Mid-Term Review of FAO-GEF Project:
Transforming Indian Agriculture for Global Environmental Benefits and the Conservation of Critical Biodiversity and Forest Landscapes (Green-Ag)

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MTR lead
Himanshu Dube, Team Leader

FAO India
Manoj Mishra, MTR Manager

Abbreviations

AWPB	Annual Work Plan and Budget
BD	Biodiversity
BH/RM	Budget Holder/ Resource Manager
CCM	Climate Change Mitigation
CEO	Chief Executive Officer
CWLW	Chief Wildlife Warden
CRPs	Community Resource Persons
DAY-NRLM	Deendayal Antyodaya Yojana - National Rural Livelihoods Mission
DC	District Collector/Commissioner
DO	Development Objective
E&S	Environmental And Social
ESM	Environmental And Social Management
ESS	Environmental And Social Standards
FAO	Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations
FFS	Farmer Field Schools
FGD	Focus Group Discussion
FLO	Funding Liaison Officer
FPIC	Free Prior and Informed Consent
FPMIS	Field Programme Management Information System
FPO	Farmer Producer Organizations
GCP	Government Cooperation Programme
GDP	Gross Domestic Product
GEB	Global Environmental Benefits
GESI	Gender Equality and Social Inclusion
GEF	Global Environment Facility
GEF CU	GEF Coordination Unit
GGP	GEF Gender Partnership
GHGs	Greenhouse Gases
GLIU	Green Landscape Implementation Unit
GLMP	Green Landscape Management Plan
GoI	Government of India
GPSU	Gram Panchayat Support Unit
GTO	GEF Technical Office
ha	Hectare/s
IDI	In-depth interview
IEC	Information, education and communication
IMAGE	Institute on Management of Agricultural Extension
KII	Key Informant Interview
KVK	Krishi Vigyan Kendra
LD	Land Degradation
LDCF	Least Developed Countries Fund
LMEs	Large Marine Ecosystems
LTO	Lead Technical Officer
LULC	Land Use and Land Cover
MGNREGS	Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme
M&E	Monitoring And Evaluation
MHIP	Mizo Hmeichhe Insuihkhawm Pawl
MIDH	Mission for Integrated Development of Horticulture
MIS	Management Information System
MiSALT	Mizoram Sloping Agriculture Land Technology
MoA&FW	Ministry of Agriculture and Farmers' Welfare
MoEF&CC	Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change
MP	Madhya Pradesh

MTR	Mid-Term Review
Mz	Mizoram
NABARD	National Bank for Agriculture and Rural Development
NAP	National Agriculture Policy
NFSM	National Food and Nutritional Security Mission
NGOs	Non-governmental Organization
NHM	National Horticulture Mission
NMSA	National Mission for Sustainable Agriculture
NPMC	National Project Monitoring Committee
NPMU	National Project Management Unit
NPSC	National Project Steering Committee
NTCA	National Tiger Conservation Authority
OD	Odisha
OECD DAC	Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development's Development Assistance Committee
OFP	Operational Focal Point
OPs	Operational Partners
OPAs	Operational Partner Agreements
OPIM	Operational Partners Implementation Modality
PAs	Protected Areas
PDO	Project Development Objective
PIA	Project Implementing Agency
PIF	Project Identification Form
PIR	Project Implementation Report
PPG	Project Preparation Grant
PRIs	Panchayat Raj Institutions
ProDoc	Project Document
PSA	Project Support Agency
PVTG	Particularly Vulnerable Tribal Groups
PY	Project year
Rj	Rajasthan
RFS	Rainfed Farming System
SBM-U	Swachh Bharat Mission-Urban
SCCF	Special Climate Change Fund
SDSS	Spatial Decision Support System
SEBs	Socio-economic benefits
SFM	Sustainable Forest Management
SLM	Sustainable Land Management
SOPs	Standard Operating Procedures
SPMU	State Project Management Unit
SRLM	State Rural Livelihood Mission
SSA	Samagra Shiksha Abhiyaan
SSC	state steering committee
SWC	Soil and Water Conservation
ToC	Theory of Change
TRIFED	Tribal Cooperative Marketing Development Federation of India Limited
TSG	Technical Support Group
Uk	Uttarakhand
UNEG	United Nations Evaluation Group
VCSU	Village Council Support Unit
VIC	Village Implementing Committee
WSHG	Women Self Help Group

Executive summary

1. Introduction

1.1 The Transforming Indian Agriculture for Global Environmental Benefits and the Conservation of Critical Biodiversity and Forest Landscapes project (known as the Green-Ag project) is funded by the Global Environment Facility (GEF) and implemented by the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO). The operational partners (OPs) involved in the execution of the project are the Union Ministry of Agriculture and Farmers' Welfare (MoAF&W) at the national level, and the agriculture departments in the States of Mizoram, Madhya Pradesh, Odisha, Rajasthan as well as the Watershed Management Directorate in Uttarakhand. The objective of the project is to "catalyse transformative change of India's agricultural sector to support the achievement of national and Global Environmental Benefits (GEBs), and mainstream biodiversity, climate change, and sustainable land management objectives and practices into the Indian agricultural sector".

1.2 The Mid-term Review (MTR) was commissioned to the Insight Development Consulting Group (IDCG) in order to assess the implementation midway and examine intended and unintended results and their impact on stakeholders. It evaluates relevance, effectiveness, efficiency, sustainability and impact, and recommends corrective measures. The findings and recommendations of the MTR will offer crucial insights for corrective and adaptive management to project planners, managers and implementers. Stakeholders at the national, state and landscape levels are expected to use the Review's findings to inform decision-making, refine strategies and ensure alignment with project goals. The MTR outcomes, including best practices, aim to facilitate upscaling successful strategies in other regions.

1.3 The MTR team used a mixed methods approach, analysing secondary data and conducting qualitative interviews and focus group discussions with stakeholders at the national level, in the five states and eight districts, as well as with community institutes and beneficiaries in the project landscapes. Interactions took place from June to November 2023. The MTR team faced challenges in scheduling meetings with the state and district level stakeholders because of the enforcement of the model code of conduct due to assembly elections in Madhya Pradesh, Mizoram and Rajasthan. The visits to Mizoram and Uttarakhand were delayed due to heavy monsoon rains.

2. Main findings

2.1. **Relevance:** The project seeks to address global and national environmental priorities in the conservation landscapes around five carefully selected national parks. The project aligns with existing policies, GEF focal areas, the FAO country programme and national priorities, including key initiatives like the National Agriculture Policy (NAP) and the National Millet Mission. The MTR did not find any evidence of the project adopting practices that are not in line with, or contrary to, the customary socio-cultural practices of the local population.

2.2. The presence of biotic pressures on each landscape, such as foraging free-range livestock, human-animal conflicts, ravine flattening, migration, land degradation and others, justifies the need for environmental funding, making the selection of project areas relevant. However, there is a need to reinforce the causal relationship between the four core barriers identified at the project design stage[1] and the component design, project objectives and the Theory of Change (ToC) among the OPs.

[1] These are: (a) the agriculture and environment sectors work at cross purposes, undermining each other's investments; (b) agricultural and environmental policies, investments and institutions are not sufficiently aligned to maximize multiple environmental and socio-economic benefits; (c) limited mechanisms and 'best

2.3. **Effectiveness:** Despite many challenges, such as the COVID-19 pandemic and frequent turnover of officials, the project has been effective in starting staff placement, institutional setup and building positive relationships between the project and target communities in all the project States, except Rajasthan. The FAO has a collaboration with the National Tiger Conservation Authority (NTCA) to work in the villages on the fringes of Protected Areas (PAs) for Mizoram, Odisha and Uttarakhand, and consent of support from the Chief Wildlife Warden (CWLW) for Madhya Pradesh and Rajasthan. The project has been able to solicit technical convergence from the line departments in the States. However, financial convergence with the line departments remains a challenge due to the different planning and approval cycles of the Green Landscape Management Plan (GLMP) and the line departments.

2.4. In four landscapes,[2] the project currently engages with only priority villages and is still experimenting with approaches that can later be scaled up and replicated across the landscape, if successful. However, understanding of the project's objectives and outcomes needs to be reinforced among project staff, government officials and project stakeholders for successful implementation of the project.

2.5. While the project has been successful in securing the active engagement of the line departments dealing with the agriculture and allied sectors, it needs to expand and deepen collaborations with the departments of forest and environment in all landscapes.

2.6. The GLMPs are the most critical tools for achieving the project objectives and outcomes. They adopt a consultative, informed and coordinated decision-making process. The plans aim to foster the adoption of agro-ecological approaches that are synergistic with PAs management plans, with clear environmental targets and sustainable livelihoods as well as gender and social inclusion considerations. However, the three approved GLMPs of Odisha, Mizoram and Uttarakhand should clearly articulate landscape-level threats, agro-ecological approaches synergistic to management plans of PAs, have clear environmental targets of proposed interventions and their linkage with GEF focal areas – biodiversity (BD), climate change mitigation (CCM), land degradation (LD), and sustainable forest management (SFM), sustainable livelihoods and gender and social inclusion considerations.

2.7. **Efficiency:** The implementation of the project has seen substantial delays due to the COVID-19 pandemic. The project could start the field level engagement, planning of activities and interactions with stakeholders only in 2022. In effect, therefore, at the mid-term point (2023), the project is in its first year of implementation. Additionally, due to the turn-over of the staff, the number of technical staff at the National Project Management Unit (NPMU) is only 30 percent compared with the project document (ProDoc). The key professional staff at the NPMU plays a critical role in providing thought leadership, technical backstopping, collaborative learning and knowledge management support to the project States, including both at the State Project Management Units (SPMU) and Green Landscape Implementation Unit (GLIU) levels. However, the limited number of NPMU staff is affecting the implementation of the project.

2.8. To date, the SPMUs, technical support groups (TSGs), GLIUs, and village implementation committees (VICs) have been established and community resource persons (CRPs) appointed in four landscapes, barring Rajasthan. In Rajasthan, government officials have been designated at the state level and TSGs have been established.

practice' models for more informed decision-making; and (d) limited awareness among farmers about the value of the environment and poor incentives to encourage them to adopt sustainable agriculture practices.

[2] Rajasthan is an exception because neither are the SPMU and GLIU in place nor is the GLMP available for the State.

2.9. The CRPs are deployed at Gram Panchayats level, with each Gram Panchayat constituting of multiple villages. Each Gram Panchayat has specific socio-economic and environmental characteristics that vary not only within its geographic boundaries, but also with that of Gram Panchayats that are contiguous or at a distance. An operationally efficient CRP ideally needs to be a local volunteer aware of these development dynamics. However, it was seen that many CRPs have been recruited from outside the target villages/Gram Panchayats, which limits their close engagement with communities.

2.10. **Results:** There are 14 outcome indicators for the project, of which 2 did not have any mid-term targets. According to information shared by the NPMU and SPMUs, mid-term targets of only 3 of the 12 indicators have been achieved, while achievement of 9 indicators appears delayed (refer Annexure 6 for rating of the 14 outcome indicators).

2.11. **Crosscutting dimensions:** The MTR team observed that the project officials and villagers (from all socio-economic backgrounds) across all landscapes are actively engaged in and aware about the project. Notably, despite the remote location of the chosen landscapes, there is significant participation from female CRPs, with commendable involvement in VIC meetings (except in Mizoram). There is active participation of women and women self-help group (WSHG) members in VIC meetings and project activities. However, limited participation of women was reported in the initial farmer field school (FFS) sessions, which is an operational issue, and can be resolved by area-specific realignment of FFS timings.

2.12. **Sustainability:** As the project is in its initial stages, it is too early to measure its sustainability. However, a positive indication for sustainability comes from (a) FAO and NPMU actively engaging with important stakeholders like NTCA and different divisions of MoA&FW managing various national agricultural programmes, and taking them on board at the national and state level; (b) sensitizing the policy makers, leading to the constitution of a committee in the MoA&FW to integrate biodiversity concerns in national agricultural programmes; (c) technical convergence with line departments in four landscapes; and (d) community participation in the VICs. For example, during a village meeting in Odisha, community members pointed out that VIC processes were more effective than the Palli Sabhas (village assembly). There seems to be a commitment within the community to ensure that the VICs continue to function regularly in the future.

2.13. The design envisages technical and financial convergence with all the line departments (including with on-going national and state-level schemes/programmes) for implementation of the GLMPs. While there are indications of technical convergence, it needs further strengthening. Financial convergence needs to be strengthened in all landscapes.

2.14. Though community acceptance has been ensured through the Free Prior and Informed Consent (FPIC) process, the sustenance of project initiatives may be affected by changes in the government, in government policies and frequent transfers of officials engaged in project implementation.

2.15. **Impacts:** Due to the initial stage of implementation in all landscapes, it is too early to assess the project impacts on potential environmental risks or the replicability and catalytic roles of the project.

2.16. **Factors affecting performance:**

- ***Project design***

  The project design is unique, and its objectives and outcomes are aligned with existing national policies/programmes/priorities, GEF focal areas and FAO's country programming. The project seeks to address global and national environmental priorities in the conservation landscapes around five carefully selected national parks, and its design is relevant to the context.

The selection of project and priority villages in Mizoram and Odisha is not in consultation with Forest Department/PA management. Some villages in these landscapes are not visited regularly even by forest guards. This has an impact on coverage and implementation of project activities. The selection of villages for the project needs to be reassessed in consultation with the Forest Department/PA management, with the focus being on including those villages which are on the fringes of PAs.

- ***Project execution and management***

  The NPMU, facilitates the planning and implementation of project interventions by offering the required technical support. The ProDoc specifies 13 positions in the NPMU, with 8 technical experts. These technical experts are meant to offer technical support and backstopping to the OPs/SPMUs/GLIUs in the planning and implementation of project activities. However, the lack of planned staff (as sanctioned in the ProDoc) as well as the lack of additional technical experts – like those for decentralized planning, environment and climate change in the NPMU – is resulting in technical support around core areas being managed by staff with limited expertise (including junior staff).

  At the state level, the onset of COVID-19 and resulting lockdowns and travel restrictions delayed project implementation. The absence of the project staff till early 2023 added to the delay and the momentum picked up only after staff placement. The SPMUs and GLIUs also do not have decentralized planning, environment and climate change, and monitoring and evaluation (M&E) experts.

