya	Finance Assistant Ecosystems Division, UNEP Headquarters, Nairobi	UNEP financial management	F
UNEP	Ruth Irungu	Finance and Budget Officer, UNEP Headquarters, Nairobi	UNEP financial management	F
GIZ	Mr. German Müller	GIZ Programme Director	International project team leader	M
GIZ	Ms. Sarida Khananusit	Senior Advisor	ISRL Project Manager	F
GIZ	Dr Atthawit Watcharapongchai	Project Manager	ISRL Project Manager	M
GIZ	Tobias Breunig	International Finance Advisor	Project Finance Advisor	M
GIZ	Ampawa Thamronglaohaphan (Ning)	Technical Advisor	Advisor on finance and other topics	F
Rice Department, MOAC	Chitnucha Buddhaboon	Deputy Director General	National Project Director, Leader of the Project Steering Committee	M
Rice Department, MOAC	Orathai Jaitui	Director, International Relations and Special Projects Group	Partner organization	F
Rice Department, MOAC	Arom Prommuang	Senior Procurement Academic Officer	Partner organization	F
Rice Department, MOAC	Watcharapong Wannawong	Agricultural Technical Officer, Senior Professional Level Rice Seed Division	Partner organization	M
Rice Department, MOAC	Nujarin Jangkan Gomes de Farias	Agricultural Technical Officer, Senior Professional Level Chiang Rai Rice Research Center	Partner organization	F
Rice Department, MOAC	Khanattaya Lalitcharoon	Agricultural Technical Officer, Professional Level Ubonratchathani Rice Seed Center	Partner organization	F
Royal Forest Department, MNRE	Sekson Kawayapanik	Director, Community Forest Management Office	Partner organization	M
Royal Forest Department	Preecha Ongprasert	Director of Forestry Foreign Affairs Office	Partner organization	M
Royal Forest Department	Siriporn Khongpraoroet	Technical staff	Partner organization	F
Royal Forest Department	Chaloemkhwan Poolwong	Forestry technical Officer, Community Forest Management Office	Partner organization	F
Royal Forest Department	Soontaree Ployrungroj	Forestry technical Officer, Community Forest Management Office	Partner organization	F
IRRI	Janejira Thospornsampan	Country Project Coordinator	In change of the Project in IRRI	F
IRRI	Vorayuth Pakachaipong	Assistant Scientist, Agricultural Data Analyst	Partner organization	M
IRRI	Rujirat Wongchandaeng	Associate Environmental Scientist	Partner organization	F

Organization	Name	Position	Role in the project	Gender
SRP	Mr Wyn Ellis	Executive Director, Sustainable Rice Platform SRP	Partner organization	M
Department of National Parks, Wildlife and Plant Conservation, DNP	Komkrit Setbubpha (Two)	Director of National Parks Research and Innovation Development Division	Partner organization	M
DNP	Ratchadoport Samadee (Tangmo)	Forestry Technical Officer Phujong Nayoi National Park, Ubon Ratchathani	Partner organization	F
DNP	Ratchanee Manorompakorn (Arg)	Forestry Officer, Doi Luang National Park, Chiang Rai	Partner organization	F
ACFS	Namaporn Attaviroj	Senior Standards Officer	Partner organization	F
ACFS	Dawisa Paiboonsiri	Senior Standards Officer	Partner organization	F
ACFS	Panyada Prayoorwong	Standards Officer	Partner organization	F
OLAM Agri	Ms Narawadee Modenuch	Research & Sustainability Officer, Olam Agri	Partner organization	F
HRDI	Prasit WongPha	N/A	Partner organization	M
HRDI	Chayanon Poungkaew	Advisor to Mae Chan Demo Farm and Farmer	Partner organization	F
HRDI	Nathaya Suriyawong	Not known	Partner organization	F
HRDI	Warataya Aongkom	Not known	Partner organization	M
HRDI	Phurin Sirichotchai	Not known	Partner organization	M
HRDI	Rinrada Nintapan	Not known	Partner organization	F
HRDI	Arnada Niransaikul	Not known	Partner organization	F
HRDI	Janjira Rungcharoen	Not known	Partner organization	F
HRDI	Rampai Yasai	Not known	Partner organization	F
HRDI	Songsak Boonsawad	Advisor	Works in framework of project in MAE Pik Sub-district, CR	M
HRDI	Taksin Auprawa	N/A	Works in framework of project in MAE Pik Sub-district, CR	M
Chiang Rai Rice Research Center	Jeerapong Wongyai	Not known	Partner organization	M
Chiang Rai Rice Research Center	Nimit Duangpinta	Plan and Policy Analyst	Partner organization	M
Chiang Rai Rice Research Center	Nujarin Jangkan Gomes de Farias	Agricultural Technical Officer, Senior Professional Level	Partner organization	F
Demo Farm, Mae Chan, Chiang Rai	Pratipan Phoemiaa	Village Headman	Beneficiary	M
Demo Farm, Mae Chan, Chiang Rai	Satit Arsakit	Farmer	Beneficiary	M
Mae Chan District Admin Org., CR	Suphot LeeCha	Deputy Mayor of Pa Teng Subdistrict Administrative Organization	Beneficiary	M
Chiang Rai Provincial Agriculture Office	Sanea Sangkham	Head of the Chiang Rai Provincial Agricultural Office	Partner organization	M
Chiang Rai Provincial Agriculture Office	Thanawadi Kaewmaninobbhacoot	Agricultural Extensionist	Partner organization	F
Chiang Rai Provincial Agriculture Office	Yuthakan Thaila	Agricultural Extensionist	Partner organization	M

Organization	Name	Position	Role in the project	Gender
Chiang Rai Provincial Agriculture Office	Supaporn Thechapith	Agricultural Extensionist	Partner organization	F
Phan District Agricultural Extension Office	Benjaporn Yommana	Agricultural Extensionist	Partner organization	F
Phan District Agricultural Extension Office	Ubontip Kotochompu	Agricultural Extensionist	Partner organization	F
Phan District Agricultural Extension Office	Chalinee Singhasenee	Agricultural Extensionist	Partner organization	F
Phan District Agricultural Extension Office	Sudarat Phommachan	Agricultural Extensionist	Partner organization	F
Provincial Working Group (CR SC)	Mr.Adisorn Chanprapaloed	Director of Chiang Rai Provincial Agriculture and Cooperatives Office	Local Steering Committee and Working Group in Chiang Rai	M
Provincial Working Group (CR SC)	Preeyanud Thammakanta	Representative from Chiang Rai Provincial Agriculture and Cooperatives Office	Local Steering Committee and Working Group in Chiang Rai	F
Provincial Working Group (CR SC)	Nimit Duangpinta	Plan and Policy Analyst, Chiang Rai Rice Seed Center	Local Steering Committee and Working Group in Chiang Rai	M
Provincial Working Group (CR SC)	Nujarin Jangkan Gomes de Farias	Agricultural Technical Officer, Senior Professional Level, Chiang Rai Rice Seed Center	Local Steering Committee and Working Group in Chiang Rai	F
Provincial Working Group (CR SC)	Jeerapong Wongyai	Representative from Chiang Rai Rice Seed Center	Local Steering Committee and Working Group in Chiang Rai	M
Provincial Working Group (CR SC)	Kusuma Kittisarn	Representative from Chiang Rai Rice Seed Center	Local Steering Committee and Working Group in Chiang Rai	F
Provincial Working Group (CR SC)	Sanea Sangkham	Head of Chiang Rai Provincial Agricultural Office	Local Steering Committee and Working Group in Chiang Rai	M
Provincial Working Group (CR SC)	Oracha Wongsarod	Representative from Chiang Rai Provincial Agricultural Office	Local Steering Committee and Working Group in Chiang Rai	F
Provincial Working Group (CR SC)	Thanawadi Kaewmaninobbhacoot	Agricultural Extensionist	Local Steering Committee and Working Group in Chiang Rai	F
Provincial Working Group (CR SC)	Varaluk Sammawattana	Representative from Chiang Rai Department of Fisheries	Local Steering Committee and Working Group in Chiang Rai	F
Provincial Working Group (CR SC)	Prarinyanon Thongkham	Representative from Chiangrai Land Development Station	Local Steering Committee and Working Group in Chiang Rai	M
Provincial Working Group (CR SC)	Songsak Boonsawad	Representative from Highland Research and Development Institute (HRDI)	Local Steering Committee and Working Group in Chiang Rai	M
Provincial Working Group (CR SC)	Wanida Lamloedwattana	Representative from Forest Resource Management Office No.2 (Chiang Rai)	Local Steering Committee and Working Group in Chiang Rai	F
Provincial Working Group (CR SC)	Pannawit Phurakpitikorn	Representative from Protected Area Regional Office 15 (Chiang Rai)	Local Steering Committee and Working Group in Chiang Rai	M
Provincial Working Group (CR SC)	Pornpimol Chaiwan	Representative from Chiangrai Highland Agricultural Research and Development Center	Local Steering Committee and Working Group in Chiang Rai	F

Organization	Name	Position	Role in the project	Gender
Provincial Working Group (CR SC)	Waraporn Mesupa	Representative from Chiangrai Highland Agricultural Research and Development Center	Local Steering Committee and Working Group in Chiang Rai	F
Provincial Working Group (CR SC)	Benjamaporn Taloen	Representative from Chiangrai Province Cooperative Office	Local Steering Committee and Working Group in Chiang Rai	F
Provincial Working Group (CR SC)	Pannee Sooksai	Representative from Chiang Rai Agricultural Occupation Promotion and Development Center	Local Steering Committee and Working Group in Chiang Rai	F
Provincial Working Group (CR SC)	Or Pangsamot	Representative from Chiang Rai Agricultural Occupation Promotion and Development Center	Local Steering Committee and Working Group in Chiang Rai	F
Female Farmer Group, Phan, CR	Wanida Chaiwan	farmer	Project beneficiary (grantee)	F
Female Farmer Group, Phan, CR	Thitipan Rinsai	Farmer	Project beneficiary (grantee)	F
Female Farmer Group, Phan, CR	Kanika Suya	Farmer	Project beneficiary (grantee)	F
Female Farmer Group, Phan, CR	Sunan Suya	Farmer	Project beneficiary (grantee)	F
Female Farmer Group, Phan, CR	Saowarod Tanuchit	Farmer	Project beneficiary (grantee)	F
Female Farmer Group, Phan, CR	Areepon Suya	Farmer	Project beneficiary (grantee)	F
Female Farmer Group, Phan, CR	Wanida Chaiwan	Farmer	Project beneficiary (grantee)	F
Mae Pik Sub-district, Chiang Rai	Areerat tawokat	Village Header at Pang Ton Phueng, Mae Pik sub-district	Representatives from 3 villages that are supported by HRDI	F
Mae Pik Sub-district, Chiang Rai	Suphicha Tidlanka	Assistant village header at Pang Anatehet, Mae Pik sub-district	Representatives from 3 villages that are supported by HRDI	F
Mae Pik Sub-district, Chiang Rai	Vasana Rudprakul	Assistant village header at Pang Klang, Mae Pik sub-district	Representatives from 3 villages that are supported by HRDI	F
Wiang Pa Pao Female farmer group, Chiang Rai	Aet Sitthiwang	Farmer	Project beneficiary (grantee)	F
Wiang Pa Pao Female farmer group, Chiang Rai	Saiphan Mongkhonphutthiphak	Farmer	Project beneficiary (grantee)	F
Wiang Pa Pao Female farmer group, Chiang Rai	Nathita Kaewtep	Farmer	Project beneficiary (grantee)	F
Wiang Pa Pao Female farmer group, Chiang Rai	Somkit Kaeokhammi	Farmer	Project beneficiary (grantee)	F
Wiang Pa Pao Female farmer group, Chiang Rai	Wisa Lakhampha	Farmer	Project beneficiary (grantee)	F
Wiang Pa Pao Female farmer group, Chiang Rai	Chamlong Kumthawanna	Farmer	Project beneficiary (grantee)	F
Wiang Pa Pao Female farmer group, Chiang Rai	Panya Sima	Farmer	Project beneficiary (grantee)	F

Organization	Name	Position	Role in the project	Gender
Wiang Pa Pao Female farmer group, Chiang Rai	Somsri Puksek	Farmer	Project beneficiary (grantee)	F
Wiang Pa Pao potato farmers, Chiang Rai	Thanachok Champawan	Farmer	Project beneficiary (grantee)	M
Wiang Pa Pao potato farmers, Chiang Rai	Manit Kongchak	Farmer	Project beneficiary (grantee)	M
Wiang Pa Pao potato farmers, Chiang Rai	Yutthana Wannarat	Farmer	Project beneficiary (grantee)	M
Wiang Pa Pao potato farmers, Chiang Rai	Suchinda Kongchak	Farmer	Project beneficiary (grantee)	F
Wiang Pa Pao potato farmers, Chiang Rai	Sommai Thijittang	Farmer	Project beneficiary (grantee)	F
Wiang Pa Pao District Agricultural Extension Office	Yuthapon Thongprit	Agricultural Extensionist	Partner Organization	M
Wiang Pa Pao District Agricultural Extension Office	Warakwan Boonchong	Agricultural Extensionist	Partner Organization	F
Wiang Pa Pao District Agricultural Extension Office	Siriyaporn Chaichana	Agricultural Extensionist	Partner Organization	F