  Project implementation continues to be delayed in Rajasthan, with only a few activities being undertaken by line departments on the basis of their own understanding of the project. Even at the MTR stage, there were no GLIU, VICs and CRPs in place, indicating a risk to project operations and sustainability in the State.

  GLIUs managing landscapes in two jurisdictions/districts (Mizoram and Madhya Pradesh) are facing administrative and operational challenges in coordinating and managing project activities. The situation is further compounded by the lack of capacity and previous experience in managing a complex project like Green-Ag.

- ***Financial management***

  During the initial stages, the administrative complexities in formalizing the funds transfer mechanism delayed the release of funds to the States, and this, in turn, affected their utilization.

  According to the data presented to the MTR team, only about one-fifth of the total GEF project budget has been spent/utilized till December 2023. During discussions with the NPMU, it emerged that there is limited flexibility for making variations in any budget head and some budget line items do not correspond with the operational modalities and this results in non-utilization/underutilization. For example, utilization of funds from the budget heads of salary and consulting fee for emergent needs under another budget head which may require more funds is not allowed. Different approval processes and timelines for the annual financial planning of GLMP and that of the line departments are hindering synergistic co-financing.

- ***Project oversight by FAO***

  The FAO, as a GEF implementing agency, has a supervisory role, which involves providing technical guidance and overseeing project implementation, providing direct support to the five OPs and preparing annual project implementation reports for the GEF Secretariat. The FAO has set up the NPMU to coordinate project execution at the national level, which has significantly increased its responsibilities.

- ***Project partnership and stakeholder engagement***
  The project integrates stakeholders from the national level to village level in project planning and implementation. However, there is need to strengthen the common understanding on project processes, objectives and outcomes among OPs.

- ***Communication, visibility, knowledge management***
  Instances of delayed communication and approvals from the NPMU have led to duplicated/late efforts and affected the implementation of project activities. Some project activities at the landscape level have been covered in local newspapers, and display boards have been installed in project sites.

  However, there is a lack of communication material and knowledge products relating to threats faced by the PAs. This has resulted in varying understanding of the project objectives and outcomes among project staff and government stakeholders, and this has led to the development of non-uniform GLMPs lacking clear articulation of the linkage of the proposed activities with the project's objectives and outcomes and GEF focal area targets.

- ***Monitoring and evaluation***
  The M&E framework has been integrated with the project's Management Information System (MIS). Pages for recording the physical progress in the MIS are currently in the development phase, and pages for recording progress of 57 out of the 73 planned physical activities have already been developed. However, due to the unavailability of M&E experts in the SPMUs and GLIUs, the M&E responsibilities are being managed by the existing staff in these units.

3. Project rating at MTR

3.1. The three major findings emerging from the MTR are:
- The project is still in the early stages of operation.
- There is a strong need for better alignment between GLMPs and the project objectives and outcomes.
- Budget utilization has been low – only about one-fifth of the GEF project funds have been disbursed.

3.2. These findings suggest that the overall project rating at the MTR stage is 'Unsatisfactory (U)'. However, the following considerations need to be borne in mind:
- administrative challenges in establishing funds flow mechanisms (for example, some budget line items do not correspond with operational modalities, resulting in underutilization);
- implementation delays due to the COVID-19 pandemic, which are outside the control of FAO and OPs; and
- the establishment of an institutional structure, from the national level to the village level, as a result of which the project is now well-poised to effectively manage the implementation.

3.3. Given these three considerations, the project has been accorded overall rating of 'Moderately Unsatisfactory (MU)'.

The project rating as per the GEF evaluation criteria rating scheme is presented at Annexure 8. The recommendations emerging from the MTR are presented in Chapter 8.

1. Introduction

The Transforming Indian Agriculture for Global Environmental Benefits and the Conservation of Critical Biodiversity and Forest Landscapes Project (Green-Ag) is funded by the Global Environment Facility (GEF) and implemented by the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO). It is being executed by the Ministry of Agriculture and Farmers' Welfare (MoAF&W) at the national level, the Directorate of Farmers Welfare and Agriculture Development, Government of Madhya Pradesh, the Department of Agriculture (Crop Husbandry), Government of Mizoram, the Institute on Management of Agricultural Extension (IMAGE), Government of Odisha, Department of Agriculture, Government of Rajasthan and the Watershed Management Directorate, Government of Uttarakhand. The project is being implemented in five landscapes in these States: Chambal landscape in Madhya Pradesh, Dampa landscape in Mizoram, Similipal landscape in Odisha, desert landscape in Rajasthan, and Corbett-Rajaji landscape in Uttarakhand.

The harmonized integration of the agriculture and environmental sectors, and the interventions planned accordingly, need to be resilient to climate change.

FAO engaged Insight Development Consulting Group Private Limited (IDCG) to conduct the Mid-Term Review (MTR) of the Green-Ag project, covering all five project landscapes. The MTR field missions took place from the first week of September to the last week of November 2023, and entailed interaction with stakeholders at the national, state and landscape levels. The details of the stakeholders who were met for the MTR are presented in Table 3 in Section 1.4.

1.1 Objective of the Mid-term Review

The overarching objective of the MTR was to review the project execution mid-course and provide inputs and recommendations regarding the relevance, effectiveness, efficiency, sustainability and impact of the planned interventions, including their implementation processes/strategies, and on the intermediate outcomes/outputs achieved. The MTR also aimed to understand why, how and the extent to which the intended results have been achieved and their impact on stakeholders as well as generate insights for recommending course corrections required to achieve the project's envisioned outcomes.

Table 1: MTR objectives

● To assess the progress made towards the achievement of the project's planned results in terms of its relevance, effectiveness and efficiency, sustainability and impact. o What results, intended and unintended, has the project achieved to date? o Is the project on track to achieve its planned results?
● To identify any problems or challenges the project is encountering, understand the causes of any underperformance and leverage project strengths and good practices to overcome them. o Recommendations for/to: – corrective measures, if needed; – overcome challenges as well as to ensure that the expected deliverables and results are achieved by the end of the project; and – improve project delivery and to increase the likelihood of longer-term sustainability of project results.
● To identify/highlight any success stories, key contributions, good practices and areas with the potential for up-scaling and replication.
● To promote knowledge-sharing and learning between FAO and project stakeholders, including the identification of lessons to improve future project formulation and implementation.

Based on the framework of Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development's Development Assistance Committee (OECD-DAC), the MTR team formulated key areas of inquiry to assess the project's relevance, effectiveness, efficiency, likelihood of impact and long-term sustainability. The primary evaluation questions and areas of inquiry are outlined in Table 2.

Table 2: Evaluation questions/ key areas of inquiry

Relevance ● The extent to which the project's objective and outcomes are consistent with national, state and sub-state environmental priorities and policies. ● The extent to which the project's objectives and results outcomes are consistent with national, state and sub-state development priorities and policies (poverty reduction/livelihoods). ● Do the project objectives and outcomes match the country, GEF and FAO priorities? ● Relevance of the project to landscape-level needs. ● Coherence with other existing policies, priorities and similar initiatives. ● Continued relevance and suitability of the project interventions over time.
Effectiveness – progress towards results ● Alignment with best practices. ● Impact on the lives of beneficiaries. ● Complementing natural resource management, climate change, and biodiversity aspects. ● Consultation and capacity building to ensure the delivery of results. ● Policy recommendations or advocacy efforts arising from project implementation. ● Adoption of policies based on insights from project implementation. ● Feedback on the possible extent of achievement of results. ● Impact of COVID-19 on project implementation. ● Attribution of impact in the landscape to project interventions. ● Likelihood of achieving the intended impact. ● Coherence with Theory of Change.
Efficiency ● Project execution on track to achieve its planned results. ● Efficient and cost-effective implementation. ● Effective implementation/instrumentality of Operational Partners Implementation Modality in effective project implementation. ● Institutionalization for effective implementation.
Factors affecting performance ● Efficacious: project implementation approaches and project supervision. ● Effective: planning (project design) and readiness for implementation, financial management, enhanced stakeholder engagement, knowledge management and communications. ● Availability of a grievance redressal mechanism. ● Availability and utilization of a M&E system.
Sustainability of project results ● Possibilities of sustaining project impacts.
Cross-cutting issues – equity issues (e.g. gender, youth, vulnerable groups) and Environmental and Social Safeguards ● Integration of gender equality and social inclusion aspects. ● Integration of the needs of indigenous people and social inclusion aspects in the project. ● Integration of Environmental and Social Safeguards and concerns in the project.

The detailed list of evaluation questions is presented at Annexure 4.

1.2 Role of the MTR

The MTR plays a crucial role in the following:

- **Ensuring accountability** by reviewing the project's progress to ensure that it aligns with its initial goals and objectives.
- **Enhancing the project/programme** by providing insights for various stakeholders, including the FAO GEF Coordination Unit (GEF CU), the lead technical officer (LTO), the funding liaison officer (FLO), the GEF technical officer, the national/lead executing agency, the state implementing partners (who are the OPs), state steering committee (SSC) members, technical support group (TSG) members, GLIUs, GEF-operational focal points, and the Government of India (GoI).
- **Contributing to the knowledge** by offering a deep understanding and contextualization of the project/programme and its practices. This knowledge is particularly valuable to the FAO, GEF CU, FAO staff and future developers and implementers, enabling them to build on and improve upon previous experiences.
- **Identifying and resolving critical issues** by generating strategic and actionable recommendations to enhance project performance and impact, and sustainability of results and highlighting the key factors/issues impacting the performance of the project at both the national and state levels.
- **Generating lessons learned by identifying** good practices and building on the project strengths based on the information and discussion with stakeholders.
- **Providing crucial feedback for adjustments and adaptable management strategies** by assessing the ongoing initiatives within the Green-Ag for the project's planners, managers, and implementers.

1.3 Intended users of MTR outcomes

The MTR findings and outcomes are intended to be used by the stakeholders at the international, national, state and landscape levels (*as listed in Section 1.2 and in the Inception Report*).

1.4 Methodology

Overall methodological approach

The MTR was initiated with preliminary meetings with the FAO team and review of project-related documents and information. Thereafter, an Inception Report was prepared, which was reviewed and approved by FAO.

The MTR entailed collection of data/information from FAO representatives and project stakeholders at different levels, landscape visits and observations, and interactions with community institutions and beneficiaries (Annexure 2 and 3). On the whole, a consultative and participatory, yet independent, approach was adopted, along the lines of appreciative inquiry. The MTR approach aligned with the OECD-DAC framework to assess the relevance, effectiveness and efficiency, sustainability and the impact of the project interventions, and was guided by the following standard principles:

- **Independence:** impartial and independent evaluation (without any influence or bias).
- **Participation:** with participation of all relevant stakeholders (enhancing accountability and ownership).
- **Impartiality:** not being partial or biased towards any gender/beneficiary group/stakeholder or results area (being emphatic but impartial).
- **Credibility:** presenting actual and observable/reported insights and findings (evidence-based reporting).
- **Usefulness:** presenting insights and findings and actionable recommendations (supporting evidence-based decision making).

An MTR matrix was developed, with details of the evaluation questions, their indicators/probes, sources of data, among others. This matrix acted as the base document for developing the data collection instruments. (Annexure 4 of this report and Chapter 4 and Annexure 6 of the Inception Report).

Data collection methods

The MTR has been conducted through a mixed methods approach entailing (a) the collection of both quantitative and qualitative data through an appreciative inquiry approach, (b) review of secondary data and (c) analysis of primary and secondary data to generate insights and draw conclusions. This included:

- collection, review and analysis of available secondary data, literature, information, etc.;
- qualitative key informant interviews (KIIs) and discussions with stakeholders at the national, state, landscape and district levels; and
- qualitative focus group discussions with village-level community institutions and project beneficiaries.

The data collection schedules included KII schedules and discussion guides aligned along the lines of the project's ToC, GEF evaluation criteria and cross-cutting domains, and the MTR matrix. The data collection tools were customized to facilitate smooth interactions at the national, state and district levels. MTR interactions were carried out through group discussions at the national, state and district levels, and through combined discussions with village beneficiaries and VIC members. The discussions were facilitated through the ToC along the lines of the probes to assess the relevance, effectiveness, efficiency, impact and sustainability of the project.

Data sources

The data collection sources were:

- Project documents shared by FAO and the NPMU (presented at Annexure 5)
- Interactions with stakeholders (Table 3) selected as per the priority set out in the terms of reference for the MTR.

Sample and sampling frame

The sample covered for MTR data collection (based on stakeholder analysis[3] and their priority[4] for MTR) is presented in Table 3. All Priority 1 stakeholders have been covered for the MTR.

[3] Stakeholders to be covered and their priority for MTR have been presented in the Inception Report at Chapter 2 and Annexure 4 and 4-A.

[4] Priority ranked from 1 to 3; with '1: essential', '2: desirable'; and '3: if time and resources allow'.

Table 3: Sample covered for MTR

Level	Activity	Target group/respondent	Proposed Sample	Sample Covered
FAO	Key informant interviews	FAO Representative in India/Budget holder	3	1
		Lead technical officer		1
		Alternate lead technical officer		1
		Funding liaison officer/ GEF technical officer		1
National	Discussions (through discussion guides)	Representative of National Project Management Unit	4	1
		Secretary, Department of Agriculture & Farmers Welfare, cum Chairman, National Project Steering Committee		-
		Joint Secretary, Rainfed Farming System Division, Department of Agriculture & Farmers Welfare, cum Chairman, National Project Monitoring Committee		1
		Joint Secretary, Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change cum GEF operational focal point		-
State	Discussions (through discussion guides)	Operational Partners	22	5
		State Project Management Units in each project state		5
		State Steering Committees (each project state)		3
		Additional Chief Secretary (Agriculture), Madhya Pradesh		0
		Additional Chief Secretary (Watershed), Uttarakhand/ Project Director, Uttarakhand		1
		Principal Secretary (Agriculture), Rajasthan		0
		Commissioner and Secretary, Agriculture Department, Mizoram/ Additional Director, Agriculture, Mizoram		1
		Principal Secretary (Agriculture), Odisha		1
		Director, Soil Conservation and Watershed Development, Odisha		1
		Principal Chief Conservator of Forests, Odisha		1
		Deputy Director (Plan), Uttarakhand		1
		Conservator of Forest, Uttarakhand		1
		Joint Director – Agriculture and State Project Coordinator, Mizoram		1
		Joint Director, Agriculture, Rajasthan		1
		Additional Director, Agriculture, Rajasthan		1
		Joint Director, Animal Husbandry Department, Rajasthan		1
District		Chairman, Technical Support Group/ TSG Members	21	4

Level	Activity	Target group/respondent	Proposed Sample	Sample Covered
	Discussions (through discussion guides)	District nodal officers		6
		Representative of the Green Landscape Implementation Unit		5
		District Collectors/Additional Collectors/Chief Development Officers of each project district		6
Landscape/ Project Site	Discussions (through discussion guides)	Green Landscape Implementation Units	5	5
		Assistant Conservator of Forests, Similipal Tiger Reserve, Odisha	-	1
		Assistant Conservator of Forests, Karanjia Forest Division, Odisha	-	1
		District Forest Officer and In-charge National Chambal Sanctuary, Morena, Madhya Pradesh	-	1
		District Forest Officer, Jaisalmer, Rajasthan	-	1
		Field Director, Dampa Tiger Reserve, Mizoram	-	1
	Focus Group Discussions	Community Institution members	10 (two in each landscape)	14
	Focus group discussions	Sarpanch/Village Council President and Panchayat and Village Council members (including women members); farmers (including women); livestock keepers (including women); poultry farmers (including women); women self-help groups	20–30 (four to six focus group discussions in each landscape with the participation of all kinds of beneficiaries)	
Total			**80-90**	**75**

Stakeholder engagement

The MTR team engaged with a diverse range of stakeholders from the national level to the state, landscape and community levels. Based on the stakeholder analysis conducted during the inception phase, the MTR team identified and prioritized key stakeholders for interactions. A list of these stakeholders can be found in Table 3 and at Annexure 3 of this report. All interactions were carried out through participatory discussions along the lines of appreciative inquiry, enabling collection of insights through their active participation. Engaging with this diverse range of stakeholders and community aided in gaining a 360^0 insights and feedback on project implementation till the MTR stage. The interactions with stakeholders were organized as per their convenience and availability, and were conducted using a mix of English and Hindi, as appropriate.

1.5 Limitations of the MTR

During its interactions, the MTR team faced the following challenges:

- Engaging high-level stakeholders proved to be challenging due to their demanding schedules, which made it hard to allocate sufficient time for in-depth discussions. The same challenge was faced by the team when interacting with the Joint Secretary-Agriculture, in the Department of Agriculture and Farmers' Welfare (DoA&FW) in the MoA&FW, resulting in restricted duration and depth of interactions.
- Government officials, particularly at the state level, were involved in various other responsibilities. Even as the MTR data collection was under way, the model code of conduct was enforced in wake of the assembly elections in Madhya Pradesh, Mizoram and Rajasthan. Rains and landslides in Mizoram and Uttarakhand also led to delay and rescheduling of MTR visits.
- In Rajasthan, the District Collector of Jaisalmer did not entertain the MTR team, stating that a review can only be conducted if some progress had been made. District level officials of Barmer in the State were not available for discussions.

All this led to delays in scheduling meetings and slowed down the MTR exercise. MTR mission visits had to be replanned/rescheduled several times as per the convenience and availability of stakeholders at the state and district levels.

2. Project background and context

2.1. Context

The agriculture sector in India has played a pivotal role in ensuring food security and has been a significant contributor to the country's economy, notwithstanding its decreased contribution to gross domestic product (GDP) over time. The sector remains the primary source of livelihood for many households, especially in rural areas. Successive governments have invested substantially in modernizing agricultural practices, leading to increased production and productivity, making India a prominent exporter of agricultural products. However, on-farm agriculture practices heavily rely on chemical-based inputs such as fertilizer, pesticides and insecticides, posing sustainability challenges for the soil as well as groundwater aquifers. The expansion of agricultural areas is exerting pressure on the environment, critical habitats and PAs, impacting biodiversity and natural resources. The GoI is also making substantial investments to reduce the potential risks of environmental degradations and climate change and conserve globally significant areas and species. Unfortunately, however, these efforts often lack alignment of agricultural and environmental interventions, resulting in conflicting actions and economic opportunity losses.

Achieving long-term sustainability in the agriculture sector necessitates a comprehensive integration of environmental considerations into policies and programmes in order to mitigate negative impacts, and to enhance positive contributions, particularly in the face of climate change. However, the integration of the agriculture and environment sectors faces various challenges and barriers. There is a lack of alignment between these two sectors – with the environmental sector primarily focused on conservation while agriculture prioritizes production – leading to resource degradation and increased emissions. This misalignment of objectives hinders the achievement of the GEBs, especially in high conservation areas like PAs, including the five globally significant landscapes where the Green-Ag is operating.

2.2 Project objective

The Green-Ag aims to mainstream biodiversity, climate change and sustainable land management objectives and practices into the Indian agricultural sector. The Project Development Objective (PDO) of Green-Ag is to *"catalyse a transformative change of India's agricultural sector to support achievement of national and global environmental benefits and conservation of critical biodiversity and forest landscapes"*.

The project seeks to harmonize priorities and investments between India's agricultural and environmental sectors so that national and global environmental benefits can be fully realized without compromising India's ability to provide and develop rural livelihoods and meet its food and nutrition security and social, particularly gender, goals. The project supports greater coherence between GoI policies, investments and institutions concerned with conservation and agricultural production at the landscape level, so that they are mutually compatible and, at the same time, resilient to the impacts of climate change.

2.3 Theory of Change

Given this context, the hypothesis for the Green Ag is that the agriculture sector can be reoriented towards more sustainable practices that incorporate environmental priorities. This is particularly aimed at the project target of five landscapes of high ecological value. The strategy involves realigning agricultural policy and investments at the national and state levels, and building capacity at the local level. It also includes developing and facilitating incentives for farming communities to adopt agro-ecological practices, including climate resilient ones. The project's ToC is built around this context. It assumes that the increasing demand for responsibly sourced farm products, combined with improved access to market opportunities and greater awareness of the negative impacts of unsustainable agricultural practices, as well as realigned and

supportive government policies and investments, will stimulate behavioural change at the farm and community levels. This will lead to more sustainable agriculture and land uses in high value conservation landscapes.

Key challenges and principal barriers

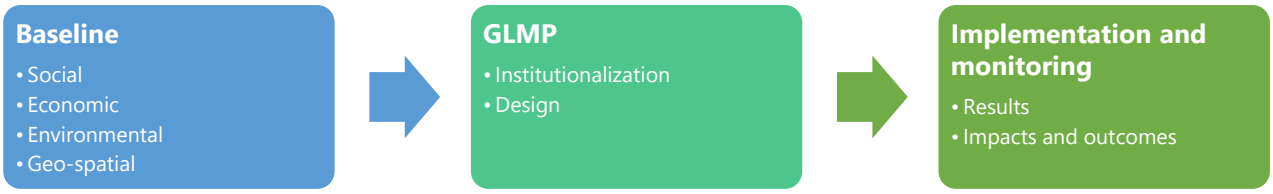
The key challenges and principal barriers enlisted in Green-Ag project's ToC are:

- **Key challenge:** The environmental sector is not aligned with the agriculture sector.
  Principal barrier: The two sectors work at cross purposes, undermining each other's investments.
- **Key challenge:** The environmental sector focuses only on conservation while the agriculture sector focuses on incentivizing production, leading to the degradation of natural resources, undermining rural livelihoods and increasing greenhouse gas emissions.
  Principal barrier: Agriculture and environmental policies, investments and institutions are not sufficiently and strategically aligned to maximize multiple environmental (particularly GEBs) and socio-economic benefits (SEBs).
  Principal barrier: Limited mechanisms, tools, data-sharing systems and 'best practice' models for more informed decision-making.
  Principal barrier: Limited awareness among farmer communities of the value of environment and the opportunities connected with agro-ecological practices, and poor incentives and programmes to encourage and support farmers and local communities to adopt sustainable agriculture practices and integrated natural resources management at scale to ensure multiple benefits.
- **Key challenge:** Incentive-based agriculture practices negatively influence the achievement of GEBs, particularly in high conservation landscapes such as within or near PAs.

Key strategic pillars to overcome challenges

The green landscape planning and management approach is the core strategic pillar of the project and requires deep and continued emphasis. Accordingly, GLMPs, by design, are required to articulate how the proposed landscape-based planning and interventions are linked to GEF focal areas (BD, LD, CCM, SFM) and how the interventions aid in mainstreaming these focal areas.

Figure 1: Broad process of developing the landscape models



The project proposes the following inputs that translate into plans and actions under the core strategic pillar:

- **Coordinated decision-making:** Establishing inter-sectoral coordination mechanisms at the national, state, district and panchayat levels for harmonized landscape conservation and policy integration.
- **Informed decision-making:** Supporting the development of decision support and knowledge management tools and a communication strategy and plan for cross-sectoral partnerships and informed decision-making.
- **Enhanced institutional capacity:** Building capacities of governments at all levels and enhancing capacities of local communities for collective, evidence-based landscape governance for sustainable production and conservation.

- **Farmer capacities enhanced:** Implementing farmer field schools (FFS) to enhance capacities of households and communities to engage in sustainable agriculture and natural resource management for livelihoods resilient to changing conditions.

2.4 Description of the project

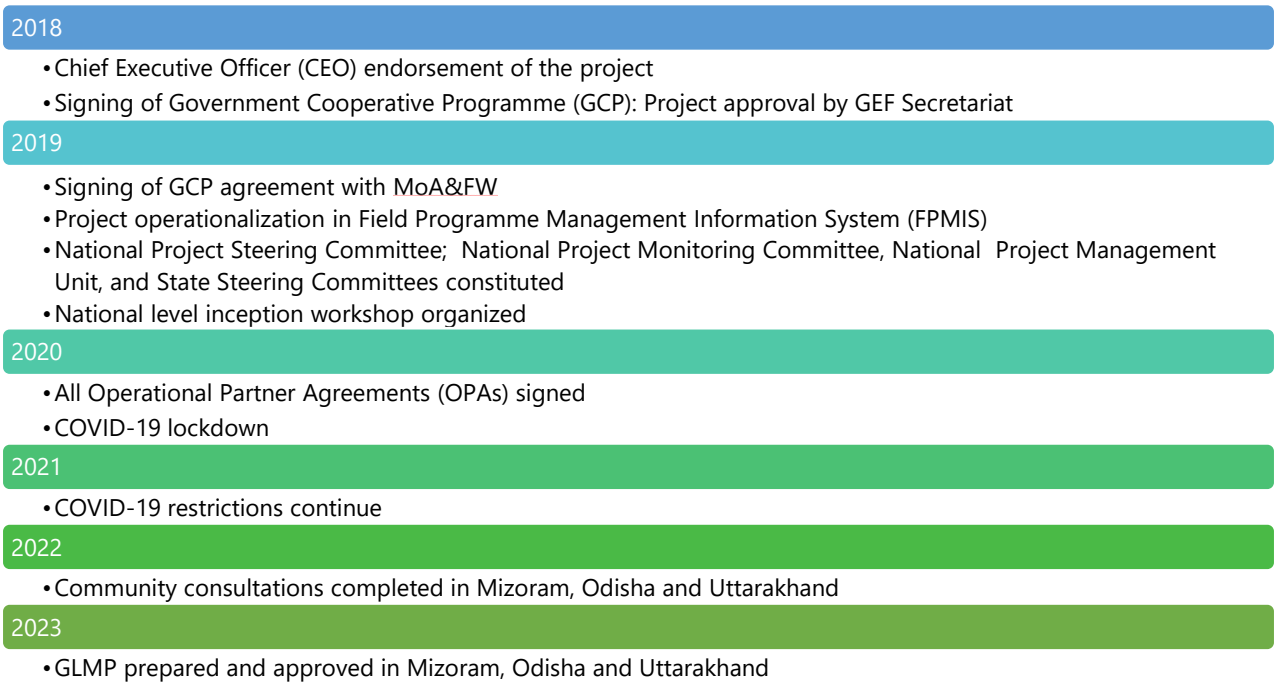
Overview of the project

Planned duration	2019–2026 (seven years)
FAO Project Id	GCP/IND/183/GFF
GEF Project ID	9243
GEF Focal Area(s)	Multi-focal area (biodiversity, land degradation, climate change mitigation and sustainable forest management)
GEF agency	Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO)
Project financing	• GEF grant amount (USD): USD 33 558 716 • Total committed co-financing amount at the approval stage: USD 868.39 million

Key milestones

Some of the key project milestones[5] are presented in Figure 2.

Figure 2: Key project milestones



Project components

The two core components of the project and their key outcomes which, in turn, would contribute to achieving the PDO are:

- **Component 1: Strengthening the enabling framework and institutional structures to mainstream BD, CCM, LD, SFM policies, priorities and practices into India's agricultural sector**
  - **Outcome 1.1:** National and state level institutional, policy and programme frameworks strengthened to integrate environmental priorities and resilience into the agriculture sector to enhance delivery of GEBs across landscapes of highest conservation concern.
  - **Outcome 1.2:** Cross-sectoral knowledge management and decision-making systems at the national and state levels to support the development and implementation of agro-ecological approaches at

[5] The achievement of results at the mid-term stage are presented in Annexure 6.

landscape levels that deliver global environmental benefits as well as socioeconomic benefits enhanced.

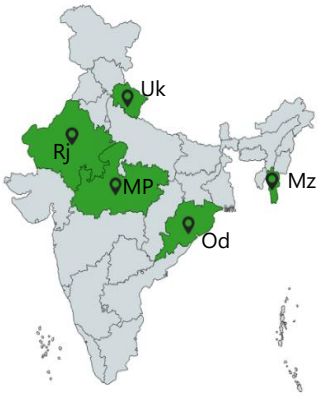
- **Component 2: Empowering and incentivizing households and communities to adopt agro-ecological practices across landscapes.**
  - **Outcome 2.1:** Institutional frameworks, mechanisms and capacities at the district and village levels to support decision-making and stakeholder participation in green landscape planning and management strengthened, with GLMPs developed and under implementation for target landscapes.
  - **Outcome 2.2:** Households and communities able and incentivized to engage in agro-ecological practices that deliver meaningful GEBs at the landscape level in target high conservation priority landscapes.