ANNEX III. KEY DOCUMENTS CONSULTED

Project planning and reporting documents

- Project document with the following appendixes:
  - Appendix 4 – Results framework
  - Appendix 4a – GEF Core indicators
  - Appendix 5 – Work plan timetable
  - Appendix 6 – Key deliverables and benchmarks
  - Appendix 7 – Costed ME plan June 9
  - Appendix 7 – Costed ME plan response 5th review
  - Appendix 9 – ProDoc Thailand FOLUR
  - Appendix 11 – TORs June 9
  - Appendix 12 – UNEP template June 9
  - Appendix 12 – GEF and UNEP Budget templates – Response 5th review FINAL
  - Appendix 15 – Thailand Rice SRIF – rev. 15-07-2021 based on GEF review
  - Appendix 15 – ESS Supporting Document
  - Appendix 16 – PPG Gender Assessment Plan 27-04-2021
  - Appendix 17 – Thailand Theory of Change 26-04-2021
  - Appendix 19 – ProDoc Thailand FOLUR Appendixes-2
  - Appendix 20 – GHG Calculations revised June 9
- GEF CEO Endorsement document
- Review Sheet for CEO Endorsement
- Response to PRC_revised_081220-FINAL
- Project Coordination Agreement (PCA) with the following annexes:
  - Annex 1. Approved UNEP Document including annexes
  - Annex 2. CEO approval endorsement letter
  - Annex 3. Definition of terms
  - Annex 4. Contact details – completed
  - Annex 5. Draft Project Supervision Plan
  - Annex 8A. Inventory of Non-expandable Equipment Report Template
  - Annex 8B. Non-expendable Equipment Ownership Transfer Letter
  - Annex 9A. Funds Transfer form signed GIZ
  - Annex 9A-1. Bank confirmation signed
  - Annex 9B. Cash advance Request Template
  - Annex 10. Half Yearly Progress Report Template
  - Annex 11. UNEP GEF PIR
  - Annex 12. Final Report Template
  - Annex 13. Quarterly Expenditures & Unliquidated Obligations Report
  - Annex 14. Cofinance Report Template
  - Appendix 1 and 2. GEF and UNEP Budget templates – Final CEO endorsed.
- Project Inception Report with the following annexes:
  - Annex 1. Rice Department Appointment Orders
  - Annex 2. Ministry of Agriculture and Cooperatives Appointment Orders
  - Annex 3. Materials from Informal Project Steering Committee Meeting, Bangkok, 13 December 2023
  - Annex 4. Materials from Provincial Steering Committee Meetings
  - Annex 5. Materials from Inception Workshop, Bangkok, 3 May 2024
  - Annex 6. Materials from Operational Planning Workshop, Ubon Ratchathani, 28-29 May 2024
  - Annex 7. Materials from Operational Planning Workshop, Chiang Rai 4-5 July 2024

Project outputs – Overall

- Half Yearly Progress Report 31 January 2024
- Project Implementation Report (PIR) July 2023 – June 2024
- Steering Committee Meeting Minutes for the Integrated Sustainable Rice Landscape (ISRL) Project Meeting Ni. 1 2024, November 14, 2024 (English Unofficial translation).
- Project expenditures Quarterly Reports 2023 (4 documents)
- Project expenditures Quarterly Reports 2024 (4 documents)
- Co-financing report GIZ 2024
- Co-financing report Rice Department 2024
- Co-financing report OLAM 2024

Previous reviews/evaluations

- Project Audit 2023 - 2024

Reference documents

- GEF 2019. The GEF Evaluation Policy
- GEF 2023. Guidelines for Conducting Program Evaluation
- GEF 2024. GEF Risk appetite document.
- UNEP 2023. UNEP Evaluation Manual
- UNEP Project and Programme Management Manual
- UNEP's Glossary of Results Definitions April 2021
- IPBES Dec. 2024. The thematic assessment report on interlinkages among biodiversity, water, food and health. Summary for Policymakers. 56 pp.
- ExAct GEF Thailand 41 June 9
- ExAct GEF Thai 416 June 9
- Global Environment Outlook GEO-6 2015-2021 Key Messages
- Global Environment Outlook GEO-7 2022-2030 documents.
- UNEP Medium-term Strategy 2018-2021
- UNEP Medium-term Strategy 2022-2025
- UNEP Programme of Work 2020-2021 (extended to cover also 2022-2023)
- UNEP Medium-term Strategy
- Cover letter – 2nd updated NDC Thailand
- Thailand's 2nd updated NDC 2021-2030
- USDA Commodity Intelligence Report Oct. 2021. Thailand Rice: Recent Dry Conditions After a Promising Start; Optimism Still Remains for this Crop Season.
- PowerPoint presentation: BAAC and project finance work, ISRL MTR Meeting 11.02.2025

ANNEX IV. REVIEW ITINERARY

Bangkok and Chiang Rai Province, Thailand (for most names, see Annex II)

9 February 2025

Arrival in Bangkok

10 February 2025

09.00 – 09.30 Briefing on agenda and logistics by GIZ, at GIZ-Rice Department Office

09.30 – 10.00 Travel to Rice Department

10.00 – 10.30 **Meeting with Mr. Chitsanucha Buddhaboon,** Deputy Director General of Rice Department and ISRL National Project Director

10.30 – 12.00 **Meeting with Rice Department ISRL Working Group** (may include remote participation by regional representatives)

12.00 – 13.00 Lunch

13.00 – 14.30 **Meeting with Ms. Kavita Sharma, UNEP**

14.30 – 15.00 Travel to Royal Forest Department (RDF)

15.00 – 16.00 **Meeting with RDF focal person and team**

11 February 2025

09.00 – 09.30 Meet at GIZ-Rice Department Office and Travel to Department of National Parks, Wildlife and Plant Conservation (DNP)

09.30 – 10.30 **Meeting with DNP focal person and team**

12.00 – 13.00 Lunch

13.00 – 14.00 **Briefing on changes of Finance concept** by Mr. Tobias Breunig, Finance Advisor, GIZ (internal)

14.00 – 15.00 **Meeting with International Rice Research Institute** (IRRI)

15.00 – 16.00 **Meeting with Sustainable Rice Platform (SRP) (TBD)**

12 February 2025

12.25 – 13.55 TG132 Suvannabhumi Airport to Chiang Rai Airport

14.00 – 15.00 Travel to Mae Chan

15.00 – 16.00 Visit a Sustainable Rice Landscape Demo farm in Mae Chan and meet with local community members and the head of community activity

16.00 – 17.00 Travel back to Chiang Rai City

17.00 – 18.00 Meet with Ms. Narawadee Modenuch, OLAM Agri (private sector partner), including on sustainable rice landscapes in Ubon Ratchathani

18.00 – 19.30 Dinner

19.30 Stay overnight in Chiang Rai (Mueng District)

13 February 2025

09.00 – 10.00 Meeting with Provincial Steering Committee of Chiang Rai

10.00 – 11.00 Travel to Phan District

11.00 – 11.50 Agriculture Office, DoAE

11.50 – 12.30 Lunch at the group

- 14.30 Visit the Coffee Farm

14.30 – 15.30 Travel to Mae Prik

15.30 – 16.30 Visit the Sustainable Landscape (Highland/crop diversification/restoration)

16.30 – 17.30 Travel to Wiang Pa Pao

18.00 – 19.30 Dinner

19.30 Stay overnight in Wiang Pa Pao

14 February 2025

09.00 – 10.00 Meeting with the female group (Sustainable IPM & Landscape Management)

10.00 – 10.30 Travel to the sustainable crop rotation in Wiang Pa Pao

10.30 – 11.30 Visit the sustainable crop rotation – potato, corn and rice – Low Land Model

11.30 – 12.30 Travel to Chiang Mai Stop one point along the way to see deforested mountain (closed to the Hot Spring Coffee Shop)

12.30 – 13.30 Lunch

14.00 – 15.00 Meeting with HRDI

19.30 – 20.45 Fly back to Bangkok by FD3340 CNX – DMK

15 February 2025

International travel

21 February 2025 (ONLINE MEETING)

10.00 – 12.00 Preliminary findings meeting with GIZ

ANNEX V. PROJECT BUDGET AND EXPENDITURES

See information within the report – Chapter V.D

ANNEX VI. FINANCIAL MANAGEMENT

Financial management components:		Rating	Evidence/ Comments
1. Adherence to UNEP's policies and procedures:		**HS**	Documentation and Confirmed by UNEP financial managers
Any evidence that indicates shortcomings in the project's adherence[7] to UNEP or donor policies, procedures or rules		No	Confirmation from UNEP Financial managers
2. Completeness of project financial information[8]:			
Provision of key documents to the reviewer (based on the responses to A-H below)		**HS**	Relevant docs received
A.	Co-financing and Project Cost's tables at design (by budget lines)	Yes	See Chapter V.D.
B.	Revisions to the budget	No	Confirmed by UNEP financial managers
C.	All relevant project legal agreements (e.g. SSFA, PCA, ICA)	Yes	PCA
D.	Proof of fund transfers	Yes	Confirmed by UNEP financial managers
E.	Proof of co-financing (cash and in-kind)	Yes	3 (so far In-kind)
F.	A summary report on the project's expenditures during the life of the project (by budget lines, project components and/or annual level)	Yes	Detailed, confirmed by UNEP financial managers See also Chapter V.D.
G.	Copies of any completed audits and management responses *(where applicable)*	Yes	1 audit, no observation
H.	Any other financial information that was required for this project (list):	No	Second audit not yet due
3. Communication between finance and project management sta		**HS**	
Project Manager and/or Task Manager's level of awareness of the project's financial status.		HS	Weekly meetings with update. Fully involved, Confirmed by UNEP financial managers
Fund Management Officer's knowledge of project progress/status when disbursements are done.		HS	Confirmed by UNEP financial managers
Level of addressing and resolving financial management issues among Fund Management Officer and Project Manager/Task Manager.		HS	Very prompt to reply, Confirmed by UNEP financial managers
Contact/communication between by Fund Management Officer, Project Manager/Task Manager during the preparation of financial and progress reports.		HS	Collaborative effort, Confirmed by UNEP financial managers
Project Manager, Task Manager and Fund Management Officer responsiveness to financial requests during the review process		HS	Confirmed by UNEP financial managers
Overall rating		**HS**	

[7] If the review raises concerns over adherence with policies or standard procedures, a recommendation maybe given to cover the topic in an upcoming audit, or similar financial oversight exercise.
[8] See also document 'Criterion Rating Description' for reference

ANNEX VII. COMMUNICATION AND OUTREACH TOOLS

See separate Annex: PowerPoint Presentation: ISRL MTR Meeting 11.02.2025.

German Cooperation presentation of Inclusive Sustainable Rice Landscapes in Thailand (ISRL):
https://www.thai-german-cooperation.info/en_US/inclusive-sustainable-rice-landscapes-in-thailand-isrl/

GIZ and partners reaffirm commitment to scaling climate-smart rice farming in Thailand during Chiang Rai field visit:
https://www.thai-german-cooperation.info/en_US/giz-and-partners-reaffirm-commitment-to-scaling-climate-smart-rice-farming-in-thailand-during-chiang-rai-field-visit/

Thailand gets ready to transform national rice sector into sustainable, environmentally resilient production:
https://www.thai-german-cooperation.info/en_US/thailand-gets-ready-to-transform-national-rice-sector-into-sustainable-environmentally-resilient-production/

Photo: An example of the Project's Communication and Outreach: Poster that shows the project's broad partner engagement. Wiang Pa Pao – Wiang Kalong, Chiang Rai Province.



ANNEX VIII. BRIEF CV OF THE REVIEWER

Name: Trond Norheim

Profession	Manager, Environment & Climate Change, Scanteam AS and CEO of DIMES-Global AS trondn@scanteam.no trondn@dimes-global.com
Nationality	Norwegian
Country experience	Europe: Belgium, Denmark, Finland, Germany, Italy, Norway, Slovenia, Sweden, Russia, Ukraine Africa: Algeria, Comoros, Eritrea, Ethiopia, Ghana, Guinea-Bissau, Ivory Coast, Kenya, Mauritius, Mozambique, Seychelles, Sierra Leone, Tanzania, Tunisia, Uganda Americas: Argentina, Belize, Bolivia, Brazil, Chile, Colombia, Costa Rica, Cuba, Dominican Republic, Ecuador, El Salvador, Guatemala, Guyana, Haiti, Honduras, Jamaica, Mexico, Nicaragua, Panama, Paraguay, Peru, St. Vincent & the Grenadines, Suriname, Trinidad & Tobago, Uruguay, USA, Venezuela Asia & Pacific: Bangladesh, Bhutan, Cambodia, China, Fiji, India, Indonesia, Jordan, Kiribati, Korea, Maldives, Myanmar, Nepal, Pakistan, Philippines, Samoa, Solomon Islands, Sri Lanka, Thailand, Tonga, Tuvalu, Vanuatu, Vietnam.
Education	PhD Forest Ecology; Postgrad Meteorology and Rural Sociology; MSc Forestry.

Short biography

Dr Trond Norheim is an environmental specialist with main strengths on project design, implementation, monitoring & evaluation. He has 40 years' international experience in 76 countries on all continents, for the UN, development banks and bilateral agencies. Consultant for the GEF Evaluation Office. Accredited expert for UNFCCC and CGIAR.

Key specialties and capabilities cover Climate Change Adaptation and Mitigation, Land Use Planning, Forestry, Energy, Biodiversity, Environment, Protected Areas, Disaster Risk Management, Sustainable Agriculture, Soil & Water Conservation, Watershed Management, Small Island Development States, Gender, and Indigenous Peoples.