Project target areas

The project is being implemented in five landscapes covering eight districts in five states, which are representative of different agro-ecological conditions with high conservation values. Each landscape includes a mix of conservation and production areas. They serve as habitats of critical biodiversity, with PAs embedded within their boundaries and productive landscapes within the adjoining areas of these PAs, and are home to more than 30 distinct ethnic groups.

i. Chambal Landscape, Madhya Pradesh (MP) *covering Morena and Sheopur districts*
ii. Dampa -Thorangtlang Landscape, Mizoram (Mz) *covering Mamit and Lunglei districts*
iii. Similipal Landscape, Odisha (Od) *covering Mayurbhanj district*
iv. Desert Landscape, Rajasthan (Rj) *covering Jaisalmer and Barmer districts*
v. Corbett-Rajaji Landscape, Uttarakhand (Uk) *covering Pauri Garhwal district*

Figure 3: Selected landscapes under the project



Figures 4 and 5 provide a snapshot of the MTR team's understanding of the project's planning and implementation process as well as the details of the landscape-wise threats.

Figure 4: MTR team's understanding of the project's planning and implementation process

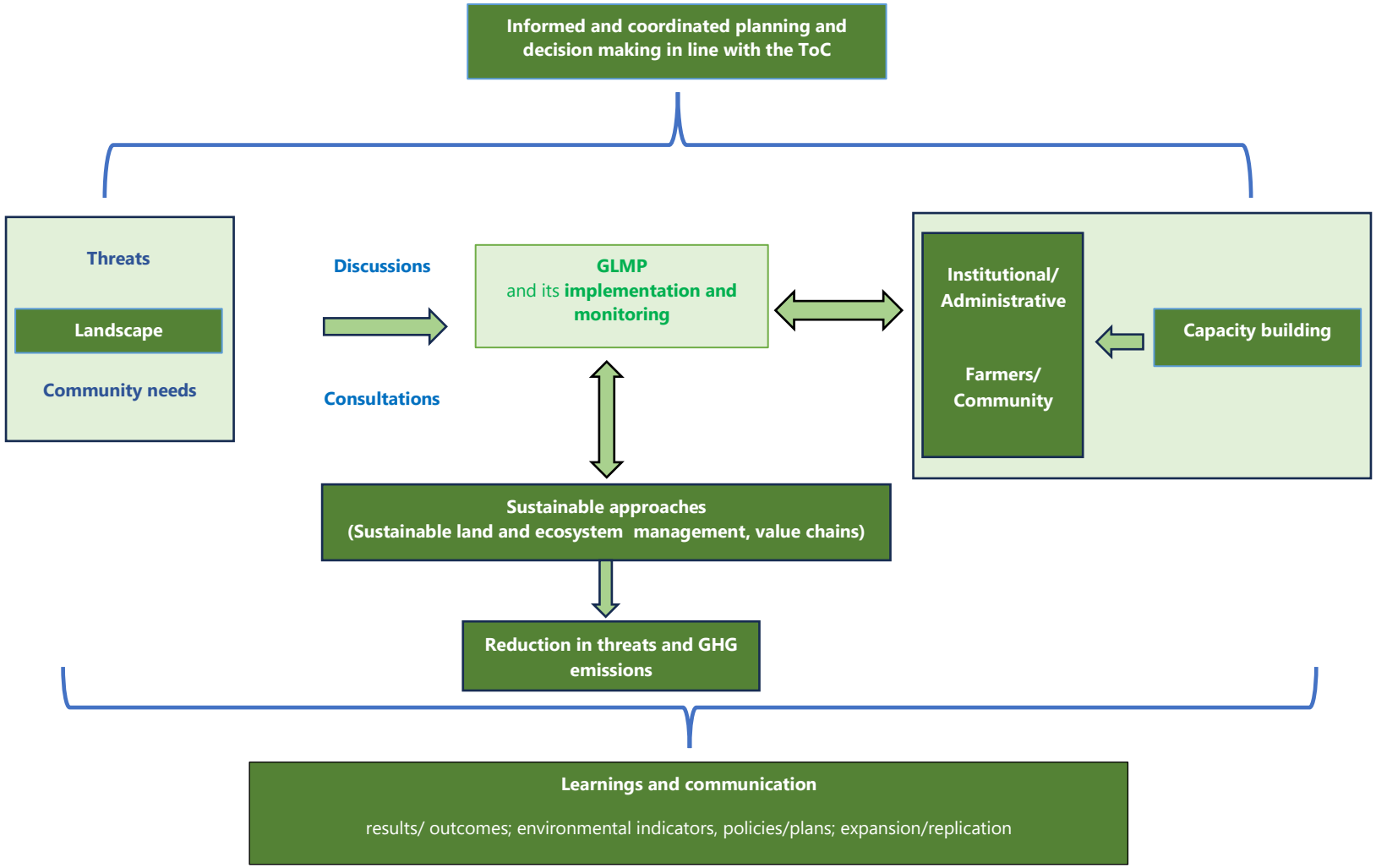
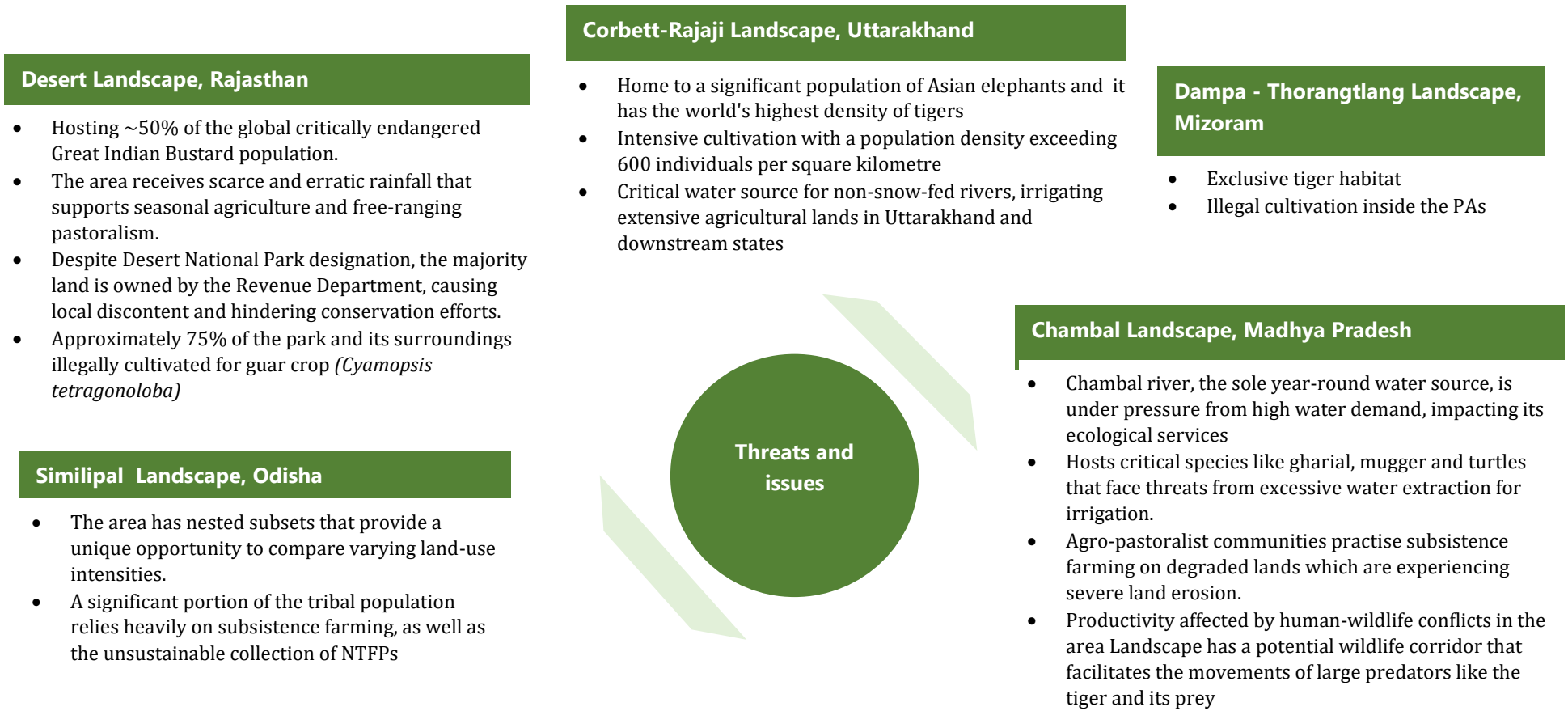


Figure 5: Landscape-wise threats identified during the design stage of the project



Project expectations and key targets

By project closure, it is expected that the following will be achieved:

- The global conservation objectives will be fully mainstreamed within the productive landscape in locations where biodiversity conservation is of highest concern.
- Partnerships between agencies responsible for agricultural production and conservation at both the national and state levels will be much better coordinated to identify, engage and monitor cooperative conservation practices effectively.
- The project will provide an evidential basis for transformational policy change.
- Decision-makers will have the tools required to generate agricultural policies that more fully reflect environmental concerns and innovative practices.
    - This will have a positive effect on the huge annual investment that currently impact millions of hectares of productive lands.
- Priority conservation landscapes across India will benefit from heightened levels of response, intervention and innovative policy support.
- Decision-makers responsible for India's agricultural and environmental sector will have the tools required to activate a new way of doing business.
    - This will result in substantially addressing the sustainability of the agricultural sector and the ecological integrity of India's most important ecosystems.
- The final results will positively impact high conservation value landscapes and be amplified to inform India's broader agricultural policy framework.
    - This will ensure sustainable, transformative change across India's agricultural landscape.

The project is designed to achieve multiple GEBs in at least 1.8 million hectares (ha.) of land across five landscapes with mixed land-use systems, and includes the following key targets[6]:

- Institutionalization of inter-sectoral mechanisms (agricultural and allied sectors, forestry and natural resources management and economic development) at the national level and in the five States to facilitate continued mainstreaming of environmental concerns and priorities related to resilience into the agriculture sector beyond the project's life.
- Inclusion of quantitative indicators in the national/state programmes and schemes to conserve critical biodiversity and forest landscapes.
- Reduction in the threat index from baseline at critical sites of high biodiversity importance.
- Bring at least 104 070 ha. of farms under sustainable land and water management (including organic farming and agrobiodiversity conservation).
- Sequester or reduce 49 million ton CO_2 eq. Greenhouse gas emissions through sustainable land use and agricultural practices and improved agroecosystems management.

Implementation modality

The MoAF&W is the executing entity for the project. As a GEF implementing agency, FAO is providing a supervisory role, which covers fund transfers to the Operational Partners (OPs). Its responsibilities also include developing an implementation framework by signing the OP agreement with partner government entities, providing technical guidance and overseeing project implementation, preparing annual project implementation reports for the GEF Secretariat, coordinating mid-term reviews, and managing project completion and evaluation, among others. Under the project implementation arrangement, FAO is tasked with setting up the NPMU to coordinate project execution at the national level. This has significantly

[6] https://agriculturemizoram.nic.in/pages/Green-Ag.html

increased FAO's responsibilities, and FAO is providing direct support to the five OPs (Table 4) under the guidance of the MoAF&W.

Table 4: Project executing partners/ operational partners

Project executing partners/ operational partners	• Executing partner at national level: MoA&FW • GEF implementing agency: FAO • Operational Partners: – Directorate of Farmers Welfare and Agriculture Development, Government of Madhya Pradesh – Department of Agriculture (Crop Husbandry), Government of Mizoram – Institute on Management of Agricultural Extension (IMAGE), Government of Odisha – Department of Agriculture, Government of Rajasthan – Watershed Management Directorate, Government of Uttarakhand

With planning, coordination, and facilitation support from the Ministry of Environment, Forests and Climate Change (MoEF&CC), FAO and MoA&FW, the project implementation is managed by the NPMU at the national level, SPMUs in the States, TSGs in districts, and GLIUs in the landscapes. For ready reference, details of national and state level staff appointed under the project is presented at Annexure 9.

Project beneficiaries

The project aims to benefit around 265 000 households, encompassing a population of 1.2 million spread across five landscapes. Table 5 presents the project outcome-wise number of beneficiaries/ beneficiary households targeted to be covered.

Table 5: Component outcome-wise total beneficiaries

Component	Target beneficiaries
Outcome 1.1. National and state level institutional, policy and programme frameworks strengthened to integrate environmental priorities and resilience into the agriculture sector to enhance delivery of GEBs across landscapes of highest conservation concern	NA
Outcome 1.2. Cross-sectoral knowledge management and decision-making systems at national and state levels to support development and implementation of agro-ecological approaches at landscape levels that deliver global environmental benefits as well as socioeconomic benefits enhanced	NA
Outcome 2.1. Institutional frameworks, mechanisms and capacities at district and village levels to support decision-making and stakeholder participation in green landscape planning and management strengthened, with GLMPs developed and under implementation for target landscapes	
• *Number of district-level agencies using green landscape plans to realign multi-sectoral investments in project areas*	25 (at least 5 in each landscape)
Outcome 2.2. Households and communities able and incentivized to engage in agro-ecological practices that deliver meaningful GEBs at the landscape level in target high conservation priority landscapes	
• *Number of households that have adopted sustainable agriculture practices on their farms, including agrobiodiversity conservation measures*	MP: 7 500, Mz: 5 490; Od: 37 500; Rj: 3 162; Uk: 14 700; **Total: 68 352 HHs**
• *Number of households involved in the development and implementation of community natural resources management plans in line with overall Green Landscape management objective/s*	**Total: 185 000 HHs**

Component	Target beneficiaries
• *Number of households implementing improved livestock management – including nutrition and fodder management (e.g. community fodder banks) – contributing to the conservation of global environmental values*	MP: 8 000; Od: 22 500; Rj: 6 000; Uk: 10 000; **Total: 46 500 HHs**
• *Number of women participating in and benefitting from female cohort-specific Green-Ag (agro-ecological) FFS*	MP: 4 000; Mz: 2 000; Od: 12 000; Rj: 3 000; Uk: 19 000; **Total: 40 000 women**

Note: MP: Madhya Pradesh; Mz: Mizoram; Od: Odisha; Rj: Rajasthan; Uk: Uttarakhand; HH: households

3. Key achievements

Of the 14 outcome indicators of the project, 2 were not to be assessed at the MTR stage. Among the remaining 12, the mid-term targets for 3 indicators have been achieved and have not been achieved/are lagging in the case of 9. Annexure 6 presents the rating of the 14 outcomes indicators at the mid-term stage, based on the information shared by NPMU/States.

3.1 Institutional structure for the project

The NPMU has been established, as have the SPMU, GLIUs and VICs in all the selected landscapes except Rajasthan. In Rajasthan, government officials have been designated to coordinate the project at the state level and TSGs have been established. These established units were found functional during the MTR. A summary of achievements regarding institutional arrangement is presented below:

- Madhya Pradesh: The landscape is spread across two administrative jurisdictions/districts. All the sanctioned positions are filled at the SPMU and GLIU level (6 in SPMU and 11 in GLIU) and 29 CRPs have been approved for 25 high priority villages (HPVs), and all were found to be placed at the time of the MTR.
- Mizoram : The landscape is spread across two administrative jurisdictions/districts. All the sanctioned positions are filled at SPMU and GLIU level (5 in SPMU and 11 in GLIU). However, only 18 CRPs have been approved for 28 HPVs, though all were found to be placed at the time of the MTR.
- Odisha: Out of the sanctioned 16 positions in the State, 13 positions are currently filled (5 in SPMU and 8 in GLIU). Moreover, for 66 HPVs, only 50 CRPs have been approved, of which 43 were found to be placed at the time of the MTR.
- Rajasthan: Due to administrative issues at the OP level; the SPMU and GLIU are yet not in place, and all positions of CRPs are vacant, despite the project completing three years.
- Uttarakhand: All the sanctioned positions are filled at SPMU and GLIU level (5 in SPMU and 10 in GLIU). However, for 98 HPVs, only 20 CRPs have been approved, of which 15 were found to be placed at the time of the MTR.

3.2 Baseline reports

A socio-economic baseline has been carried out under the project, which also included collecting data regarding changes in land use and land cover. The baseline reports have been finalized for four States, with the exception of Madhya Pradesh, where geospatial analysis is reportedly still underway. Free Prior and Informed Consent (FPIC) processes have been completed in Madhya Pradesh, Mizoram and Odisha, with the corresponding reports in the finalization stage. However, FPIC was only to be undertaken with indigenous communities (that is, tribals/Scheduled Tribes[7]). In Uttarakhand, there are no tribal communities in the project villages, so no FPIC was conducted. As part of the baseline assessment, the NPMU also undertook a geo-spatial assessment in three out of the five landscapes, with the help of an external agency. Nevertheless, despite the focus of the project on environment and climate change, no reference of environmental/ecological baselining came up during the MTR. The baseline benchmarking of environmental/ecological parameters, and their regular tracking, would be a key requirement for the project to showcase (through attribution to its intervention) its impact on GEBs in landscapes.

3.3 Spatial Decision Support System

The Spatial Decision Support System (SDSS) platform has been developed and field-tested for all States. The crop criteria matrix has been developed across the five States. Proposals for two value chains in

[7] Article 366 (25) of the Constitution of India defines Scheduled Tribes as "such tribes or tribal communities or parts of or groups within such tribes or tribal communities as are deemed under Article 342 to be Scheduled Tribes for the purposes of this Constitution"

Mizoram (turmeric and Mizo chilli) and two in Madhya Pradesh (pearl millet and finger millet) have been developed.

3.4 Achievements in cross-cutting issues

The following are the observations of the MTR team on cross-cutting issues related to project implementation, participation of stakeholders, gender and social inclusion:

- The gender balance has been assessed across national, state and village-level institutional structures.
  - The active participation of women and WSHG members in VIC meetings is particularly noteworthy.
  - However, gender balance is absent within the CRP team in Mizoram, where all 18 functioning CRPs are males. In the other States, despite the remote locations of the selected landscapes, there is notable engagement of female CRPs in project activities.
- The project through its Outcome/Component 1 and 2 is contributing directly to human rights-based approaches, including right to food, decent work and accountability to affected populations.
- By incorporating FPIC into the project framework and planning of activities (community consultation and needs assessment), the project team has tried to build trust, foster community ownership and promote environmentally sustainable and socially responsible agricultural practices. This emphasis on FPIC also reflects a strategic approach to building a collaborative and harmonious relationship with local communities.

3.5 Outputs of NPMU

The key outputs of NPMU in project planning and implementation are:

- When COVID-19 struck, FAO, in consultation with the project task force, prepared a contingency plan with state partners. As field activities were not possible, it was decided that the NPMU would interact with and rope in national players for necessary sensitization and dialogue to achieve the overall project objectives of bringing about policy-level changes. This was achieved to a certain extent, as evidenced by the signing of an agreement with the National Tiger Conservation Authority (NTCA) for three States/landscapes and having a letter of commitment from the Chief Wildlife Wardens (CWLWs) in the other two States/landscapes.
- A module was developed for helping the project staff undertake FPIC for obtaining community consent and, thus, enhancing acceptance of the project among tribal communities.
- A module was developed for preparing GLMPs. However, its use was not reported in four of the five landscapes where GLMPs have been prepared.
- Support was provided for the development of GLMPs in Odisha, Mizoram, Uttarakhand and Madhya Pradesh.
- FFS curriculum development workshops were organized for livestock management in all five landscapes.
- The development of the FFS curriculum focused on landscape governance and sustainable agriculture.
- FFS implementation is currently underway in Odisha and Uttarakhand, while it will be done in the next agricultural cycle in Mizoram.
- Master trainers have been trained in all designated landscapes.
- Strategy papers have been developed on various thematic areas such as landscape management, gender mainstreaming, communication and sustainable livestock management. These strategy papers provide, among other things, relevance of the issue for the project, expected outputs, framework and methodology for achieving the project target, budget allocated and the monitoring plan. A standard operating manual for the project's implementation has also been developed. These documents were intended to address issues related to changes in manpower during implementation, allowing any new personnel to start working on the basis of the stage of implementation of that particular issue. However, the use and impact of strategy papers and the standard operating manual could not be observed on the field, and the

stakeholders, especially the ones newly inducted in the project, were found with varying understanding of project objectives and outcomes.

- Officials of the MoA&FW were sensitized about mainstreaming biodiversity in the national schemes related to agriculture.
- In Mizoram, one of the three planned studies has been completed, the report for the second study is under review, and the third study is awaiting finalization by the State team. In Uttarakhand, of the three studies, the report for one is currently being reviewed by the NPMU. However, these aspects were not discussed during the MTR in the other three States.
- A robust online financial accounting system and MIS for the project was developed.

4. Key findings

The MTR team visited all five landscapes and interacted with national, state, district and landscape level stakeholders to understand why, how and to what extent results have been achieved, and their impact on stakeholders. The key findings emerging from the MTR interactions are presented below.

4.1 Green Landscape Management Plan

The practice of the green landscape planning and management approach is the core of the project and needs deep and continued emphasis. The GLMP is the main tool for informed and coordinated decision making and means of decentralized bottom-up planning related to agriculture, environment and climate change. This is to be ensured by developing GLMPs which are comprehensive documents that outline the goals, practices and strategies for planning and implementing interventions for the landscapes to achieve environmental, social, and economic benefits. As per the NPMU, a module on the development of GLMPs is available, and one batch of training on participatory landscape assessment has been organized by NPMU for OPs in each of the five States. As reported by SPMUs, similar trainings have been organized by GLIUs for their CRPs. However, there are no experts with experience of decentralized planning, environment and climate change in the NPMU and GLIUs in order to guide the development of GLMPs.

The MTR team observed the following:

- GLMPs have been prepared and approved in Odisha, Mizoram and Uttarakhand, while they are pending approval in Madhya Pradesh and are yet to be prepared in Rajasthan.
- They have been designed in consultation with the community (needs assessment) and with due consideration to the GEF focal areas (BD, CCM, LD, and SFM). However, proposed interventions in existing GLMPs are focused on entry-point economic activities, and lack clear articulation of how they are synergistic to PA management plans, have linkage with GEBs and SEBs, and contribute to the achievement of targets for BD, CCM, LD, and SFM.
- GLMPs cover activities for a limited period and are not long-term perspective plans with annual sub-plans.
- They have not been uniformly prepared in line with the project objectives and ToC. The GLMPs been prepared landscape-wise in Mizoram and Odisha, and village-wise in Uttarakhand.

4.2 Project partnership and stakeholder engagement

The key driver of the project's achievements and outcomes in each landscape is a common understanding of the project stakeholders and staff on the concepts/ToC, objectives and outcomes of the project. However, the MTR team observed that the project stakeholders/current government officials and project staff have varied, or even lack of, understanding of the project objectives. Thus, the project is being visualized in a different manner in each State, which undermines the project's core focus on conservation and aligning agriculture with the environment sector.

The MTR team observed active engagement of the departments of agriculture and its allied sectors and of the soil and water conservation department. However, the lack of convergent working between the agriculture/allied departments and the forest/environment/climate change departments is affecting informed decision making for improving agricultural biodiversity and reducing pressure on forests and PAs.

At the district level, there was noticeable dissatisfaction with the project's progress and the level of support provided to the project/implementation staff, especially in Rajasthan. The objectives of the MTR mission were not understood by the current district-level officials. In most cases, the meetings began with

the officials directing their ire at the MTR team. Subsequent clarifications had to be made in most districts to ensure productive discussions.

4.3 Convergence with the forest, environment and climate change departments

Being the core partners in all the landscapes, the forest, environment and climate change departments, have a crucial role to play in the achievement of results and outcomes of the project. The FAO has collaboration with NTCA for Mizoram, Odisha and Uttarakhand, and consent of support from the CWLW for Madhya Pradesh and Rajasthan. However, the effect of these partnerships are yet to be seen at the landscape level. A visible lack of convergence with forest departments was observed at the district and landscape levels. Except for some engagement of the forest department in the selection of project villages in Madhya Pradesh, Rajasthan and Uttarakhand and in the distribution of saplings for plantation, celebration of World Environment Day, mobilization of Eco Clubs in schools, trainings on preventing forest fire, and the like, no other specific role of the department was reported. In three landscapes – Mizoram, Madhya Pradesh and Rajasthan – the MTR visits were almost the first formal discussions with the current landscape level forest officials.

The forest department officials are, however, willing to actively engage and support the implementation of the project. These are positive signs indicating that focussed engagement and convergence with the department can be actualized in the near future. The project needs to deepen its efforts to facilitate the interaction between the agriculture and forest departments at the landscape level to aid in streamlined working and implementation of activities, with their technical and financial convergence.

4.4 Financial management

The current budget utilization modalities of the project are not flexible, and some budget line items do not correspond with the operational modalities. For example, it is not permissible to cross-utilize funds under the budget heads of salary and consulting fee for an activity which require more funds as per emerging needs. This results in non-utilization or underutilization of funds.

There is difference in the annual financial planning of GLMP and that of the line departments. The line departments follow the financial year timelines for their planning, while project planning is based on approval of the GLMPs. The planning of line departments is largely governed by their state directorates, and they have very little flexibility at the district level to change any activity/financial outlay. Thus, due to different planning cycles, there is limited financial convergence with the line departments.

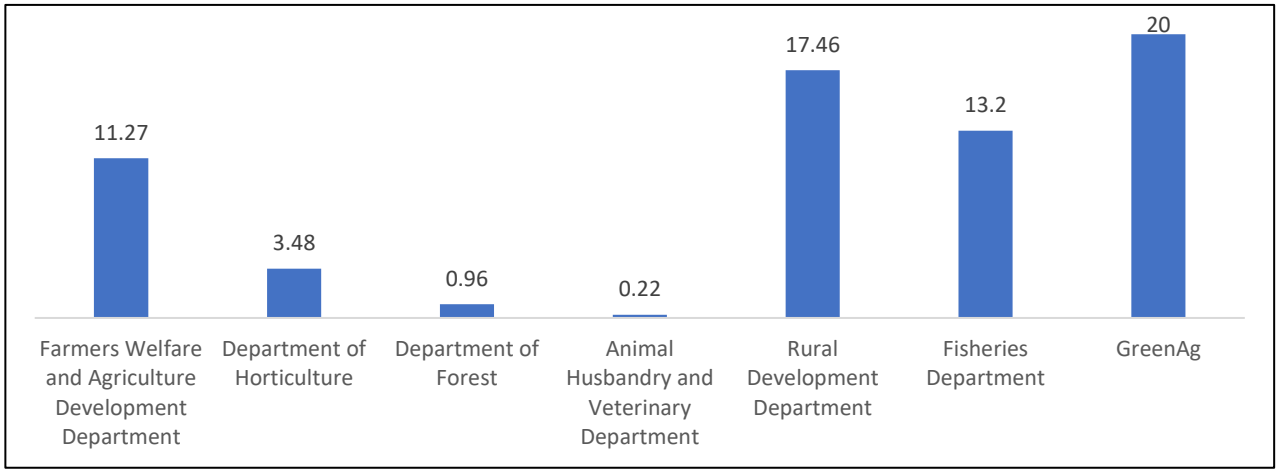
4.5 Co-financing

The project actively and strategically seeks potential collaborations with line departments in the green landscape sector to identify synergies and explore co-financing arrangements. The State-wise key findings of co-financing are presented below:

- **Madhya Pradesh:** The project is working in coordination with the Farmer Welfare and Agriculture Development Department, Horticulture Department, Forest & Environment Department, School Education Department, Animal Husbandry & Veterinary Department, Rural Development Department, Fishery Department, to name a few. The project is also converging with existing national and state level schemes/ programmes, such as the Pradhan Mantri Krishi Sinchai Yojana (per drop more crop), National Mission on Edible Oil, National Food and Nutritional Security Mission (NFSM), Rashtriya Krishi Vikas Yojana, National Millets Mission, Nutri-cereals, Khadi Gram Udhyog, Bamboo Mission, State Rural Livelihood Mission (SRLM), Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme (MGNREGS), Rashtriya Gokul Mission, and vaccination programmes for livestock.

Figure 6 presents , the contribution of different sectors/departments in Green-Ag project activities in Madhya Pradesh, as per information from the SPMU.