Independent reviews/evaluations (from 2017 only):

UNEP: (i) Harmonization of the project review process in UNEP; (ii) Terminal evaluation of the GEF project 'Strengthening national biodiversity and forest carbon stock conservation through landscape-based collaborative management of Cambodia's Protected Areas System as demonstrated in the Eastern Plain Landscape'; (iii) MTR of 'Transitioning to sustainable food systems for sustainable lifestyles and food security and nutrition' component 3; (iv) MTR of 'Caribbean Biological Corridor'; (v) Terminal Evaluation of the GEF project 'Mainstreaming agrobiodiversity conservation and use in Sri Lankan agro-ecosystems for livelihoods and adaptation to climate change'; (vi) Terminal Evaluation of the GEF project 'Mainstreaming Sustainable Management of Tea Production Landscapes in Asia'; (vii) Terminal Evaluation of the GEF global project 'Expanding Rainforest Alliance certification at landscape level through incorporating additional ecosystem services'.

UNDP: (i) Final Evaluation UNDP-GCF project 'Integrated Flood Management to Enhance Climate Resilience of the Vaisigano Catchment in Samoa'; (ii) Terminal Evaluation UNDP-GEF 'Resilience for Peace & Stability, Food and Water Security Innovation Grant Program', Sudan and Uganda; (iii) MTR AF-EU Innovation Small Grant Aggregator Platform; (iv) Terminal Evaluation GEF project 'Sustainable, renewable biomass-based charcoal for the iron and steel industry in Brazil'; (v) MTR GEF project 'Mainstreaming Natural Resource Management and Biodiversity Conservation Objectives into Socio-Economic Development Planning and Management of Biosphere Reserves, Vietnam'; (vi) MTR GEF project 'Facilitation of the Achievement of Sustainable National Energy Targets in Tuvalu'; (vii) Terminal Evaluation GEF project 'Enhancing Capacity to Develop Global and Regional Environmental Projects in the Pacific'; (viii) MTR GEF project 'Economy-wide Integration of Climate Change Adaptation & Disaster Risk Management to Climate Vulnerability of Communities in Samoa'; (ix) Terminal Evaluation GEF project 'Capacity for Implementing the Rio Conventions in Samoa'.

GEF Evaluation Office: Consultant integrated in the GEF Evaluation Office's teams: (i) Evaluation of regional programs in the Caribbean SIDS 2024-25; (ii) Evaluation of integrated interventions in the Pacific SIDS 2024; (iii) SIDS strategic country cluster evaluations, Pacific, Indian Ocean, Africa, Caribbean (2019).

World Bank-FCPF: Technical Advisory Panel Expert, review of the Colombia and Uruguay REDD+ Readiness Packages.

EU: Team Leader, Ex-post Evaluation, 'Support to the Global Climate Change Alliance (GCCA) through Capacity Building, Community Engagement and applied Research in the Pacific', Phases I and II.

Norad/MFA Norway: (i) Team Leader, End review of National REDD+ Program in Tanzania; (ii) Team Leader, End review of 'Support to the Asian Disaster Preparedness Centre; (iii) MTR of 'Strengthening the Environment Component of Oil for Development Program' through UNEP agreement; (iv) Team Leader, Review of the Organization of Indigenous Peoples of the Colombian Amazon; (v) Team Leader, Appraisal of Global Green Growth Institute GGGI; (vi) Team Leader, MTR of 'Forest Landscape Restoration in Amhara', Ethiopia; (vii) Team leader, Consequences of the corona pandemic on value chains in agriculture, ocean-based industries, finance and energy in developing countries; (viii) Team Leader,

MTR and End Review of GRID-Arendal's cooperation with Norad and UNEP; (ix) Institutional assessments of two Colombian environmental CSOs in support of indigenous peoples.

ANNEX IX. REVIEW TORS (WITHOUT ANNEXES)

TERMS OF REFERENCE

Mid-Term Review of the UNEP project

"Inclusive Sustainable Rice Landscapes in Thailand (ISRL)", GEF ID 10268

Section 1: PROJECT BACKGROUND AND OVERVIEW

(This section describes what is to be reviewed. Key parameters are: project timeframe, funding envelope, results framework and geographic scope)

1. Project General Information

Table 1. Project Summary

(This is a generic table to summarise a project. Integrate the information below with the standard 'project summary' table of the relevant donor e.g. Adaptation Fund, GCF, GEF).

UNEP PIMS ID/SMA[9] ID:	191236	Grant ID[10] (if applicable):	S1-32GFL-000729
UNEP Management (Division/Branch/Unit):	Ecosystems Division / Biodiversity and Land Branch / GEF Biodiversity and Land Degradation Unit		
Implementing Partners:	Rice Department (RD) of the Ministry of Agriculture and Cooperatives (MoAC) German International Cooperation (GIZ)		
Sources of Funding:	*Country[11](ies):* Thailand, Germany	*Institution[12] Name/Type: a federally owned enterprise*	
Relevant SDG(s):	Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) of the UN 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development (2015), particularly: SDG 12 (Sustainable Consumption and Production), SDG 13 (Climate action), SDG 15 (Sustainable Use of Terrestrial Ecosystems and Forest Management) and SDG 17 partnerships for the goals		
MTS (all that apply):		UNEP approval date:	17 March 2022
POW Direct Outcome(s) number/reference *(applicable for projects approved from 2022):* **OR** POW Output(s) number/reference *(applicable for projects approved pre-2022)*	*POW Direct Outcome: Healthy and Productive Ecosystems - contributes to the PoW 2018-2019 EAa, Indicator 2*	MTS 2025 Outcome(s) number/reference *(applicable for projects approved from 2022):* **OR** POW Expected Accomplishment(s) number/reference *(applicable for projects approved pre-2022):*	*MTS 2025 Outcome: N/A*
	POW Output: Healthy and Productive Ecosystems - contributes to the PoW 2018-2019 EAa, Indicator 2		*POW Expected Accomplishment: Healthy and Productive Ecosystems - contributes to the PoW 2018-2019 EAa, Indicator 2*
Sub-programme:	Ecosystems Management	Programme Coordination Project:	Conservation, Restoration and Sustainable Use of Biodiversity
Expected start date:	2021	Actual start date:	19 Jan 2023
Planned completion date:	30 Nov 2026	Actual operational completion date:	N/A
Planned total project budget[13] at approval:	US$5,535,963	Actual total expenditures reported as of [30 June 24]:	USD 264,518
Planned Extra-budgetary Funds[14]:	*Cash:* USD *14,600,000* *In-kind:* USD 32,700,000 Loan* / investment mobilized 20,000,000	Secured Extra-budgetary Funds:	*Cash:* USD *14,600,000* *In-kind:* USD 32,700,000 Loan* / investment mobilized 20,000,000

[9] SMA refers to the ID provided by the Integrated Planning, Management and Reporting Solution (IPMR) system, which was introduced by UNEP in July 2023.
[10] For example, ID references from EC, IKI, UNDA, Adaptation Fund, GCF.
[11] Where applicable, list countries who have provided project funds and/or co-finance.
[12] Indicate where funding institutions are any/all of the following: Foundation/NGO; Private Sector; UN Body; Multilateral Fund; Environment Fund; Other.
[13] Total budget may include; Regular Budget, Environment Fund, Extra-Budgetary, including 'softly-earmarked' etc.
[14] Extra-budgetary funds may include co-finance (cash/in-kind)

		Actual Extra-budgetary Funds expenditures reported as of [31 Dec 2023]:	*Cash: 3,654,955* *In-Kind- 1,419,274*
First disbursement:	USD 500,000	Planned date of financial closure:	*Estimated 1 year after operational completion.* *30 Nov 2027*
No. of formal project revisions:	NA	Date of last approved project revision:	CEO-Approved
No. of Steering Committee meetings:	2	Date of Last Steering Committee meeting:	3 May 2024
Mid-term Review/ Evaluation *(planned date):*	23 Dec 2024	Mid-term Review/ Evaluation (actual date):	N/A
Terminal Evaluation *(planned date):*	Jan 2027	Terminal Evaluation (actual date):	N/A
Coverage – Implementing Country(ies):	Thailand	Coverage – Implementing Region(s):	Asia
Dates of previous project phases:	N/A	Status of future project phases:	N/A

2. Project Rationale

[Describe project context and justification]

Thailand is a global leader in rice production (20.7 million tons) and exports (11.7 million tons). However, increased rice production over the past decades without a sustainable landscape approach has resulted in significant GHG emissions and declines in biodiversity and ecosystem services (e.g. freshwater provision, soil retention, and flood control functions). Destructive agricultural expansion, intensive monocultures, and expansion of cash crops such as sugar cane, rubber, cassava and maize particularly in the upper reaches of watersheds, have caused deforestation with negative impacts on wildlife habitat and connectivity between Protected Areas in landscapes.

The project, through a multi-focal area GEF grant of Biodiversity, Land Degradation, Climate Mitigation and he Food Systems, Land Use and Restoration (FOLUR[15]) grant support, seeks to transform rice and agricultural production landscapes in Thailand by reconciling competing social, economic, and environmental interests. To achieve this, the project proposes an integrated and multi-disciplinary landscape management approach to create inclusive, sustainable rice farming practices through policy, capacity building, financing, and sustainable land management (SLM) practices at landscape scale. Inter-ministerial land use planning at the national and local levels in the target provinces Chiang Rai and Ubon Ratchathani will precede the adoption of Sustainable Rice Platform (SRP) Standard practices by smallholder farmers, while maintaining, restoring and improving landscapes, ecosystems and biodiversity.

However, the realization of the project alternative is constrained by the following barriers: 1. Lack of institution and policy coordination at national and local levels to promote an integrated approach to sustainable rice production, land use planning and sustainable land management for both production as well as environmental outcomes, 2. Limited technical knowledge, capacity and incentives for implementing sustainable rice/agriculture production systems at both farm and landscape level, 3. Insufficient linkages between sustainable rice value chain actors to leverage market growth, 4. Lack of incentives and financing mechanisms for farmers to support transformation of rice production systems, 5. Lack of innovative financing for land restoration, forest protection and ecosystem services protection, 6. Limited sharing of knowledge on sustainable rice production systems, land use planning and restoration (national, regional and global level). The project seeks to remove these barriers through the following components:

Component 1 establishes landscape-scale alliances through capacity building with ministries to foster policy for the integrated management of rice production landscapes, including agreement on a national restoration roadmap for watershed management, biodiversity protection, Mega Farm & Flood Retention Development Programs, and reduced agro-chemical pollution.

Component 2 enhances the management of forests, watersheds, and biodiversity to support resilient environments and productive agriculture landscapes in two target provinces – Chiang Rai and Ubon Ratchathani. Provincial governments and national agencies will conduct provincial-level spatial land-management planning as a basis for an integrated approach to landscape conservation, connectivity and sector investments for BD and other ecosystem service benefits. This planning will contribute to local project implementation and the development of gender-inclusive agriculture diversification programs for coffee, fruit-crops, agroforestry in forest areas key to biodiversity conservation. The financial mechanisms to be developed under Component 3 may facilitate enhanced sector investments for ecosystems preservation, sustainable land-use and restoration of degraded lands in the selected landscapes.

Component 3 focuses on reducing on- and off-farm environmental impacts by implementing the SRP Standard for Sustainable Rice Cultivation on 90,000 ha of rice fields, establishing finance mechanisms for sustainable rice production within landscapes, crop diversification in sub-optimal rice systems, as well as collaboration with the private sector for sourcing SRP-verified rice. The project will pursue an innovative financing trajectory through supporting design, development, preparation, issuance and verification of green bonds with possible monetarization of SRP Standard certificates, contributing to watersheds protection, ecosystem and biodiversity preservation, as well as sustainable land restoration interventions in the uplands and forest protection.

[15] Promoting effective coordination and adaptive management for Food Systems, Land Use and Restoration. In this document the term "farmer" may refer to both male and female farmers as well as to those with another gender identity (gender neutrality).

Component 4 steers knowledge management and outreach for national and regional replication of the adoption of the SRP Standard with an integrated landscape approach. A gender sensitive M&E system will be implemented during the project through monitoring of the GEF core indicators, FOLUR Global Platform indicators, Gender disaggregated indicators outlined in the Gender Mainstreaming Plan (**Appendix 16**), as well as well as custom-project indicators, specifically related to SRP quality assurance at farm and landscape level. Specifically, the project will facilitate, through enhanced multi-stakeholder collaboration - building upon the SRP Performance Indicator framework (which for now is limited in scope to on-farm performance) as well as other existing landscape resilience and M&E performance systems[16], to development of a 'sustainable rice landscapes performance measurement system' to assess the impact of the (on-farm) SRP sustainability practices on the protection and conservation of neighboring ecosystems and their multiple services (off-farm).

In summary: Building on SRP's demonstrated success and existing Thai policy and programs, GEF funding and co-financing will upscale sustainable farming practices through an integrated landscape approach while significantly reducing environmental externalities to protect biodiversity, habitats, hydrological systems and landscapes.

3. Project Results Framework

[Present the project objective(s), components, outputs, outcomes and long-lasting impacts as per the Project Document (i.e. the results framework). Include the Theory of Change diagram, where available. Use tables as appropriate.]