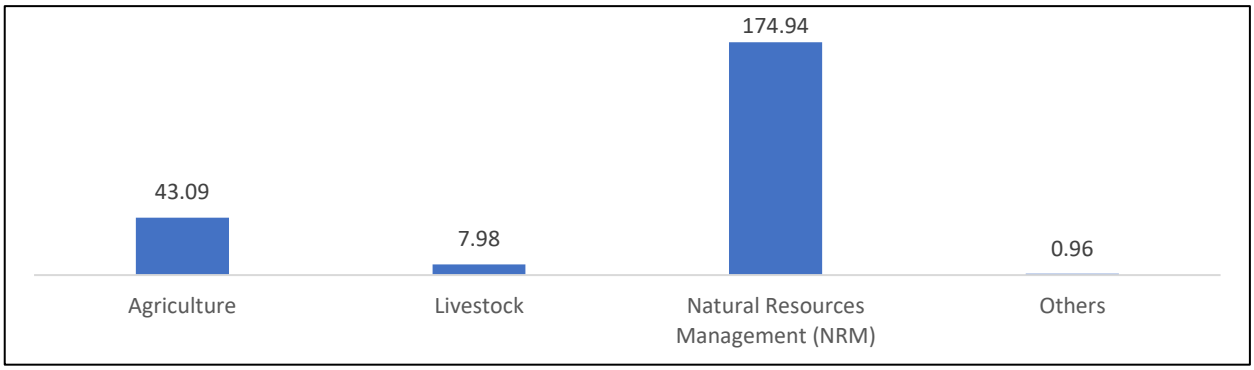
Figure 6: Contribution (co-finance) of different sectors/departments in Madhya Pradesh (in million INR)



- **Mizoram:** The project is working in coordination with the Agriculture Department, Rural Development Department, Horticulture Department, Animal Husbandry and Veterinary Department, Forest & Environment Department, among others, the Samagra Shiksha Abhiyaan (SSA) and Panchayat Raj Institutions (PRIs). The project is also converging with existing schemes/ programmes such as Mizoram SRLM, MGNREGS and the National Livestock Mission. *However, the co-financing contribution cannot be mapped for the State because the SPMU did not report any co-financing data till the time of the MTR, though there is some technical convergence with the line departments. .*

- **Odisha:** The project is working in coordination with the Agriculture & Farmers' Empowerment Department, Fisheries & Animal Resources Development, Forest & Environment Department, Handlooms, Textiles & Handicrafts Department, Mass Education Department, among others, and PRIs. The project is converging with existing schemes/programmes such as the Odisha Millets Mission, NFSM: oilseeds and pulses, National Horticulture Mission (NHM), Mission for Integrated Development of Horticulture (MIDH), MGNREGS, vaccination programmes for livestock, Odisha Forestry Sector Development Project, Craft village programme and SSA. Figure 7 presents the contribution of different sectors/departments in Green-Ag project activities in Odisha as per the information made available to the MTR team by the SPMU.

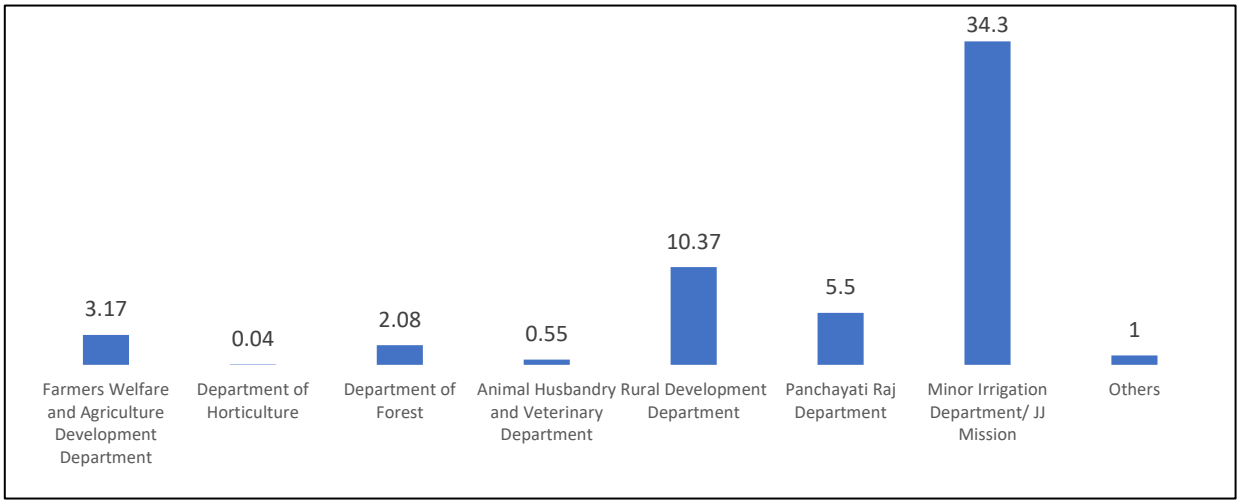
Figure 7: Contribution (co-finance) of different sectors/departments in Odisha (in million INR)



- **Uttarakhand:** The project is working in coordination with the Agriculture Department, Department of Rural Development, Department of Sericulture, Animal Husbandry and Veterinary Department,

Horticulture Department, Forest & Environment Department, PRIs and Hans Foundation, a non-government organization (NGO). The project is converging with existing schemes/programmes such as SRLM, NHM, MGNREGS and vaccination programmes for livestock. Figure 8 presents the contribution of different sectors/departments in Green-Ag project activities in Uttarakhand as per the information made available to the MTR team by the SPMU.

Figure 8: Contribution (co-finance) of different sectors/departments in Uttarakhand (in million INR)



- **Rajasthan:** The recruitment for the experts/personnel for SPMU, GLIU and CRPs has not happened in the State. Despite the absence of a project presence at the state and landscape level, the district-level officials, with their limited understanding of the project, have been trying to carry out the project activities by implementing schemes of line departments in the project villages. However, as there is no GLMP for the State, the co-financing contribution cannot be mapped.

More details of co-financing are presented at Annexure 7. At an aggregate level, the analysis of data indicates that though different line departments have contributed to the co-financing, the share of the forest department is among the lowest.

5. Factors affecting project performance

5.1 COVID-19 pandemic

The disruptions caused by the first and second waves of the COVID-19 pandemic adversely affected the pace of project implementation. The onset of the pandemic and the resulting lockdown and travel restrictions delayed the setting up of SPMUs and GLIUs. With activities largely limited to preparatory work, actual field work was disrupted, including activities like community and personnel engagement. Additionally, there was considerable turnover among the project staff which also affected progress.

5.2 Frequent transfers of key government officials

Frequent transfers of government officials at the national, state and district levels resulted in the lack of sustained institutional memory regarding the project among incumbent officials, many of whom were found to have a different understanding of the project's objectives and outcomes. As a result, the implementation and its methodologies varies from landscape to landscape, affecting the achievement of project objectives and outcomes.

5.3 Challenges in developing OP agreements and fund transfer mechanisms

The project became operational in August 2019, and the National Project Inception Workshop was organized in November 2019. The Operational Partner Agreements (OPAs) could be finalized and signed only by the first quarter of 2020. As per ProDoc and as agreed upon by the GoI, initially the funds were to be transferred to the OPs through the treasury system via the Controller of Aid Accounts and Audit. However, after the approval of the project, the GoI decided that the funds would be transferred directly by the FAO to a project account of the OPs. These administrative issues and delayed finalization of the funds transfer mechanism slowed down the pace of project implementation and release of funds to the States, and, hence, their utilization.

5.4 Project implementation and oversight by FAO

Apart from the constitution of the National Project Steering Committee and National Project Monitoring Committee, the NPMU has been established to provide technical support and oversight to the state-level counterparts in project implementation. However, the functioning of the NPMU is impacted by the lack of technical staff. Additionally, the project has a memorandum of understanding (MoU) with the NTCA to collaborate in three tiger reserve landscapes and has letters of consent from the CWLWs for Madhya Pradesh and Rajasthan. However, the impact of these partnerships are not visible at the landscape level.

Each State has its own administrative and procurement protocols, which are not coherent and streamlined with the project activities. At the district level, there are TSGs, which are constituted under the chairmanship of the District Collector/Commissioner (DC) and include representatives of the district administration and line departments. The line departments have their own administrative and procurement protocols, which are not in harmony with the project activities and planning cycles. Additionally, TSG members lack clear understanding of project. Thus, while there are signs of technical convergence with the line departments, financial convergence with them needs to be strengthened.

While VICs have been established (except in Rajasthan) and CRPs have been deployed to support and facilitate implementation of project activities at the village level, the level of their capacities vary and need further development.

FAO is the GEF implementing agency for Green-Ag and has a supervisory role to play, which includes overseeing project implementation, providing technical guidance and direct support to the five OPs, and preparing annual project implementation reports for the GEF Secretariat. FAO coordinates with national and state level stakeholders for effective project implementation, and supportive supervision, including monitoring and evaluation. As per the project implementation arrangements, FAO was entrusted to set up the NPMU to coordinate project execution at the national level, which has been done. However, managing the NPMU has significantly increased FAO's responsibilities. While FAO has made significant efforts to support the NPMU and project implementation, these are hampered by the turnover of key professional staff in the NPMU. Additionally, frequent transfers of government officials at the state, district and landscape levels have impeded project implementation. This has resulted in FAO having to make additional efforts to orient new officials about the project through the NPMU and SPMUs.

FAO's Country Office in India (FAOIN) played the supervisory role for this project, including that of the budget holder. The lead technical officer, funding liaison officer and FAOIN provide technical guidance to the project as and when necessary. A committee composed of the lead technical officer, funding liaison officer and budget holder, with other relevant FAO officials, called FAO's "Project Task Force", was constituted to support the project. As Green-Ag is being implemented through the Operational Partners Implementation Modality (OPIM), the project task force also includes designated national officers/experts from the GoI. However, during the COVID-19 pandemic, visits by the lead technical officer were not feasible. The lead technical officer mission happened in September 2022 and, in 2023, the lead technical officer support was strengthened by providing timely response time for clearance requests.

The other project task force members, such as GEF Technical Office (GTO), also provided technical insights and support. However, no lead technical officer mission was organized in 2023, and the plans for 2024 are yet to be finalized. The lead technical officers' interventions with the NPMU have remained ad-hoc and the budget holder-lead technical officer exchange took place only twice in 2023. Considering the scope and scale of the Green-Ag project, the engagement needs to be more frequent. The FAOIN, the budget holder/resource manager and FAO GEF CU provided required support and quality assurance checks for the MTR report.

5.5 Project execution and management

Only 30 percent of the senior technical experts recommended by the ProDoc are in position in the NPMU, indicating dependence on junior staff and technical experts/consultants deployed on short-term basis. Given that there is no project staff available in Rajasthan (SPMU/GLIU), the project implementation is yet to begin in the State. In Madhya Pradesh, the project started picking up pace only after the placement of the project staff. The technical/project staff play a key role in the thought leadership, guidance, facilitation and support, liaison and follow up with different stakeholders at the state, district and village level. Their unavailability is a key factor that impacts project performance. Further, the underlying principle of the project is bottom-up and need-based decentralized planning in line with the environment and climate change aspects. However, there are no decentralized planning and environment and climate change experts at the NPMU and GLIU levels.

State-wise issues and challenges:

- In Madhya Pradesh, the project has started picking up pace only after the recent placement of the project staff in the last four to eight months.
- In Mizoram and Madhya Pradesh, the landscape is spread over two administrative jurisdictions (districts), with only one GLIU managing the project activities. Thus, the GLIUs face both administrative

challenges in managing project implementation and operational challenges in covering vast geographies. As the GLIU is based in one district, it is difficult to convene and converge with the TSG of the other district. This makes it difficult for GLIUs to align with line departments and implementation in the two districts. GLIU staff and experts are required to travel to remote locations which have poor road connectivity, as a result of which they spend a significant proportion of their time in travelling, rather than on project activities. As per GLIU staff and as observed during MTR, these problems have increased the workload of the GLIU staff in these two States.

- In Rajasthan, the project failed to make significant progress despite persistent efforts.
  - The OPA for Rajasthan was signed in January 2020. Due to changes in fund transfer modalities and the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic, the recruitment and establishment of the SPMU and GLIU was delayed. The efforts to establish the SPMU and GLIU resumed in December 2020.
  - Even after personnel recruitment strategies shifted to hiring through a human resource agency as per Rajasthan's regulations, the challenges persisted, leading to further delays in project implementation.
  - Throughout 2021 and 2022, the project faced setbacks due to staffing issues and delays in field implementation. A significant number of personnel resigned due to delayed payments, and there were frequent changes in key administrative roles, including that of the State Project Director and district-level officials. High turnover and lack of consistent leadership hindered the establishment of a stable SPMU or GLIU. Till the MTR, no project was staff available in Rajasthan, and the project implementation was yet to start in the State.
  - Despite some progress in agricultural practices aligning with project objectives (in convergence with line departments), the absence of CRPs and the need for FPIC in tribal areas stalled further activities.
  - By 2023, efforts to stabilize the project continued to face challenges due to turnover of administrative personnel and state assembly elections. With the passage of four Commissioners, four Principal Secretaries, and three Chief Secretaries, along with frequent changes among DCs, the project struggled to gain traction.

5.6 Accessibility and vast coverage areas

Two of the five landscapes (Mizoram and Madhya Pradesh) are spread over two districts, with only one GLIU each managing the project activities across the landscape. Offering the required technical/administrative/management coordination support in two vastly-spaced districts has increased the workload of the GLIU staff (something which was observed during the MTR as well). This has made it difficult for GLIUs to align with line departments and manage implementation in the landscape.

5.7 Financial management

During discussions with the NPMU, it emerged that some budget line items do not correspond with operational modalities and are, therefore, resulting in non-utilization/underutilization. The OPAs have limited flexibility (10 percent) for making variations in any budget heading. Any variation above this requires FAO's prior approval and revision to the ProDoc amending the budget. Additionally, as per current guidelines, it is not permissible to cross-utilize funds under the budget heads of salary and consulting fee for emerging needs or activities which require more funds. These issues have impacted the project budget utilization. Till December 2023, only about one-fifth of the total GEF project budget has been utilized.