Objective, Outcomes	SMART Indicators				Means of Verification	Risks and Assumptions
	Objectively Verifiable Indicators	Baseline	Mid-Term Target	End of Project Target		
Objective: To transform the Thai rice value chain for environmental sustainability by upscaling the Sustainable Rice Platform (SRP) Standard through an Integrated Landscape Management approach.						
Component 1: National Policy and Institutional Development for Integrated Multi-Sectoral Management of Sustainable Rice Landscapes						
Outcome 1.1: National policy strengthened, inter-ministerial collaboration improved, and environmental outcomes achieved under the framework of New Theory Farming Policy						
Outputs for Outcome 1.1: Output 1.1: The positive economic and environmental benefits of an integrated SRP and landscape approach have been demonstrated to and are acknowledged by national governmental agencies Output 1.2: A national roadmap is developed and agreed for integrated target setting, investments, management, and monitoring for sustainable rice landscapes as well as to enable restoration of biodiversity and ecosystem services at provincial level in Chiang Rai and Ubon Ratchathani Output 1.3: National multi-agency agreement reached and applied on better alignment of the Mega Farm and Flood Retention Development Programs for meeting the interests of both the rice sector with the financing and protection of lowland and upland hydrological and forest BD services Output 1.4: Reduced agrochemical pollution through regulatory approaches and collaboration with the private sector (PPP) on Extended Producer Responsibility (EPR) (e.g. proper disposal of contaminated containers)						
Component 2. Integrated Landscape Management for productive agriculture and environmental sustainability in Chiang Rai and Ubon Ratchathani						
Outcome 2.1: Management of forested landscapes improved for enhancing environmental integrity and productivity of neighboring agricultural areas, including rice, by the governments of Chiang Rai and Ubon Ratchathani						
Outputs for Outcome 2.1: Output 2.1: Two spatial landscape management plans produced and agreed at provincial level that integrate sustainable agriculture with improved landscape conservation and restoration of ecosystem services and biodiversity Output 2.2: Government partners (MoAC, RFD, provincial administrations of UR&CR) implement landscape management plans through investments that reduce negative environmental impacts and restore ecosystem/water services of HCVF for agricultural areas such as Mega Farms. Output: 2.3: Gender-inclusive agriculture diversification and development program designed and agreed (including coffee, fruit-crops, agroforestry) in upland HCVF in Ubon Ratchathani & Chiang Rai						
Component 3. Upscaling sustainable rice production and value chains through provincial rice sector investments						
Outcome 3.1: Environmental and social benefits on- and off-farm obtained by deployment of SRP Standard and diversification of agricultural production widely adopted by small farmers in selected provinces						
Output 3.1: The area under Sustainable Rice Platform (SRP) Standard practices is expanded through capacity building, extension and farmer field schools servicing 45,000 farmers Output 3.2: Feasibility design and investments agreed for diversification of agricultural production in 10,000 ha of low-land sub-optimal rice systems Output 3.3: Financial instruments and investments mobilized and agreed with private sector, government partners and rice producers for scaling up sustainable rice value chains and landscapes (Revolving Fund, BAAC Green Loan Program, Green Bonds) Output 3.4: The economic and technical feasibility of new technologies and incentive mechanisms for linking the SRP Standard with an integrated landscape approach is analyzed and proven Output 3.5: Value chain actors promote market-based solutions that drive demand for sustainable rice systems and products						
Component 4. Upscaling sustainable rice production and value chains through provincial rice sector investments						
Outcome 4.1: Environmental, technical and socio-economic benefits from implementation of SRP standards and integrated landscape approaches are understood by government agencies, private companies, and farmers willing to replicate this scheme at national and regional level						
Output 4.1: A national outreach campaign implemented to strengthen governmental and farmer adoption of sustainable rice value chains and integrated landscape management for multiple services Output 4.2: Corporate and government mobilized for adopting and replicating SRP Standard and sustainable sourcing of "Quality Thai Rice" under the New Theory Farming Policy						

[16] E.g. the Bioversity International ('Toolkit for the indicators of resilience in socio-ecological production landscapes and seascapes") and/or LandScale M&E frameworks

Objective, Outcomes	SMART Indicators				Means of Verification	Risks and Assumptions
	Objectively Verifiable Indicators	Baseline	Mid-Term Target	End of Project Target		
Output 4.3: Concept of integrating the SRP Standard into sustainable rice value chains is extended to two other Asian countries (under the SRP partnership and South – South mechanisms) Output 4.4: A gender sensitive M&E system is operational to track project performance and the level of adoption of SRP/Integrated Landscape Management approach						

4. Executing Arrangements

[Specify UNEP Branch and Unit responsible for project implementation and project execution partners. Briefly describe role and composition of management and supervision structures of the project, including formal revisions since approval. Use table or diagram as appropriate. NOTE: For GEF-funded projects highlight internally executed projects, providing details on reporting lines for implementation and execution.]

UNEP, as the GEF Implementing Agency is implementing the project though its Ecosystems Division with delegated authority for day-to-day supervision by a Task Manager based at the Asia and the Pacific Office in Bangkok, Thailand, and is responsible for overall project supervision to ensure consistency with GEF and UNEP policies and procedures and for providing guidance on linkages with related UNEP and GEF-funded activities. UNEP is also responsible for monitoring implementation of the activities undertaken during the execution of the project and provides the overall coordination and ensures that the project is in line with UNEP Medium-Term Strategy (MTS) and its Program of Work (PoW).

Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit GmbH, as project Lead Service Provider (hereinafter referred to as "GIZ"), a federally owned enterprise represented by its Division of Economic and Social Development, Digitalization

The project will be implemented by UNEP. The UNEP – through its GEF Task Manager (TM) and Funds Management Officer (FMO) - will monitor the implementation of the project, review progress in the realization of the project outputs, and ensure the proper use of GEF funds. The UNEP RO will be directly responsible for: (i) providing consistent and regular project oversight to ensure the achievement of project objectives; (ii) liaising between the project and the GEF Secretariat; (iii) ensuring that both GEF and UNEP policy requirements and standards are applied and met (i.e. reporting obligations, technical, fiduciary, M&E); (iv) approving budget revisions, certifying fund availability and transferring funds; (v) organizing mid- and end-term evaluations and reviewing project audits; (vi) providing technical, legal and administrative guidance if requested; and (vii) certifying project operational completion.

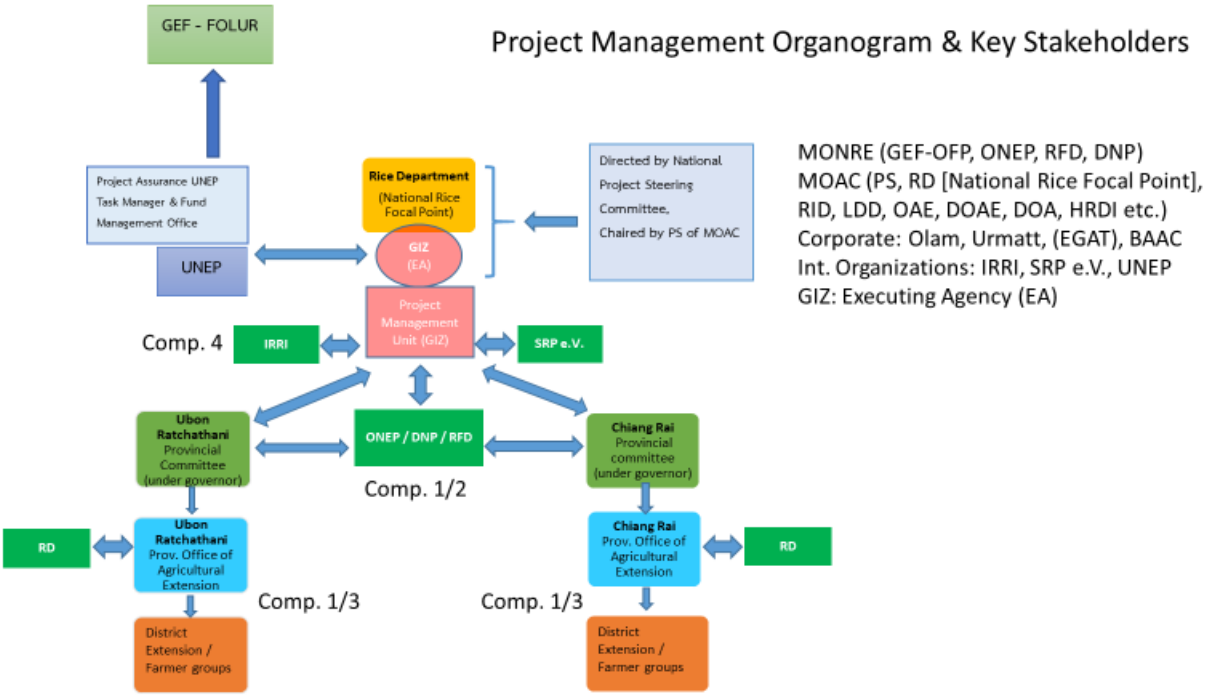
The Ministry of Agriculture and Cooperatives (Rice Department) will be the 'National Rice Focal Point' for the project. A senior officer of Rice Department will act as National Project Director (NPD) and will closely cooperate with the PMU. The NPD will take the overall fiduciary responsibility of the project as well as forming, leading and supporting the National Project Steering Committee (NPSC). Rice Department has proposed GIZ to become the lead EA of the project.

There are four tiers in the management structure of the project. The first tier is the contractual relationship between the lead EA (GIZ) and UNEP. With UNEP providing oversight and quality control, whilst having the authority to approve project plans, budgets, expenditures, as well as changes to the GEFSEC endorsed project plan (ProDoc). The second tier is the National Project Steering Committee with policy decision stakeholder members coming from both national and provincial levels, as well as including representatives from technical, governance and academic institutions well representing the projects' sustainable rice landscapes approach (convened by the National Project Director); the third tier includes the Project Management Unit (PMU), which will coordinate and implement the project at a day-to-day basis; and a fourth tier at provincial level where a Project Implementation Unit (PIU) staffed with the Provincial Project Coordinator with support from flexible Technical Working Groups (convened as needed) will coordinate the implementation of local activities.

The National Project Steering Committee will meet not less than twice each year of which one meeting specifically dedicated to review the project and approve the annual workplans, budgets, and address significant implementation issues.

The Provincial Steering Committees will be convened by provincial Governor Office (supported by the Provincial Project Coordinator at the PIU) as required and meet on demand according to the related project work streams. Additionally, Working Groups will provide guidance to implementation of the relevant work streams and the sharing of knowledge and project results among sectoral agencies and related projects.

Figure 1- Project implementation structure



5. Project Cost and Financing

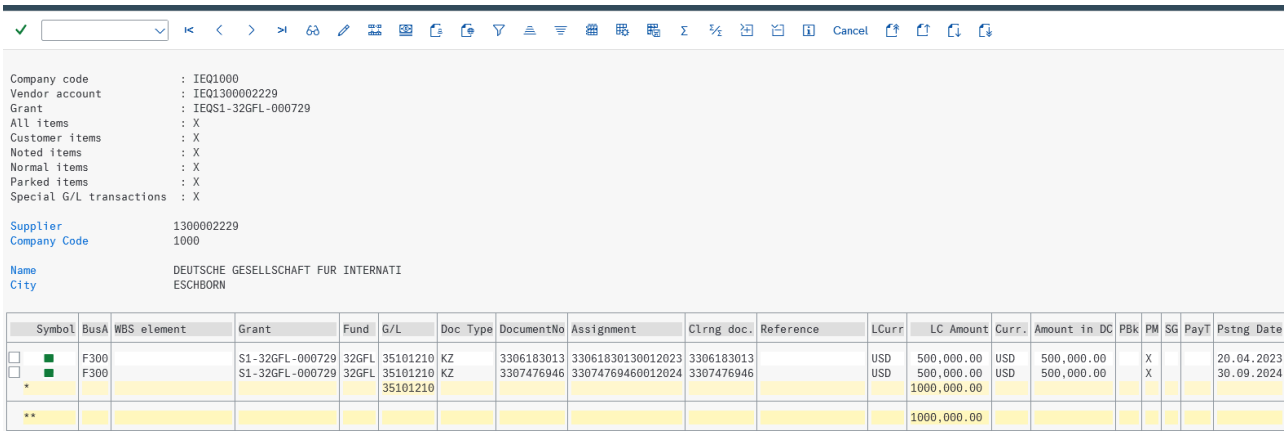
[Present total project budget at design, broken down per component and per funding source. Use tables as appropriate. Present most recent figures on disbursement.]