5.8 Communication, visibility and knowledge management

During the MTR visits to the project States, it was reported that instances of delayed communication and approvals from the NPMU have led to duplicated/late efforts at the level of SPMUs and GLIUs and slowed down the implementation of project activities. For example, household surveys were conducted twice in Uttarakhand due to lack of clear instructions at the outset; the FFS module was received after the cropping season got over in Mizoram and so no FFS session could be organized in the State.

Project activities at the landscape level have received some coverage in local newspapers. Display boards have also been installed in project sites. However, there is a notable lack of communication material and knowledge products relating to threats faced by the PAs with the project staff at the SPU and GLIU levels. This has resulted in varying understanding of the project objectives and outcomes among the project staff and government stakeholders, and hence in the design of GLMPs.

5.9 Monitoring and evaluation

An M&E framework has been developed for the project. The framework is also integrated with the project's MIS. There are 73 planned physical activities of the project, of which pages for recording physical progress of 57 activities have already been developed, and the rest are being developed. The project also has am M&E tracker Excel sheet, which is being used to collect data on project indicators. However, the ProDoc does not recommend deploying an M&E expert at the SPMU and GLIU levels. The M&E responsibilities are being managed by the existing staff in these units. Tracking progress and achievement of PDOs is core to the project. Thus, it is necessary to deploy an M&E expert at the SPMU and GLIU levels to track progress of the project and achievement of PDOs, as well as to provide evidence-based insights to enhance project implementation efficiency.

6. Evaluation of project based on OECD-DAC's criteria

The MTR's evaluation of the project is based on five criteria of OECD-DAC, assesses the relevance, effectiveness, and efficiency of the planned interventions, including their implementation processes and strategies. Additionally, it examines the impacts and sustainability emerging from the implementation of the project.

6.1 Relevance

The project's objectives and outcomes are strongly aligned with its ToC, existing policies, programmes, national priorities, GEF focal areas, operational programme strategy, and FAO's country programming. It is in harmony with national-level policies such as the National Agriculture Policy (NAP) 2000, National Policy for Farmers, 2007, National Mission for Sustainable Agriculture (NMSA) and Sub Mission on Agroforestry, which emphasize conservation and biodiversity. These policies aim to promote sustainable agricultural practices that safeguard the environment and uphold ecosystem services. Additionally, the project demonstrates coherence with existing national and state-level schemes and supports current national priorities such as the National Millets Mission. The project maintains a strong country-driven approach and persists in confronting the identified barriers to change as outlined in the ProDoc. Like guidelines of many national and state programmes and schemes, the project proposes convergence as a key strategy for implementation, and is highly relevant in the national context.

All the five project sites are unique landscapes. There is biotic pressure on each landscape from a variety of stressors – foraging free-range livestock, migration, illegal cultivation, unsustainable harvesting, sand mining, ravine flattening, human-wildlife conflict, poaching, ritual/traditional hunting and illegal timber cutting. Various issues and threats were identified at the project design stage and considered while selecting the landscapes. These included overgrazing by small ruminants, human-wildlife conflict, forest fires causing destruction of forest resources, deforestation due to *jhum* cultivation and other anthropogenic pressures, loss of agrobiodiversity due to monoculture plantations, and traditional hunting and cross border illegal poaching of wildlife/wild plants. It was, however, observed that the interventions/activities in the GLMPs do not clearly articulate how they are aligned to address these issues and reduce threats. Most of project villages are on the fringes of forests, dominated by the marginalized communities (Scheduled Tribes and socio-economically backward communities). The areas deserve the attention of development funding, especially on aspects related to the interplay of agriculture and environment. Hence, the selection of the project areas is relevant.

The MTR did not find any evidence of the project adopting practices that are not in line with or contrary to the customary socio-cultural practices of the local population.

6.2 Effectiveness

The project encountered challenges during its initial roll-out phase, including delays in establishing a mechanism for flow of funds to the States, recruitment difficulties at the level of operational partners, and other issues. Additionally, the COVID-19 pandemic's first and second waves disrupted the pace of project execution and community engagement.

As a result of all these factors, even at the mid-term stage, the project is effectively in its first year of implementation in all the five landscapes. The recruitment of the GLIU level staff and CRPs are still very recent. In fact, some of the project personnel and CRPs have been recruited in the last four to six months. Hence, the effectiveness of results is assessed from this perspective. The MTR found the project to be at different stages of implementation in the five landscapes. Overall, limited FFS sessions and some entry point convergence activities have been implemented on the ground. The more substantial set of activities

are yet to be implemented. As a result, the communities are getting impatient and losing interest in the project. However, the institutional structures from the national level to the landscape and village level have been established. The project is now poised on a platform that can effectively support and coordinate implementation.

State-wise, Mizoram and Odisha have performed comparatively better than the other three States, as they are in more advanced stages of preparation of plans and implementation. Barring in Rajasthan, the project has been successful in placing project staff, setting up the institutional structures and establishing a working relationship with the state and district level officials in all other landscapes. The process of establishing and engaging with community-level institutions is at an advanced stage in Mizoram, Uttarakhand and Odisha, while it is in a nascent stage in Madhya Pradesh.

In each landscape, the project currently engages with a limited number of HPVs and is still experimenting with approaches that can be implemented there. If these are found to yield the desired results, they can later be scaled up and replicated across the landscape.

The key driver of the achievements and outcomes in each landscape is the common understanding of the project stakeholders and staff on the project's concepts, goals and objectives and outcomes. However, the current project stakeholders/current government officials and project staff have varying comprehension of the project objectives. The project is being seen as 'convergence/gap funding project' in Odisha and Madhya Pradesh, 'training and demonstration project' in Rajasthan, 'agriculture project' in Mizoram, and 'project for protection of crops from the wildlife' in Uttarakhand.

6.3 Efficiency

Despite the commencement of project activities in 2019, the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic significantly impeded its progress, particularly in areas such as establishing SPMUs and GLIUs and recruiting personnel for them, and project procurements. As a result, the implementation of the project has experienced delays which has also affected the budget utilization.
The MTR observations on the efficiency of the project execution are as follows:

Human resources: During the MTR team's interactions and review of the available information, the NPMU was seen to have limited technical capacity. This situation underscores a reliance on junior staff members and technical experts being engaged for short-term engagements, thus indicating dependence on individuals in lower-level positions to carry out crucial technical functions within the project framework.

Though the project prioritizes environment and climate change as a focal area, there is currently no designated position for an environment and climate change expert at the NPMU, SPMU and GLIU levels. Though the National Project Director has experience in forestry and climate change, the post has more of an administrative role, than that of a technical expert regularly engaging with SPMUs and GLIUs to integrate environment and climate change activities in landscape level planning and GLMPs. Additionally, though M&E is core to the project, the ProDoc does not designate an M&E expert at the NPMU, SPMU and GLIU levels. In Rajasthan the SPMU and GLIU have not yet been established, and government officials have been designated to coordinate project activities at the state level.

During the visits to the landscapes and interactions at the GLIU level, the following was also observed:

- While the CRPs are able to engage with and mobilize the communities, many of them do not hail from the villages where they are deployed, which limits their operational efficacy.

- No medical insurance/travel insurance is provided to the GLIU staff and the CRPs despite their frequent travels to remote locations with challenging road conditions and transport facilities.
- In two of the five landscapes (Mizoram and Madhya Pradesh), the project area is spread over two districts, with only one GLIU managing the activities. Thus, the GLIUs are facing challenges in managing the project activities across two administrative jurisdictions.

Financial resource: Though the project became operational in August 2019, the agreements with OPs were signed later and were finalized only by the first quarter of 2020, and project inception was initiated in the States between June 2021 and October 2022. However, the COVID-19 pandemic lockdown in 2020 and subsequent restrictions in 2021, delayed the establishment of state and district units, resulting in project delivery and utilization of funds being hampered. Consequently, significant planned activities such as training, vital research studies and the appointment of key consultants – which collectively contribute over 80 percent of the total project cost – could not be achieved within the project timelines. Furthermore, planned studies, another essential component constituting 8.85 percent of the total allocation, could not be initiated. The allocated budget for the period 2019–2026 is USD 33.56 million, of which only USD 2.61 million, or 7.78 percent, has been spent from June 2018 to the present date. Annexure 7A presents an analysis of the utilization of the project budget.

The project budget allocated for the period 2019–2026 amounts to USD 33 558 716. According to the data presented to the MTR team, of the total funds received (USD 6 655 920), 82.04 percent has been utilized as of December 2023. However, this utilization is only about 20 percent of the total Green-Ag project budget. Table 6 gives details of project finance and budget receipt/utilization. Annexure 7A presents an analysis of utilization of the project budget.

Table 6: Status of GEF funds spent till 31 December 2023

Particulars	USD	% to GEF budget	% to funds received/ utilized
Total Green-Ag Project budget (A)	33 558 716		
Funds received by FAO India (B) (as of 31 Dec 2023)	6 655 920	19.83	
Actual expenditure incurred (C)*	5 460 240		82.04
Add: Commitments (D)	1 166 975		17.53
Total delivery (C+D)	**6 627 215**	**19.83**	**99.57**
**Includes disbursement to OPs*			

Audits and spot checks for funds were commissioned in 2022, covering the entire period of the project till then. To date, audit reports of all the States have been finalized up to July 2022, and the spot check report of Uttarakhand has also been finalized.

During the discussions with NPMU and SPMU/GLIU teams, it emerged that some budget line items do not correspond with operational modalities of project execution. Additionally, there is limited flexibility in the OPAs for making variations not exceeding 10 percent on any budget heading. Any variation above this requires FAO's prior approval and revision to the project document amending the budget. This results in non-utilization and underutilization of funds.

6.4 Impact

The MTR found encouraging levels of participation of women and indigenous communities in VICs in the four landscapes, in line with the Gender Equality and Social Inclusion (GESI) policy/guidelines of GEF.

- **Madhya Pradesh:** The communities consider VICs as a planform that will help them address issues that otherwise get overlooked in the regular Gram Sabhas (village assembly of the Gram Panchayat).
- **Mizoram:** The communities reported the VIC to be a better and more effective platform and means of establishing liaison with government departments at the block and district levels and generating resources from them. The VIC members and other community members reported that they would manage the VICs even after the project support ends.
- **Odisha:** The village communities rate the VICs and their participation in the meetings to be more effective than the Palli Sabha. The community is willing to ensure that the VICs keep functioning even after the project period. During community-level discussions, it was reported that while the Palli Sabha was more for selection of beneficiaries for government schemes, the VIC was a platform for people to voice their opinions, discuss village-level problems and take them up with government officials at the block or district level, as required.
- **Uttarakhand:** The communities in Uttarakhand reported the VIC to be a more effective medium to discuss developmental and social problems. In addition, the membership of active and vocal women in the VICs is significant.

Thus, in most landscapes village communities consider discussions in the VIC to be more engaging than in the existing Gram Sabhas. It also emerged from interactions that communities regard the VICs as the means to gain knowledge about various government schemes and programmes, the benefits of which they can then avail.

The TSGs have been established in all the landscapes and meet periodically (less frequently in Rajasthan as compared to other landscapes). The technical convergence and support from line departments is ensured through the TSGs under the oversight of the SSCs (also established in four States).

However, the impact of project activities that are being implemented will take time to fructify. The project will need to work on building the capacities of stakeholders at State, landscape/district and GLIU levels to achieve project outcomes, objectives and goals through informed and coordinated decision-making through aligned GLMPs.

6.5 Sustainability of project results

The implementation of activities on the ground has begun only recently. Thus, it is too early to measure the sustainability of the project results at the MTR stage. Nevertheless, a good indicator of sustainability will be the independent functioning of the institutional structures set up under the project, and activities being undertaken without the facilitation of the project staff. The community ownership of VICs and the organic linkages between the VIC and TSGs/district level officials and the functioning and periodic meetings of the TSGs indicate that the likelihood of the sustainability of project initiatives is high. However, the sustainability of the project in the landscapes, is also dependent on the following aspects:

- ***Strategic phase-out for sustainability:*** The sustainability of the project and its interventions depends on the preparation of the post-project sustainability strategy and its effective rollout in the final year of the project.
- ***Technical and financial convergence for sustainability:*** The project emphasizes convergence in both financial and technical aspects, and intends to serve as a catalyst in implementing schemes across diverse landscapes, targeting households not covered by existing government programmes. Moreover, the project envisions promoting replicable and scalable activities such as greenhouses, homestead plantations, vermicomposting and the development of value chains for identified commodities. All these

activities may vary from one landscape to another, but one common factor among them is that they require effective technical and financial convergence with the concerned line departments. The project endeavours to strategically address the financial risks by aligning project activities with the current national and state-level schemes/programmes. Technical convergence and support from the line departments is available through the functioning and periodic meetings of the TSGs under the oversight of SSCs. However, the project may face financial sustainability risks owing to different financial planning cycles of the line department and that of the GLMPs.

- ***Sustainable land management:*** The project aims to reduce land degradation and the negative impacts of climate change and, hence, lower the environmental risks. The project is designed to advocate sustainable land management practices. Some activities have already been rolled out under the project and could be observed during the MTR missions in the landscapes. These include:
  - Lantana eradication, homestead plantation and napier grass plantation in Uttarakhand.
  - Mizoram Sloping Agricultural Land Technology (MiSALT) demonstration plots in Mizoram.
  - Conservation of 106 varieties of traditional paddy, promotion of Nutri Garden through supply of saplings of drumsticks, papaya, lemon, yam and raw banana, distribution of vegetable mini kits for brinjal, okra, green chilli, bitter gourd, tomato, spinach, and installation of vermicomposting units in Odisha.

  Nevertheless, the sustainability of these interventions is dependent on the active role of the VICs in facilitating these activities through the support of TSG/line departments and ensuring technical and financial convergence from them.
- ***Administrative sustainability:*** Despite conducting FPIC and engaging stakeholders, the project is susceptible to disruptions caused by changes in government, policies and transfers of government officials leading/facilitating project implementation. The turnover in leadership positions, in particular, imperils administrative support and sustainability, organizational continuity and strategic direction, affecting coordinated decision-making processes, which may result in project implementation and progress being adversely affected.
- ***Risk to sustainability:*** This cannot be assessed at the mid-term stage. However, the risks to sustainability can be minimized if the following points are taken into consideration:
  - **Aligning with current national and state-level schemes/programmes:** While the project envisages mitigating the financial risks, the financial planning cycles of the line departments and that of the project are different. Thus, financial convergence and, hence, co-financing, is a challenge faced in all the landscapes, with no concerted measures in place to ensure such convergence.
  - **Socio-political, and institutional and governance risks:** Though FPIC has been conducted and interventions identified through stakeholder consultation (with a view to ensuring social and community acceptance), there could be risks emerging from political and administrative changes, including frequent transfers of officials engaged in project implementation. The turnover in leadership positions, especially, affects continuity.