UNEP Budget line		Expenditure by calendar year (US$)					
		Year 1	Year 2	Year 3	Year 4	Year 5	TOTAL
1999	PERSONNEL COMPONENT	106,649	759,634	634,145	623,370	433,043	2,556,840
2999	SUB-CONTRACT COMPONENT	91,438	579,210	431,115	372,751	281,897	1,756,410
3999	TRAINING COMPONENT	43,142	136,682	99,082	94,582	102,977	476,465
4999	EQUIPMENT AND PREMISES COMPONENT	50,000	90,000	119,802	90,095	20,000	369,897
5999	MISCELLANEOUS COMPONENT	11,900	14,000	14,000	14,000	25,000	78,900
TOTAL (ALL COMPONENTS)		303,129	1,579,526	1,298,144	1,194,798	862,916	5,238,512

Cost to the GEF Trust Fund	***5,535,963***	**7.6**
Co-financing - in kind		**92.4**
Min. of Agriculture and Cooperatives (Rice Department)	10,500,000	
Office of Natural Resources and Environment Policy	4,000,000	
Department of National Parks	500,000	
Royal Forestry Department	500,000	
Governments of Chiang Rai and Ubon Ratchathani	3,000,000	
German International Cooperation (GIZ)	8,500,000	
International Rice Research Institute (IRRI)	3,000,000	
Sustainable Rice Platform (SRP e.V.)	2,500,000	
UN Environment Programme	200,000	
Sub-total	***32,700,000***	
Co-financing - in cash / investment mobilized		
Urmatt Limited	1,000,000	
Olam International	13,600,000	
Sub-total	***14,600,000***	
Loan* / investment mobilized		

Bank of Agriculture and Cooperatives (BAAC): Financial mechanisms/market instruments	20,000,000	
Sub-total	***20,000,000***	
Total	***72,835,963***	***100***

Recent figures on disbursement = USD 1,000,000



Company code : IEQ1000
Vendor account : IEQ1300002229
Grant : IEQS1-32GFL-000729
All items : X
Customer items : X
Noted items : X
Normal items : X
Parked items : X
Special G/L transactions : X

Supplier 1300002229
Company Code 1000

Name DEUTSCHE GESELLSCHAFT FUR INTERNATI
City ESCHBORN

Symbol	BusA	WBS element	Grant	Fund	G/L	Doc Type	DocumentNo	Assignment	Clrng doc.	Reference	LCurr	LC Amount	Curr.	Amount in DC	PBk	PM	SG	PayT	Pstng Date
	F300		S1-32GFL-000729	32GFL	35101210	KZ	3306183013	33061830130012023	3306183013		USD	500,000.00	USD	500,000.00		X			20.04.2023
	F300		S1-32GFL-000729	32GFL	35101210	KZ	3307476946	33074769460012024	3307476946		USD	500,000.00	USD	500,000.00		X			30.09.2024
*					35101210							1000,000.00							
**												1000,000.00							

6. Implementation Issues

[Record any issues that have arisen in the initial implementation period including: significant delays, changes in partners, implementing countries and/or results statements. Note the dates when such changes have been approved.]

The project has not run into any major issues thus far. There have been some challenges in timely engagement with project partners such as the SRP, but they are outside the EA's control. The EA has yet to submit any formal requests for amendments.

Section 2. OBJECTIVE AND SCOPE OF THE MID-TERM REVIEW

(This section is standard and does not need to be revised for each TOR)

7. Objective of the Review

In line with the UNEP Evaluation Policy[17] and the UNEP Programme and Project Management Manual[18], the Mid-Term Review (MTR) is undertaken approximately half-way through project implementation to analyze whether the project is on-track, what problems or challenges the project is encountering, and what corrective actions are required.

8. Key Review Principles

Mid-Term review findings and judgements will be based on sound evidence and analysis, clearly documented in the Review Report. Information will be triangulated (i.e. verified from different sources) as far as possible, and when verification is not possible, the single source will be mentioned (whilst anonymity is still protected). Analysis leading to evaluative judgements should always be clearly spelled out.

Possible questions to be considered include, *(MTR Review Framework Questions available from UNEP Project Manager):*
Does the TOC properly reflect the project's intended change process?
Is the stakeholder analysis still appropriate and adequate to support the project's ambitions?
Are results statements in keeping with UNEP definitions (e.g. outcomes are expressed as the uptake or use of outputs)
Are roles and responsibilities commonly understood and playing out effectively?
Is there an effective monitoring mechanism for the project's implementation (this is separate from, and supports, reporting)?
Is the rate of expenditure appropriate for the mid-point?
Have plans for inclusivity, equality and/or equity been implemented as planned, or does more need to be done?
Are safeguard identification and mitigation plans being monitored and steps taken to minimize negative effects?
Is there an exit strategy in place and are the elements needed for the project's benefits to be sustained after the project end being incorporated in the project implementation?
(Where relevant) Have recommendations from previous learning exercises/performance assessments been appropriately addressed
(Where relevant) What changes were made to adapt to the effects of COVID-19 and how might any changes affect the project's performance?

Key Strategic Questions:

What evidence is available that the project activities are contributing to integrating ecosystem services and biodiversity into rice landscapes and value chains in Thailand?

[17] https://wedocs.unep.org/handle/20.500.11822/41114
[18] https://wedocs.unep.org/20.500.11822/42752

What evidence is available to suggest that the project has increased the capacity and trained human resources for sustainable rice production amongst local communities and stakeholders?

A Mid-Term Review is a *formative assessment*, which requires that the consultant(s) go beyond the assessment of "*what*" the project performance is and make a serious effort to provide a deeper understanding of "*why*" the performance is as it is.

Attribution, Contribution and Credible Association: In order to *attribute* any outcomes and impacts to a project intervention, one needs to consider the difference between what has happened with, and what would have happened without, the project (i.e. take account of changes over time and between contexts in order to isolate the effects of an intervention). This requires appropriate baseline data and the identification of a relevant counterfactual, both of which are frequently not available for reviews. Establishing the *contribution* made by a project in a complex change process relies heavily on prior intentionality (e.g. approved project design documentation, logical framework) and the articulation of causality (e.g. narrative and/or illustration of the Theory of Change). Robust evidence that a project was delivered as designed and that the expected causal pathways developed supports claims of contribution and this is strengthened where an alternative theory of change can be excluded. A *credible association* between the implementation of a project and observed positive effects can be made where a strong causal narrative, although not explicitly articulated, can be inferred by the chronological sequence of events, active involvement of key actors and engagement in critical processes.

Partners and Key Project Stakeholders. A key aim of the Mid-Term Review is to encourage reflection and learning by UNEP staff, the implementing partners and key project stakeholders The Review Consultant should consider how reflection and learning can be promoted, both through the review process and in the communication of review findings and key lessons.

9. Review Criteria

All review criteria will be rated on a six-point scale as follows: Highly Satisfactory[19] (HS = 6); Satisfactory (S = 5); Moderately Satisfactory (MS = 4); Moderately Unsatisfactory (MU =3); Unsatisfactory (U = 2); Highly Unsatisfactory (HU =1). A Criteria Ratings Matrix is available, within the suite of tools, to support a common interpretation of points on the scale for each review criterion. The Overall Performance Rating is calculated as a simple average of the ratings for each criterion (A-H). **Any criterion assessed as being in the 'Unsatisfactory' range should trigger corrective action in the Management Response.**

For GEF-funded projects there are a series of questions that need to be uploaded to the GEF Portal. The consultant should complete the table in Annex 5 of these TOR and append it to the Final Review report.

Where UNEP funding partners have areas of specific interest, these are noted, below.

A. Strategic Relevance

The Mid Term Review (MTR) will assess the extent to which the activity is suited to the priorities and policies of UNEP, the donors, implementing regions/countries and target beneficiaries and is operating in a way that is complementary to other ongoing interventions.

The MTR will assess whether there have been any changes in priorities since the project was designed and whether the project has/should adapt to address the changing policy/strategy context.

This criterion comprises two elements:

Alignment to UNEP's, Donors and Country (global, regional, sub-regional and national) strategic priorities

The Review should assess the project's alignment with the UNEP Medium Term Strategy (MTS) and Programme Of Work (POW)[20] under which the project was approved and include, in its narrative, reflections on the scale and scope of any contributions made to the planned results reflected in the relevant MTS and POW. UNEP strategic priorities include the Bali Strategic Plan for Technology Support and Capacity Building[21] (BSP) and South-South Cooperation (S-SC). The MTR will assess the extent to which the project is suited to, or responding to, donor priorities as well as alignment of the project with global priorities such as the SDGs and Agenda 2030. The extent to which the project is suited, or responding to, the stated environmental concerns and needs of the countries, sub-regions or regions where it is being implemented will also be considered. Examples may include: UN Sustainable Development Cooperation Framework (Cooperation Framework) or, national or sub-national development plans, poverty reduction strategies or Nationally Appropriate Mitigation Action (NAMA) plans or regional agreements etc. Within this section consideration will be given to whether the needs of all beneficiary groups are being met and reflects the current policy priority to leave no-one behind.

Complementarity/Coherence[22] with Relevant Existing Interventions

An assessment will be made of how well the project is taking account of ongoing and planned initiatives (under the same sub-programme, other UNEP sub-programmes, or being implemented by other agencies within the same country, sector or institution) that address similar needs of the same target groups.

The MTR will consider if the project team, in collaboration with all partners, is fulfilling any commitments to collaborate made at project design and is working to ensure their own intervention is complementary to other interventions. Examples may include work within UN Sustainable Development Cooperation Frameworks (UNSDCF) or One UN programming. Linkages with other

[19] *Sustainability* is similarly rated on a six-point scale but labelled from Highly **Likely** (HL) down to Highly **Unlikely** (HU).
[20] UNEP's Medium Term Strategy (MTS) is a document that guides UNEP's programme planning over a four-year period. It identifies UNEP's thematic priorities, known as Sub-programmes (SP), and sets out the desired outcomes, known as POW Outcomes and POW Direct Outcomes of the Sub-programmes. https://www.unenvironment.org/about-un-environment/evaluation-office/our-evaluation-approach/un-environment-documents.
[21] http://www.unep.fr/ozonaction/about/bsp.htm
[22] This sub-category is consistent with the new criterion of 'Coherence' introduced by the OECD-DAC in 2019.

interventions should be described and instances where UNEP's comparative advantage has been particularly well applied should be highlighted.

Adaptation Fund	To encourage utilization, each review should optimize relevance by ensuring (i) that the primary intended users of the evaluation and their intended uses are clearly identified and engaged at the beginning of the evaluation process; (ii) that "intended users" include funding, implementing, and beneficiary stakeholders; and (iii) that evaluators ensure these intended users contribute to decisions about the evaluation process.
Green Climate Fund	Coherence in climate finance delivery with other multilateral entities.

B. Quality & Revision of Project Design

The MTR should provide a brief overview of the strengths and weaknesses of the project design and assess whether all elements of the project design have been initiated and/or are still planned for. Based on a review of the project design document, regular reports and meeting minutes, the Review Consultant will confirm whether any amendments[23] have been made to the activities and/or results of the project. This includes changes to the formulation of results statements as well as changes in results indicators and/or project targets and the associated budget. Where revisions have been made the Consultant should confirm that formal documentation for these amendments is available and that UNEP/donor policies for revisions have been followed. In the absence of such formalization the Review Consultant will make appropriate recommendations.

C. Effectiveness

The Review will assess effectiveness across four dimensions: availability of outputs, progress towards project outcomes and adaptive management. The Review Consultant will confirm that all results statements conform to UNEP's definitions[24] and make recommendations for adjustments where necessary. At the project's mid-point emphasis is placed on the timeliness, quality and ownership of outputs and whether the project is adopting approaches or delivering activities to support the uptake of outputs (i.e. outcome level results).

Theory of Change

The Review will assess whether the Theory of Change/Results Framework represents a coherent and realistic change process from a cause-and-effect perspective. Considerations will be given to whether the causal pathways are effectively shown/articulated and supported by a full set of contributing conditions ('drivers' are external factors largely under the influence of the project; 'assumptions' are external factors largely outside the influence of the project). The TOC should also reflect[25] UNEP's commitment to increasing equality in line with the UN's commitment to human rights. If adjustments are needed they should be clearly presented and justified during the MTR process and a recommendation made on how any revisions could be formally approved.

Availability of Outputs[26]

The Review will assess the project's success in producing the planned outputs and making them available to the intended beneficiaries as well as its success in achieving milestones as per the project design document or any formal revisions. The availability of outputs will be assessed in terms of both quantity and quality, and the assessment will consider their ownership by, and usefulness to, intended beneficiaries and the timeliness of their provision. It is noted that emphasis is placed on the performance of those outputs that are most important to achieve outcomes. The Review will briefly explain the reasons behind the success or shortcomings of the project in delivering its planned outputs and recommend corrective action as appropriate.

Progress towards Project Outcomes[27]

At the project mid-point the Review Consultant will focus on the links between the provision of outputs and their adoption at the outcome level. The MTR will explore whether the assumptions and drivers that need to be in place to support the uptake of outputs are evident/emerging and consider whether sufficient effort and attention is being directed towards reaching outcome levels.

The Review Consultant will review the project Theory of Change (TOC) and confirm that is properly reflects all levels (outputs, outcomes, intermediate states and long-lasting impact) of results included in the project design. Where necessary, the TOC should be reconstructed, in discussion with the project team, to better guide and strengthen project implementation.

Likelihood of Impact

Based on the articulation of long-lasting effects in the reconstructed TOC (i.e. from project outcomes, via intermediate states, to impact), the Review will assess the likelihood of the intended, positive impacts becoming a reality.

[23] The conditions and processes for amendments should abide by the terms of the funding agreement. For example, the GEF has specific requirements for the approval/reporting of 'minor' and 'major' amendments. This includes the provision that any minor and major (approved) amendments should be reflected in the PIR report of the same year.

[24] UNEP, 2023, Glossary of Results Definitions.

[25] This can be as a driver or assumption if there is no specific equality results statement.

[26] Outputs are the availability (for intended beneficiaries/users) of new products and services and/or gains in knowledge, abilities and awareness of individuals or within institutions (UNEP, 2023)

[27] An outcome is a change at institutional level, or changes in behaviors, attitudes or conditions achieved from the use (i.e., uptake, adoption, application) of outputs by intended beneficiaries (UNEP, 2023).

The Review will consider the extent to which the project has played a catalytic role[28] or has promoted scaling up and/or replication as part of its Theory of Change (either explicitly as in a project with a demonstration component or implicitly as expressed in the drivers required to move to outcome levels) and as factors that are likely to contribute to greater or long-lasting impact.

Adaptive Management

The Review will assess whether any adaptive management[29] is evident, possibly reflected in annual reports or reports from field missions etc. The Review Consultant will consider the project's performance to-date from a risk perspective considering: a) the likelihood of any non/late delivery of the project's workplan; b) likelihood of any negative effects, including reputational risks and safeguard issues and c) factors undermining the endurance of project achievements.

During the MTR, forward plans should be reviewed and adaptive management strategies discussed such that the project's effectiveness and efficiency are maximized. Actions for adaptive management should be reflected in the MTR recommendations, which may include recommendations on governance structures, implementation arrangements, project design elements, monitoring and/or exit strategies etc.

Adaptation Fund	The Review should consider, under Effectiveness, the extent to which the evaluand is reaching Strategic Results Framework indicator targets.
Adaptation Fund	The Review should consider, under Effectiveness, the extent to which the intervention demonstrates that Climate Change Adaptation can be increased or replicated at a broader scale, as well as in other contexts.
Green Climate Fund	The Review should consider, under Effectiveness, the project's Innovativeness in result areas – the extent to which interventions may lead to paradigm shift towards low-emission and climate-resilient development pathways.
Global Environment Facility	The Review should consider, under Effectiveness, the extent to which the evaluand is reaching Core Indicator targets (from GEF-6 onwards).
Global Environment Facility	The Review will determine, under Effectiveness, the project's additionality by comparing the benefits of GEF support to a scenario without GEF support. It will identify specific areas where GEF support has contributed additional results and what these additional results were. It will provide quantitative and qualitative evidence to support the findings.

D. Financial Management

Under financial management the Mid-Term Review will assess a) whether the rate of spend is consistent with the project's length of implementation to-date, the agreed workplan and the delivery of outputs and b) whether financial reporting and/or auditing requirements are being met consistently and to adequate standards by all parties. Any financial management issues that are affecting the timely delivery of the project or the quality of its performance will be highlighted. Expenditure should be reported, where possible, at output/component level and will be compared with the approved budget.

Ratings should be provided for two sub-categories (*adherence to policies and completeness of financial information*), as assessed at the mid-point: i) the Review will verify the application of proper financial management standards and adherence to UNEP's financial management policies; ii) the Review will record where standard financial documentation is missing, inaccurate, incomplete or unavailable in a timely manner. The Review may comment on the level of communication between the UNEP Project Manager[30] and the Fund Management Officer as it relates to the effective delivery of the planned project and the needs of a responsive, adaptive management approach.

Global Environment Facility	The Review will determine, under Financial Management, i) time from CEO endorsement (FSP) / CEO approval (MSP) to first disbursement; ii) disbursement balance; iii) whether the project has secured co-financing higher than 35% and iv) time between CEO Endorsement and (likely) end of MTR.

E. Efficiency

Under the efficiency criterion, the Review will assess the extent to which the project delivered maximum results from the given resources. The Review will assess the *cost-effectiveness and timeliness* of project execution.

Focusing on the translation of inputs into outputs, *cost-effectiveness* is the extent to which an intervention has achieved, or is expected to achieve, its results at the lowest possible cost. *Timeliness* refers to whether planned activities have been/are being delivered according to expected timeframes as well as whether events are being sequenced efficiently. The Review will give special attention to efforts being made by the project teams during project implementation to make use of/build upon pre-existing

[28] The terms catalytic effect, scaling up and replication are inter-related and generally refer to extending the coverage or magnitude of the effects of a project. Catalytic effect is associated with triggering additional actions that are not directly funded by the project – these effects can be both concrete or less tangible, can be intentionally caused by the project or implied in the design and reflected in the TOC drivers, or can be unintentional and can rely on funding from another source or have no financial requirements. Scaling up and Replication require more intentionality for projects, or individual components and approaches, to be reproduced in other similar contexts. Scaling up suggests a substantive increase in the number of new beneficiaries reached/involved and may require adapted delivery mechanisms while Replication suggests the repetition of an approach or component at a similar scale but among different beneficiaries. Even with highly technical work, where scaling up or replication involves working with a new community, some consideration of the new context should take place and adjustments made as necessary.

[29] Adaptive management is an **iterative process** in which practitioners test hypotheses and adjust behavior, decisions, and actions based on experience and actual changes (Stankey et al., 2005).

[30] For GEF funded projects the UNEP Project Manager refers to the Task Manager.

institutions, agreements and partnerships, data sources, synergies and complementarities[31] with other initiatives, programmes and projects etc. to increase project efficiency.

The Review will also assess ways in which potential project extensions can be avoided through stronger project management.

F. Monitoring and Reporting

The Review will assess monitoring and reporting across two sub-categories: monitoring of project implementation and project reporting.

Monitoring of Project Implementation

Each project should be supported by a sound monitoring plan that is designed to track progress against SMART[32] results towards the provision of the project's outputs and the achievement of the project outcomes, including at a level disaggregated by gender, marginalization or vulnerability, including those living with disabilities. In particular, the Review will assess the relevance and appropriateness of the project indicators as well as the methods used for tracking progress against them as part of conscious results-based management.

The Review will assess whether the monitoring system is operational and facilitates the timely tracking of results and progress towards project milestones and targets throughout the project implementation period. This assessment will include consideration of whether the project gathered relevant and good quality baseline data that is accurately and appropriately documented. This should include monitoring the representation and participation of disaggregated groups, including gendered, marginalized or vulnerable groups, such as those living with disabilities, in project activities. It will also consider how quality monitoring data are being used to adapt and improve project execution, achievement of outcomes and ensure sustainability. The Review should confirm that funds allocated for monitoring are being used to support this activity.

Project Reporting

UNEP has a centralized information management system[33] in which project managers upload six-monthly progress reports against agreed project milestones. This information will be provided to the Review Consultant by the UNEP Project Manager. Donors may have specific reporting requirements and copies of reports will be made available by the UNEP Project Manager. The Review will assess the extent to which both UNEP and Donor reporting commitments have been fulfilled. This should include confirmation that meeting and field mission reports are being written and centrally stored.

Where the need for any corrective action has been indicated in any project reports (e.g. as an identified risk), the Review Consultant will record whether this action has been taken. This may include responses made during the COVID-19 pandemic or other unpredictable external events of a disruptive or crisis nature. The Review Consultant will also confirm whether formal reports have been appropriately authorized by both the author and the relevant supervisor.

Global Environment Facility	For internally executed projects the Review Consultant should review the quality of regular reports and confirm they have been submitted on a timely basis.

G. Exit Strategy & Sustainability (for Adaptation Fund, read Human and Ecological Sustainability and Security)

Sustainability[34] is understood as the probability of the benefits derived from the achievement of the project outcomes being maintained and developed after the close of the intervention. It may be considered from the perspectives of socio-political, institutional and/or financial sustainability. The Review will identify and assess the key conditions or factors that *are likely* to undermine or contribute to the endurance of benefits at the outcome level. Some factors of sustainability may be embedded in the project design and implementation approaches while others may be contextual circumstances or conditions that evolve over the life of the intervention. It is assumed that environmental sustainability is central to any UNEP project design but where applicable an assessment of bio-physical factors that may affect the sustainability of project outcomes may also be included.

The Review will ascertain that the project has put in place *an appropriate exit strategy* and measures to mitigate risks to sustainability. The Review Consultant will consider: a) the level of ownership, interest and commitment among government and other stakeholders to take the project achievements forwards; b) the extent to which the sustainability of project outcomes is dependent on issues relating to institutional frameworks and governance and c) the extent to which project outcomes are dependent on future funding for the benefits they bring to be sustained. It will consider whether institutional achievements such as governance structures and processes, policies, sub-regional agreements, legal and accountability frameworks etc. are robust enough to continue delivering the benefits associated with the project outcomes after project closure.

Adaptation Fund	The Review should consider, under Human and ecological sustainability and security – the extent to which the intervention is likely to generate continued positive or negative, intended and unintended impacts beyond its lifetime, taking into consideration, social, institutional, economic, and environmental systems. Is the intervention sensitive to conflict and fragility, i.e., to what extent does it consider the political context and the sharing of natural resources? Is it contributing towards targeted communities' livelihoods and to the health or well-being of the ecosystems on which they depend?

[31] Complementarity with other interventions during project design, inception or mobilization is considered under Strategic Relevance above.

[32] SMART refers to results that are specific, measurable, achievable, relevant and time-oriented. Indicators help to make results measurable.

[33] Project Information Management System (PIMS) or, from 2022, Integrated Planning Monitoring and Reporting (IPMR)

[34] As used here, 'sustainability' means the long-term maintenance of outcomes and consequent impacts, whether environmental or not. This is distinct from the concept of sustainability in the terms 'environmental sustainability' or 'sustainable development', which imply 'not living beyond our means' or 'not diminishing global environmental benefits' (GEF STAP Paper, 2019, Achieving More Enduring Outcomes from GEF Investment)

H. Factors and Processes Affecting Project Performance and Cross-Cutting Issues

Project Inception

This criterion focuses on the inception or mobilization stage of the project. The Review will assess whether appropriate measures were taken to either address weaknesses in the project design, fill information gaps or respond to changes that took place between project approval, the securing of funds and project mobilization. In particular, the Review will consider the nature and quality of engagement with stakeholder groups by the project team, the confirmation of partner capacity[35] and development of partnership agreements as well as initial staffing and financing arrangements. The Review Consultant will confirm whether appropriate inception meetings were held and whether an inception report is available on file.

Quality of Project Management and Supervision

During the MTR the consultant will review the planned implementation structure and the roles and responsibilities assigned to each partner or party. Where roles are not being played as planned, an appropriate recommendation to formalize correction action and/or a change in the implementation structure, should be made.

In some cases 'project management and supervision' may refer to the supervision and guidance provided by UNEP to partners and national governments while in others it may refer to the project management performance of an implementing partner and the technical backstopping and supervision provided by UNEP. The performance of parties playing different roles should be discussed and a rating provided for both types of supervision (UNEP/Implementing Agency; Partner/Executing Agency) and the overall rating for this sub-category is established as a simple average of the two.

The Review will assess the effectiveness of project management to-date with regard to: providing leadership towards achieving the planned outcomes; managing team structures; maintaining productive partner relationships (including Steering Groups etc.); maintaining project relevance within changing external and strategic contexts; communication and collaboration with UNEP colleagues; risk management; use of problem-solving; project adaptation and overall project execution. Evidence of adaptive project management should be highlighted.

Adaptation Fund	The Review should consider the extent to which the evaluand is being adapted in response to lessons and reflections during implementation; and the extent to which the intervention supports the use, development, or diffusion of innovative practices, tools, or technologies to improve or accelerate Climate Change Adaptation.
Global Environment Facility	For internally executed projects the Review Consultant should review whether the segregation of responsibilities meets the GEF requirements[36] (the GEF Agency must separate its project implementation and execution duties and establish each of the following: (a) A satisfactory institutional arrangement for the separation of implementation and executing functions in different departments of the GEF Agency; and (b) Clear lines of responsibility, reporting and accountability within the GEF Agency between the project implementation and execution functions.

Stakeholder Participation and Cooperation

Here the term 'stakeholder' should be considered in a broad sense, encompassing all project partners; duty bearers with a role in delivering project outputs; target users of project outputs and any other collaborating agents external to UNEP and the implementing partner(s). The assessment will consider the quality and effectiveness of all forms of communication and consultation with stakeholders throughout the project life to-date and the support given to maximize collaboration and coherence between various stakeholders, including sharing plans, pooling resources and exchanging learning and expertise. The inclusion and participation of all differentiated groups, including gender groups, should be considered.

Responsiveness to Human Rights and Gender Equality (for Adaptation Fund, read 'Equity'; for GCF, read 'Gender Equity')

The Review will ascertain to what extent the project has applied the UN Common Understanding on the human rights-based approach (HRBA) and the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous People. Within this human rights context the Review will assess to what extent the intervention adheres to UNEP's Policy and Strategy for Gender Equality and the Environment[37].

The report should present the extent to which the intervention, following an adequate gender analysis at design stage, has implemented the identified actions and/or applied adaptive management to ensure that Gender Equality and Human Rights are adequately taken into account. In particular, the Review will consider the extent to which project implementation has taken into consideration: (i) possible gender inequalities in access to, and the control over, natural resources; (ii) specific vulnerabilities of disadvantaged groups (especially women, youth and children and those living with disabilities) to environmental degradation or disasters; (iii) the role of women in mitigating or adapting to environmental changes and engaging in environmental protection and rehabilitation.

Adaptation Fund	The Review should consider the extent to which the project's design and implementation includes input of the designated authority (DA) and vulnerable groups such as women, youth, persons with disability, Indigenous Peoples, minorities, and other potentially marginalized groups or locations. It also encompasses

[35] During 2023 UNEP is reviewing its Partnership Policy and Procedures and a future version is expected to include a requirement for risk mitigation against weak performance among partners.

[36] GEF Minimum Fiduciary Standards: Separation of Implementation and Execution Functions in GEF Partner Agencies (2019).

[37]The Evaluation Office notes that Gender Equality was first introduced in the UNEP Project Review Committee Checklist in 2010 and, therefore, provides a criterion rating on gender for projects approved from 2010 onwards. Equally, it is noted that policy documents, operational guidelines and other capacity building efforts have only been developed since then and have evolved over time. https://wedocs.unep.org/bitstream/handle/20.500.11822/7655/-Gender_equality_and_the_environment_Policy_and_strategy-2015Gender_equality_and_the_environment_policy_and_strategy.pdf.pdf?sequence=3&isAllowed=y

	the degree to which the intervention reduced or perpetuated inequalities, and how equitably benefits were accrued to vulnerable groups.

Environmental and Social Safeguards (for Adaptation Fund, read Human and ecological sustainability and security')

UNEP projects address environmental and social safeguards primarily through the process of environmental and social screening, risk assessment and management (avoidance or mitigation) of potential environmental and social risks and impacts associated with project and programme activities. The Review will confirm whether UNEP requirements[38] were met to: screen proposed projects for any safeguarding issues; conduct sound environmental and social risk assessments; identify and avoid, or where avoidance is not possible, mitigate, environmental, social and economic risks; apply appropriate environmental and social measures to minimize any potential risks and harm to intended beneficiaries and report on the implementation of safeguard management measures taken.

The Review will also consider the extent to which the management of the project is minimizing UNEP's environmental footprint.

Country Ownership and Driven-ness

The Review will assess the quality and degree of engagement of government / public sector agencies in the project to-date. While there is some overlap between Country Ownership and Institutional Sustainability, this criterion focuses primarily on the forward momentum of the intended projects results, i.e. either: a) moving forwards from outputs to project outcomes or b) moving forward from project outcomes towards intermediate states. The Review will consider the involvement not only of those directly involved in project execution and those participating in technical or leadership groups, but also those official representatives whose cooperation is needed for change to be embedded in their respective institutions and offices (e.g. representatives from multiple sectors or relevant ministries beyond Ministry of Environment). This factor is concerned with the level of ownership generated by the project over outputs and outcomes and that is necessary for long term impact to be realized. This ownership should adequately represent the needs and interests of all gender and marginalized groups.

Communication and Public Awareness

The Review will assess the effectiveness of: a) communication of learning and experience sharing between project partners and interested groups arising from the project during its life and b) public awareness activities that were undertaken during the implementation of the project to influence attitudes or shape behavior among wider communities and civil society at large. The Review should consider whether existing communication channels and networks were used effectively, including meeting the differentiated needs of gender or marginalized groups, and whether any feedback channels were established. Where knowledge sharing platforms have been established under a project the Review will comment on the plans to sustain, handover or decommission the communication channel at the end of the project.

Section 3. REVIEW APPROACH, METHODS AND DELIVERABLES

(This section has both standard text and parts that are specific to the project, to be filled in)

The Mid-Term Review will use a participatory approach whereby key stakeholders are kept informed and consulted throughout the review process. Both quantitative and qualitative review methods will be used as appropriate to determine project achievements against the expected outputs, outcomes and impacts. It is highly recommended that the Review Consultant maintains close communication with the project team and promotes information exchange throughout the review implementation phase in order to increase their (and other stakeholder) ownership of the review findings.

The findings of the Review will be based on the following:

A **desk review** of:

Relevant background documentation

Project Document and Appendices

Project design documents (including minutes of the project design review meeting at approval); Annual Work Plans and Budgets or equivalent, revisions to the project (Project Document Supplement), the logical framework and its budget;

Project reports such as six-monthly progress and financial reports, progress reports from collaborating partners, meeting minutes, relevant correspondence etc.;

Evaluations/Reviews of similar projects.

Interviews (individual or in group) with:

UNEP Project Manager[39] and team members; *Kavita Sharma (Task Manager), Peerayot Sidonrusmee (Programme Management Assistant)*

Representatives of Implementing Agencies; *Nana Kuenkel (Cluster Coordinator), German Müller (Project Manager)*

UNEP Fund Management Officer (FMO); *Paul Vrontamitis*

Representatives from civil society and specialist groups (such as women's, farmers and trade associations etc.).

[38] For the review of project concepts and proposals, the Safeguard Risk Identification Form (SRIF) was introduced in 2019 and replaced the Environmental, Social and Economic Review note (ESERN), which had been in place since 2016. In GEF projects safeguards have been considered in project designs since 2011.
[39] For GEF funded projects, UNEP Project Manager refers to the Task Manager.

Field visits: Bangkok, Ubon, Thailand

Other data collection tools: If needed, to be decided by the Review Consultant at the inception phase

10. Review Deliverables and Review Procedures

See Annex 1 of these TOR for a list of tools and guidance available, see Annex 2 for a list of review criteria and sub-categories to be assessed. The Review Consultant will prepare:

Inception Report: (see Annex 3 of these TOR for guidance on structure and content) containing confirmation of the results framework and Theory of Change of the project, project stakeholder analysis, review framework and a tentative review schedule.

Preliminary Findings Note: typically, in the form of a PowerPoint presentation, the sharing of preliminary findings is intended to support the participation of the project team, act as a means to ensure all information sources have been accessed and provide an opportunity to verify emerging findings.

Draft and Final Review Reports: (see Annex 4 for guidance on structure and content) containing an Executive Summary that can act as a stand-alone document; detailed analysis of the review findings organized by review criteria and supported with evidence; lessons learned and recommendations and an annotated ratings table.

Review of the draft Review Report. The Review Consultant will submit a draft report to the UNEP Project Manager and revise the draft in response to their comments and suggestions. Once a draft of adequate quality has been peer-reviewed and accepted, the Project Manager will share the cleared draft report with key project stakeholders for their review and comments. Stakeholders may provide feedback on any errors of fact and may highlight the significance of such errors in any conclusions as well as providing feedback on the proposed recommendations and lessons. Any comments or responses to draft reports will be sent to the Project Manager for consolidation. The Project Manager will provide all comments to the Review Consultant for consideration in preparing the final report, along with guidance on areas of contradiction or issues requiring an institutional response.

At the end of the review process and based on the findings in the Review Report, the UNEP Project Manager will prepare a **Recommendations Implementation Plan** in the format of a table, to be completed and updated at regular intervals, and circulate **Lessons Learned**.

11. The Review Consultant

The Review Consultant who will work under the overall responsibility of the UNEP Project Manager, ***Kavita Sharma*** in consultation with the Head of Branch/Unit ***Johan Robinson*** and the Fund Management Officer, ***Paul Vrontamitis***. The consultant will liaise with the Project Manager on any procedural and methodological matters related to the Review. It is, however, the consultant's individual responsibility (where applicable) to arrange for their travel, visa, obtain documentary evidence, plan meetings with stakeholders (with assistance from the Partners), organize online surveys, and any other logistical matters related to the assignment. The Project Manager and project team will, where possible, provide logistical support (introductions, meetings etc.) allowing the Review Consultants to conduct the review as efficiently and independently as possible.

The Review Consultant will be hired over a period of 5 months, 16 Dec 2024 to 15 May 2025, and should have the following: A minimum Masters/Advanced University degree in environmental sciences, international development or other relevant political or social sciences area is required. A University degree in the same areas is acceptable with two additional years of relevant experience; At least 7 years of technical / evaluation experience is required, preferably including evaluating large, regional or global programmes and using a Theory of Change approach; Experience in GEF Biodiversity projects is desirable; Knowledge of the UN system; preferably including the work of UNEP and GEF is desirable; Professional work experience in Asia, on sustainable agriculture, is desirable. . English and French are the working languages of the United Nations Secretariat. For this consultancy, fluency in oral and written English is a requirement; Fluency in oral and written English is required. The work will be home-based with possible field visits.

The Review Consultant will be responsible, in close consultation with the UNEP Project Manager, for overall management of the Review and timely delivery of its outputs, described above in Section 10 Review Deliverables, above. The Review Consultant will ensure that all review criteria and questions are adequately covered.

12. Schedule of the Review

The table below presents the tentative schedule for the Review.

Table 3. Tentative schedule for the Review

Milestone	Tentative Dates
Inception Report	26 Dec 2025
Review Mission	25 Jan -5 Feb 2025 (Tentative)
E-based interviews, surveys etc.	Dec – May 2025
PowerPoint/presentation on preliminary findings and recommendations	1 Feb 2025
Draft Report to UNEP Project Manager	8 Mar 2025
Draft Report shared with the wider group of stakeholders	31 Mar 2025
Final Main Review Report	21 Apr 2025
Final Main Review Report shared with all respondents	15 May 2025

13. Contractual Arrangements

The Review Consultant will be selected and recruited by the UNEP Project Manager under an individual Special Service Agreement (SSA) on a "fees only" basis (see below). By signing the service contract with UNEP/UNON, the consultant certifies that they have not been associated with the design and implementation of the project in any way which may jeopardize their independence and impartiality towards project achievements and project partner performance. Consultants who carry out a Mid-Term Review may not be contracted for a Terminal Review of the same evaluand. All consultants are required to sign the Code of Conduct Agreement Form.

Fees will be paid on an instalment basis, paid on acceptance by the UNEP Project Manager of expected key deliverables. The schedule of payment is as follows:

Schedule of Payment for the Consultant:

Deliverable	**Percentage Payment**
Approved Inception Report ***(as per Guidance Note)***	30%
Approved Draft Main Review Report ***(as per Guidance Note)***	30%
Approved Final Main Review Report ***(as per Report Template)***	40%

Fees only contracts: Where applicable, air tickets will be purchased by UNEP and 75% of the Daily Subsistence Allowance for each authorized travel mission will be paid up front. Local in-country travel will only be reimbursed where agreed in advance with the UNEP Project Manager and on the production of acceptable receipts. Terminal expenses and residual DSA entitlements (25%) will be paid after mission completion.

The consultants may be provided with access to UNEP's information management systems (e.g. PIMS, IPMR, Anubis, SharePoint etc.) and if such access is granted, the consultants agree not to disclose information from that system to third parties beyond information required for, and included in, the Review Report.

In case the consultant is not able to provide the deliverables in accordance with these guidelines, and in line with the expected quality standards by the UNEP Project Manager, payment may be withheld at the discretion of the Head of Branch/Unit until the consultants have improved the deliverables to meet UNEP's quality standards.

If the consultant fails to submit a satisfactory final product to the UNEP Project Manager in a timely manner, i.e. before the end date of their contract, UNEP reserves the right to employ additional human resources to finalize the report, and to reduce the consultants' fees by an amount equal to the additional costs borne by the project team to bring the report up to standard or completion.

ANNEX X. GEF PORTAL INPUTS *(for GEF funded projects)*

The following table contains text to be uploaded to the GEF Portal. **It will be drawn from the Review Report, either as copied or summarized text.** In each case, references should be provided for the paragraphs and pages of the report from which the responses have been copied or summarized.

Table A: GEF portal inputs

Portal Entry: What is the performance at the project's mid-point against Core Indicator Targets? *(For projects approved prior to GEF-7, these indicators will be identified retrospectively and comments on performance provided[40])*

Response: The project demonstrates performance at a Moderately Satisfactory performance at mid-point against the Core Indicator Targets. The project is however expected to improve during the second part of the implementation period and could be able to achieve most of its end goals.

GEF Core Indicator	Baseline	Mid-term target	Mid-term result
3. Area of land restored	0	10,000 ha	0
4. Areas of landscapes under improved practices (excluding protected areas)	0	85,000 ha	22,286 ha
6. Greenhouse gas emissions mitigated	0	183,230 tCO_2e by end of Year 2	Not yet reportable
9. Reduction, disposal/destruction, phase out, elimination and avoidance of chemicals of global concern and their waste in the environment and in process, materials and products	333 tons active ingredients of hazardous herbicides & pesticides used on 90K ha rice	50 metric tons toxic chemicals reduced	178.84 ton chemical reduction
11. Number of direct beneficiaries disaggregated by gender as co-benefit of GEF investment	0	20,000 beneficiaries	10,633 farmers (59% female)

Portal Entry: What has been the progress, challenges and outcomes regarding engagement of stakeholders in the project/programme? *(This should be based on the description included in the Stakeholder Engagement Plan or equivalent documentation submitted at CEO Endorsement/Approval)*

Response: The Stakeholder Engagement Plan is included in the CEO Endorsement document (pg. 59-60). The project has complied with this plan, and there is strong national ownership of the project and political will to achieve its planned outcomes and impact. There is strong relation between the project and national policy through the work with the ministries that are in charge of implementing the policy. Important factors include strong government support, integration with existing sector strategies, and active stakeholder engagement including the private sector and local communities.

Stakeholder roles and responsibilities are well-defined and mostly well understood. Not all are used to working together with other agencies and even less with the private sector. The RD was onboarded first due to its intended role in project management and implementation. Other agencies under the MoAC and MNRE were then engaged – such as DOAE, ACFS, DNP, and RFD, who all are seeing the clear linkages between ISRL work and the financial support packages for joint activities. It has not been equally easy with agencies such as LDD, RID, ONEP, and DCCE, where there are no planned grant packages and therefore could potentially be less interest based on a "what's in it for us" perception of some partners.

In the two priority provinces Ubon Ratchathani and Chiang Rai the project has local staff and is also working through the partner agencies to reach local stakeholders on community- and grantee level. There are many positive examples of local activities and satisfaction among the beneficiaries, where the majority is women.

Portal Entry: What has been the progress, challenges and outcomes regarding gender-responsive measures and any intermediate gender result areas? *(This should be based on the documentation at CEO Endorsement/Approval, including gender-sensitive indicators contained in the project results framework or gender action plan or equivalent)*

[40] This does not apply to Enabling Activities

Response: Gender-responsive measures are adequately addressed in the project in line with the Gender Mainstreaming Plan. Both women and men benefit from the project, though targeted efforts are made to address gender-specific needs. Gender mainstreaming has enhanced women's empowerment and participation in the project activities. Specific resources and activities are allocated to ensure women's participation and benefits, which GIZ consider as sufficiently funded. In this regard it should be considered that DOAE has an explicit focus on women empowerment in their diversification activities, whereas in all other activities gender balance is promoted and as far as possible ensured. There are also specific women empowerment activities undertaken in partnership with PepsiCo, and a Women-focused SRP authorized TOT capacity development event took place. A gender mainstreaming manual will be developed by an external consultant in 2025 that is expected to further strengthen the project's positive impact on local women in the project areas.

The women met during the MTR mission express their satisfaction with the project support but gave little information to be able to assess their opinions about the project's gender equality initiatives. Women beneficiaries are often aware of their rights and the benefits provided through the project, but it depends on the degree of involvement and knowledge of the project's content.

Gender disaggregated data are collected for meetings, training, and farmer-level activity data (i.e., farmer record books) to calculate environmental, economic, and social impacts of on-farm practices.

The project results framework includes two gender-sensitive indicators:

Output: 2.3 Gender-inclusive agriculture diversification and development program agreed (including coffee, fruit-crops, agroforestry) in upland HCVF in Ubon Ratchathani & Chiang Rai: The project target is to develop 2 gender-inclusive agriculture diversification and development programs. There is no target at mid-term, but this task is under development.

Output 4.4 A gender sensitive M&E system to track project performance and the level of adoption of SRP/ Integrated Landscape Management approach: The project has the target to develop a farm book for data collection, including gender data, which has been complied with.

Portal Entry:

1- *Provide an overall ESS risk classification to be entered into the portal as either Low, Medium/Moderate, or Hight/Substantial).*

2- *Provide updates on any revisions to identified types of risk classifications/ratings and describe progress made in the implementation of the management measures as outlined in the CEO Endorsement/Approval. Please make reference to any PIR-reported ESS risks.*

3- *Provide supporting documents*

Response: The Project Document/CEO endorsement document mentions 11 risks with mitigation measures. The overall project risk rating is now M, as stated in the PIR Dec. 2024. The reviewer agrees with this rating. The identified risks, including climate variability, stakeholder disengagement, and financial uncertainties, are realistic. Risk mitigation strategies, such as continuous stakeholder engagement and adaptive management practices, are in place. Periodic reviews during project implementation were recommended to adjust assumptions as necessary and has been done by the PMU and in relation with the Steering Committee Meetings. The assumptions are also considered realistic and include the commitment and capacity of government for multi-stakeholder processes, private sector commitment to purchase sustainable rice, community participation and functional financial management.

The ProDoc also includes analysis of the use of social and environmental safeguards, complemented by the Safeguard Risk identification Form (SRIF). The type of activities supported by the project are not expected to lead to any adverse environmental or social impacts. The project is rather expected to reduce the negative environmental impacts on the water and air related with rice production, combined with positive impacts for local stakeholders such as improved income and strengthened resilience to climate change.

Environmental and Social Safeguards Monitoring mechanism is in place to ensure compliance with the project's safeguards measures. It is confirmed that the project design complies with UNEP's environmental and social safeguards. The project's *Safeguard Risk Identification* (Appendix 15 to ProDoc) found that there are low risks connected to project implementation, with no separate safeguards management plan required. The project applies a good practice approach, e.g.,

participatory and inclusive stakeholder engagement, gender-responsive approaches, and access to complaints and grievance processes. A Grievances Redress Mechanism (GRM) overseen by a qualified Environmental and Social Safeguards (ESS) Manager will be developed and rolled out in 2025 through the aligned new GIZ-GCF project, including for application in Chiang Rai and Ubon Ratchathani. The GRM will provide central channels that are accessible and credible for target audiences. A GRM Handbook will also be released for the project's staff and extensionists to support its dissemination and implementation. It would however have been better if this task had been carried out before project initiation or early in the implementation period.

It has also an analysis of the use of social and environmental safeguards, complemented by the Safeguard Risk identification Form (SRIF).

Portal Entry: What has been the progress, challenges and outcomes regarding the implementation of the project's Knowledge Management Approach, including: Knowledge and Learning Deliverables (e.g. website/platform development); Knowledge Products/Events; Communication Strategy; Lessons Learned and Good Practice; Adaptive Management Actions. *(This should be based on the documentation approved at CEO Endorsement/Approval)*

Response: The project's knowledge management approaches as stated in the ProDoc at CEO endorsement focused on upscaling adoption of sustainable practices among rice smallholders and other value chain actors in and beyond Thailand for sustainable food systems and productive landscapes to be leveraged through linkages and synergies with the FOLUR IP Global Platform. This was expected to be accomplished through the following KM approaches:

- Targeted Technical Assistance to other countries:
- Diversification / integrated landscape management:
- Engagement with key Global Policy Drivers:
- National and regional platforms to drive scale:
- Value chain linkages.

The knowledge management inputs and activities were integrated into the project Workplan and came out of the Project's technical activities rather than acting as stand-alone activities.

During the implementation, the Government and private sector partners conduct awareness campaigns to promote Thai certified rice including SRP rice through promotion in local markets via trade fairs, TV campaigns and additional events. Output 3.5 directly contributes to this from the rice value chain perspective and economic models.

The outreach and partnership strategy under project output 4.1 aims to create a common vision for stakeholder engagement, ownership, and sustainability. A Knowledge Management system is documenting and sharing best practices and ensuring that lessons learned are accessible to the project beneficiaries and the general public. For this purpose, the strong communication and coordination among stakeholders, including government, corporate sectors, and communities, are crucial. The strategy also seeks to expand SRP partnerships in ASEAN and Thailand, but so far this activity is incipient.

Key approaches include public awareness campaigns, public relations efforts, branding (Q, SRP), and media strategies to promote sustainable rice landscapes. Effective media relations and engagement is enhancing project visibility and support broader adoption of the project work models.

On local level, the RD and other partners are actively involved in creating awareness among the rice farmers on not burning the rise husks and straws to reduce the possibility of uncontrollable forest fires and maintain organic matter to improve plant growth. There is also continued training and information about soil and water conservation, introduction of fruit trees, crop diversification, and management with better crop systems that increase yield, as well as awareness raising in the communities to avoid or slow-down the encroachment into forest areas and protected areas.

The local stakeholders benefit from training, awareness-raising and technical assistance to scale-up sustainable rice production practices and integrated landscape planning to reduce net GHG emissions while at the same time generating environmental and socio-economic benefits. In that

relation, the project is supporting the so-called Mega Farms for education and awareness creation in the communities about sustainable and environmental-friendly practices and forest conservation.

Portal Entry: *What are the main findings of the review?*

Response:

Project strengths: The project aligns strongly with Thailand's national policies on sustainable agriculture, as well as international frameworks such as the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), especially SDG 2 (Zero Hunger), SDG 13 (Climate Action), and SDG 15 (Life on Land), as well as the Paris Agreement, UNCCD and the GEF focal areas on biodiversity and climate change. It effectively integrates multi-stakeholder collaboration, including public-private partnerships and community engagement, to drive sustainable rice production. Compared to other criteria, strategic relevance scored highest because of its clear policy coherence and strong institutional buy-in, which provides a solid foundation for long-term success.

The project was well-conceived, integrating sustainability principles and an inclusive governance model. Key project activities have made notable progress in delivering key outputs, particularly in SRP adoption and policy engagement.

The project's potential impact remains strong due to its alignment with national policy priorities, private sector engagement, and the scaling-up of SRP standards. By establishing sustainable rice landscapes across 22,286 hectares and advancing financial mechanisms for sustainable farming, the project demonstrates tangible progress toward achieving long-term sectoral transformation.

The project has maintained robust financial management with well-documented resource utilization, effective allocation of co-financing contributions, and compliance with UNEP/GEF financial policies. Despite some administrative delays in the initial disbursement, budget execution has remained well-aligned with the project's needs.

The project has demonstrated flexibility in responding to challenges, including adjusting strategies to enhance stakeholder collaboration and reallocating resources to address delays. Further improvements in streamlining decision-making and refining operational coordination are needed to maximize efficiency.

Stakeholders' roles and responsibilities are well-defined and mostly well understood. Not all are used to working together with other agencies and even less with the private sector. The RD was onboarded first due to its intended role in project management and implementation. Other agencies under the MoAC and MNRE were then engaged – such as DOAE, ACFS, DNP, and RFD, who all are seeing the clear linkages between ISRL work and the financial support packages for joint activities.

In the two priority provinces Ubon Ratchathani and Chiang Rai the project has local staff and is also working through the partner agencies to reach local stakeholders on community- and grantee level. There are many positive examples of local activities and satisfaction among the beneficiaries, where the majority is women.

The project has established strong foundations for sustainability through government engagement, private sector partnerships, and community participation. However, continued efforts are needed to secure long-term financial mechanisms and policy integration. Strengthening institutional capacity and embedding project learnings into national frameworks will be essential to ensuring the project's lasting impact and sustainability, including adjusting strategies to enhance stakeholder collaboration and reallocating resources to address delays. Further improvements in streamlining decision-making and refining operational coordination are needed to maximize efficiency.

Project weaknesses: Challenges in balancing ambitious objectives with realistic timelines and ensuring efficient coordination among stakeholders have required continuous adaptive management. Some aspects of the project design could benefit from simplification to enhance efficiency.

Delays in establishing full coordination among executing partners and delayed implementation in several target areas have hindered the overall effectiveness of the project, while delays in decision-making and administrative bottlenecks have impacted overall efficiency. Coordination challenges among stakeholders and delayed procurement processes have affected timely implementation.

Strengthening monitoring systems and ensuring timely stakeholder actions will be essential for achieving projected outcomes.

Cross-cutting issues, including attention to human rights gender, and minorities, are adequately addressed in the project design. Areas with minorities, known as hilltribes, are found in the mountains of the Chiang Rai Province, supported by the project partner HRDI. Targeted efforts are made to address gender-specific needs and gender mainstreaming has enhanced women's empowerment and participation in the project activities.

The type of activities supported by the project are not expected to lead to any adverse environmental or social impacts but would rather reduce the negative impacts on the water and air related with traditional rice production, combined with positive socioeconomic impacts and improved resilience for local communities.

The Country ownership is reflected through national leadership in project governance, coordination and consultations, and strong alignment with national policies and strategies for the agriculture and rice sector. Country-level systems are utilized for project planning, management and monitoring, combined with the GIZ management systems.

Communication and public awareness campaigns to promote certified rice are conducted by the Government and private sector in TV, trade fairs and other events. The outreach and partnership strategy aims to create a common vision for stakeholder engagement, ownership, and sustainability.

On local level, the Rice Department and other partners are actively involved in creating awareness among the rice farmers on soil and water conservation, not burning the rise husks and straws to avoid forest fires and maintain soil organic matter. There is also introduction of fruit trees, crop diversification, and management with better crop systems that increase yield, and avoid the encroachment into forest areas and protected areas. The integrated landscape planning is reducing net GHG emissions while generating environmental and socio-economic benefits.

Portal Entry: *Actual Sources of Co-financing*

Response:

Sources of Co-financing	**Name of Co-financier**	**Type of Cofinancing**	**Investment Mobilized**	**Amount ($)**
GEF agency	UNEP	In-kind		0
Implementing partner	GIZ	In-kind		3,770,185
Government	Rice Department	In-kind		3,190,706
	ONEP	In-kind		0
	DNP	In-kind		0
	RFD	In-kind		0
	Local Gov. CR and UR	In-kind		0
Other partners	Olam	Cash		7,443,791
	Olam	In-kind		632,243
	Urmatt	In-kind		0
	IRRI	In-kind		0
	SRP	In-kind		0

The figures are confirmed with FMO.

Portal Entry: Key Risks (please refer to ANNEX XI)

ANNEX XI. GEF RISKS TO ACHIEVING PROJECT OUTCOMES *(for GEF funded projects)*

Summarize risks that might affect the achievement of desired outcomes and the mitigation measures which are planned or already undertaken to address these. The risk rating should reflect the *residual* risk to achieving outcomes after considering the implementation of mitigation measures. The rating scale is: High, Substantial, Moderate, Low. See the *GEF Risk Appetite* document (GEF/C.66/13) for more information and its Annex B for a description of each risk category. Note that the rating for the "Environment and Social" category should be the same as the risk rating for Safeguards.

RISK CATEGORIES	RATINGS	ASSESSMENT AND MITIGATION MEASURES
CONTEXT		
Climate	Moderate	Climate change and natural disasters might affect crop yields. Mitigation is part of the project's design.
Environment and Social	Low	The project maintains good relations with local communities through partner organizations, which should be strengthened further.
Political and Governance	Moderate	Project Steering Committee has many representatives and has only met 2 times, which could reduce efficiency of decision making. Mitigation: Establish core group of fewer partners for more frequent follow-up.
INNOVATION		
Institutional and Policy	Moderate	Changes in authorities and counterpart staff affect project implementation. Mitigation: Ensure that many staff members are trained to take over tasks when there are changes.
Technological	Low	The project is top of the line in the areas it is promoting
Financial and Business Mode	Moderate	Business model for certified rice must be successful to have sustainability, but it is a low-cost commodity. Mitigation: Continue to strengthen collaboration with SRP and private sector partners.
EXECUTION		
Capacity for Implementation	Moderate	The project has a significant delay due to several factors, and it is important to speed up implementation to reach the targets. Mitigation: 1. Strengthen risk monitoring and mitigation; 2. Apply for no-cost extension
Fiduciary	Low	No risk detected.
Stakeholder	Low	The two international partners IRRI and SRP has much delay since their agreements were signed late but are expected to reach their targets on time.
Other	N/A	No other significant risk detected
Overall Risk Rating	Low - Moderate	With proper risk monitoring and mitigation, as well as capacity building and follow-up on all partners, the project is expected to get highly positive outcomes.