6.6 Cross-cutting issues

While achieving gender balance among women CRPs remains a challenge, it was observed during MTR interactions that the VICs mostly have 30–40 percent representation of women members, as had been recommended.

- Despite high enthusiasm, there is reportedly limited female participation in FFS because the sessions overlapped with women's household chores.

- The absence of transgender communities in the landscapes is indicative of a cultural context that imposes restrictive gender norms, making it challenging for individuals to openly identify as transgender. Across all States, there appear to be no self-help groups specifically formed for transgender individuals.
- During the MTR visits to project landscapes/villages, it was observed that the project activities have attempted to address some local challenges (like water scarcity, absence of certain fodder species, concerns related to land degradation) through planning the construction of rainwater harvesting structures, introduction of fodder species like Moringa, planting of fruit-bearing species, use of grasses to reduce soil erosion and the like. It was observed that while project functionaries and many villagers are aware of these interventions, there is generally limited awareness and understanding among them about the broader environmental and ecological benefits stemming from these activities under the Green-Ag project.
- During the MTR, it was reported that the strategic approach adopted for the initial phase of the project involved first engaging with the community and focussing on the economic aspects to foster ownership and acceptance of project activities among them. The environmental considerations would be facilitated later in subsequent years through the project's interventions. However, the linkage of the socio-economic benefits with environmental benefits and their alignment with GEF focal area targets needs to be clearly articulated in the GLMPs, and impressed upon in all community/VIC interactions. This will ensure that even at the community/VIC level, there is a clear understanding of what the project intends to achieve.

State-wise, some of the pertinent cross-cutting issues observed during the MTR are:

- ***Madhya Pradesh:*** There is limited participation of women in FFS sessions, and a notable number of villagers, including women, lacked a comprehensive understanding of the VIC and its institutional importance within the project. While the female CRPs in the State are motivated to play their roles, their activities are hindered by mobility constraints – the lack of public transport means that most of them are dependent upon their male family members for visiting the allotted villages for meetings and field activities.
- ***Mizoram:*** Gender balance is absent within the CRP team, with all 18 CRPs working in the State being males.
- ***Odisha:*** Despite high enthusiasm, the participation of women in FFS is limited, because of the timing of FFS sessions overlapping with their household duties.

7. Lessons learned

The key lessons learned from project implementation till the MTR stage are presented below:

Reinforcing the Theory of Change: It is essential to continuously emphasize the project's ToC and its outcomes among all stakeholders, at all levels. Regular consultations and awareness-building activities should be conducted to ensure that everyone understands the project's goals and strategies. This approach helps maintain a clear focus and alignment of efforts across different levels, fostering a cohesive and effective implementation process.

Linking interventions to outcomes: To effectively attribute the changes observed at the end of the project to specific interventions, it is vital that the GLMPs clearly define how these interventions relate to the GEF focal areas and targets. Each activity within the GLMP should have measurable and directly attributable targets, ensuring that the impact of the project can be distinctly identified and assessed.

Regular training for project staff: Organizing regular refresher courses for the project staff is crucial for the successful development of GLMPs. These trainings should focus on updating the team on best practices, emerging challenges and the latest methodologies. This ensures that the staff remains competent, informed and equipped to adapt the GLMPs to evolving project needs and environmental contexts.

Early engagement with government authorities: Engaging with government authorities from the early stages of project planning, implementation and monitoring is crucial for influencing policy effectively. This ensures greater ownership by governments and facilitates easier policy influence. For instance, the NTCA inviting project teams to educate park managers of tiger reserves about landscape assessment and community engagement demonstrates how early involvement can integrate project learnings into national policies, strengthening the project's impact as it progresses.

Multi-stakeholder engagement at the grassroots level: Establishing a multi-stakeholder platform at the grassroots level and focusing discussions on the economic impact of project objectives enhances community ownership. By addressing the tangible economic outcomes of their interventions and activities, rather than abstract project goals, stakeholders feel more connected and motivated to participate actively in the project's success.

Context-specific strategy adoption: While overarching project documents provide general guidelines, it is essential to customize these strategies to fit the specific contexts of different States. This requires close collaboration with local teams to ensure the project's relevance and effectiveness in varying environments.

Informed government officials: Ensuring that government officials involved in the project understand its concepts and expected outputs leads to better ownership and more effective implementation. This informed approach results in outputs of higher quality and smoother project execution.

Role clarity for FAO and NPMU: FAO and NPMU should avoid getting involved in day-to-day implementation issues, which can cause delays. Their focus should be on providing technical guidance to ensure that the project's strategic direction remains clear and unimpeded.

Capacity building for the GLIU team: The capacity of the GLIU team is limited. While it is effective in field activities, its ability to integrate these into broader project objectives is weak. The project should leverage the GLIU teams' strengths in implementation rather than expecting them to undertake higher-level strategic thinking.

Rigid FAO processes: The inflexibility and rigidity of the FAO's processes often lead to delays, as seen in the lengthy time taken to sign agreements or change personnel details. Streamlining these processes could enhance project efficiency.

Challenges with FPIC process: The FPIC process is time consuming and may not be directly related to project outputs. The lack of separate budgetary allocations for the FPIC further complicates the usage of project funds in the designated areas, posing significant implementation hurdles.

Frequent changes in senior officials: Frequent changes of senior government officials at both national and state levels results in the NPMU and FAO spending significant time in orienting new officials. This constant need for sensitization affects the momentum and effectiveness of the project.

Pre-assessment of Operating Partners: Assessing the human resource rules of OPs/state-level partners and their practical application, along with their other strengths and weaknesses, is essential before project initiation to ensure smooth collaboration and implementation.

Village versus cluster level institutions: VICs have proven more effective in delivering project objectives compared to cluster-level institutions. This localized approach enhances direct engagement and results.

Identification and showcasing of torch bearers: Identifying individuals who exemplify the project's four pillars and documenting their success stories can inspire others and promote best practices. This approach has been effective in areas like the Similipal landscape for conserving agricultural biodiversity.

Necessity for one GLIU per district: To ensure proper project implementation, it is essential to have one GLIU per district. This structure supports focused and coordinated efforts across different project activities.

Documenting success in Mizoram: The convergence success in Mizoram's Bunghmun area in the Lunglei district serves as a case study worth documenting and sharing. This example highlights effective collaboration and outcomes that can guide future projects.

Alignment of the Annual Work Plan and Budget with the financial year: The alignment of the Annual Work Plan and Budget with the financial year followed by state governments and synchronizing it with district plan preparation/planning ensures effective financial convergence and smoother project execution.

Regular capacity building: Continuous capacity building for the SPMU, GLIU, and sensitization of district-level officials are necessary to maintain the momentum of the project and ensure all stakeholders are informed and engaged in the project's progress.

8. Recommendations of MTR

The MTR provides several key recommendations to enhance the effectiveness, efficiency and sustainability of the project. The MTR recommends a no-cost extension of the project. However, the project structure, including the project goal, targets, components and activities should remain unchanged, and no restructuring of the project is required. The following recommendations are vital for steering the project toward achieving its intended outcomes and ensuring that the ToC is adhered to across all levels of implementation. By focusing on strategic relevance, effectiveness and efficiency, the project will optimize its impact on environmental and economic development goals.

Extension of the project: The effectiveness of the project has been affected by initial delays and a lack of convergence among key departments. The MTR recommends extending the project timeline by 24 months and restructuring its design for better alignment with partner state governments and departmental activities. This adjustment is expected to compensate for the initial rollout delays and enhance the project's overall effectiveness by ensuring continuous government engagement and technical and financial convergence in activities.

Budget revision: To optimize the impact and sustainability of the project, it is crucial to revise the budget with a focus on strategic allocation and management. This involves revisiting current spending patterns to ensure that funds are directed towards high-priority areas that drive the most significant outcomes, such as enhancing community engagement, strengthening local capacity building and ensuring the successful implementation of GLMPs at the community level. A flexible, yet accountable, budgeting approach should be adopted, allowing for adaptive responses on the part of OPs to emerging challenges and opportunities while maintaining rigorous oversight to prevent inefficiencies. This strategic financial revision will support the project's long-term objectives and foster a robust framework for achieving its goals.

Close communications with the state, district and ground level staff members: It is crucial to establish closer communication with state governments, OPs and staff members at the GLIU about the project, its approach and implementation issues. Strengthening these communication channels will ensure that all stakeholders are consistently informed and actively engaged in the project's progress and challenges. This approach will facilitate the rapid resolution of issues, alignment of goals and synchronization of efforts across different levels of implementation. Regular, structured dialogues and updates, along with the use of collaborative tools and platforms, should be implemented to maintain transparency, foster mutual understanding and build a cohesive team focused on achieving the project's objectives. This proactive communication strategy is essential for navigating complexities, enhancing coordination and ultimately driving the project towards its intended outcomes.

Capacity building of OP and GLIU staff members: To strengthen the project's effectiveness and ensure alignment with the ToC, it is essential to focus on the capacity building of OPs and GLIU members. By integrating the ToC into all capacity-building initiatives, team members will gain a comprehensive understanding of how their roles and activities contribute to the broader project objectives. Training sessions, workshops, and continuous learning opportunities should be designed to enhance the skills and knowledge of OPs and GLIU members in key areas such as project management, environmental sustainability and community engagement as well as the development and implementation of GLMPs. This targeted approach will empower them to effectively implement strategies, troubleshoot challenges, and drive the project towards its intended outcomes while maintaining fidelity to the ToC principles.

Hence the NPMU needs to develop a holistic capacity-building strategy that is crucial for fostering a skilled and responsive team and make them adapt to and thrive in the dynamic landscape of the project.

Implementation of GLMPs by developing community-based GLMP investment plans: In order to enhance the delivery and effective implementation of GLMPs, it is essential to restructure the approach to their implementation by developing community-based GLMP investment plans. This approach involves engaging local communities in the planning and decision-making processes, and ensuring that their needs and insights are central to the development of these plans. It is recommended to work with farmer producer organizations (FPOs) to start with, and expand the coverage of communities. By involving FPOs and community members, the GLMPs can be tailored to address specific local challenges and opportunities, fostering a sense of ownership and commitment to the project's goals. Additionally, integrating community feedback and priorities into the GLMPs will help create more sustainable and impactful outcomes, aligning with both environmental and socio-economic objectives, and ensuring a holistic approach to landscape management.

Restructuring of the implementation modality of Rajasthan: Given the ongoing challenges in Rajasthan, including frequent administrative turnover and difficulties in establishing a stable SPMU and GLIU, a hybrid execution model is recommended. Under this approach, the Government of Rajasthan will maintain a supervisory role, while FAO will engage third-party entities such as government institutions or NGOs to execute project activities. This strategy aims to circumvent the persistent issues of staffing and bureaucratic delays by leveraging the expertise and stability of external organizations, ensuring more consistent and effective implementation of project objectives on the ground.

Restructuring Green-Ag's FFS strategy and implementation: So far, the project has used the FFS as the entry point to engage with the community. However, the implementation of GLMPs has not yet begun, and the integration of FFS into the GLMPs has not been observed. As demonstrated in other countries, FFS is a powerful platform for effecting behavioural changes among participants. The FFS should be integrated with the community-based investment plans, ensuring that these plans are recognized as a fundamental component of the GLMPs. This integration will enable a more holistic approach to landscape management, promoting sustainable agricultural practices and empowering local communities. By aligning FFS with broader landscape objectives, the project can foster more meaningful and impactful engagement with community members, ultimately enhancing the sustainability and resilience of the agricultural ecosystem.

Immediate actions to refill vacant posts: The review addresses the efficiency of project implementation, which has been affected by administrative delays and the COVID-19 pandemic. To address these issues, the MTR suggests filling vacant positions, deploying experts in decentralized planning and environment, and M&E; and ensuring adequate staffing in areas with multiple administrative jurisdictions. This approach aims to bolster the project's capacity to function as an agent of change and to improve budget utilization and operational modalities.

These recommendations form the cornerstone of the next phase of project implementation, focusing on strategic adjustments and enhanced engagement across all levels to ensure the project's long-term success and sustainability. Table 7 presents the details of further recommendations according to the OECD-DAC's framework.

Table 7: MTR recommendations

Sl. No.	Rationale for recommendation	Recommendations that project may consider	Responsibility	Timing/ date for action
A. STRATEGIC RELEVANCE (refer to section 6.1)				
A1. Overall strategic relevance	1. The project builds upon convergence as a strategy for implementation. However, there is a lack of, and varied, understanding on project concepts/design/threats and envisioned outcomes/results among the project staff and government officials and stakeholders. The SPMU and GLIU staff also have varied understanding regarding the development of GLMPs.	1.1. Reinforcement and continuous clear articulation of threats and project design elements among all stakeholders through communication and outreach activities like orientation/refresher courses/capacity building. These activities should be supported/complemented by regular communication and needs assessment meetings with the project stakeholders, all SPMUs and GLIUs at least on a monthly basis, to enable sustained common understanding of the project's objectives, ToC and outcomes for successful implementation and for the development of five unique but replicable models. 1.2. Develop clear, simple and templatized guidelines for preparing GLMPs having clear linkages to GEF focal area targets, and orienting SPMU and GLIU staff on the same.	NPMU and SPMU	Within three months of acceptance of the MTR report
B. EFFECTIVENESS (refer to section 6.3)				
B1. Overall assessment of project results	2. In terms of effectiveness (progress towards results), the project has encountered challenges in its initial roll-out phase, including delays in establishing a mechanism for funds flow to the States, recruitment difficulties at the level of OPs, COVID-19 pandemic, etc. Project implementation is impacted by lack of ProDoc recommended technical experts and additional experts (on subjects like climate	2.1. An extension of 24 months for the project beyond its stipulated implementation period to compensate for the delayed roll out of the project. 2.2. Review project staffing and immediately fill vacant positions of technical experts in NPMU; deploy additional experts like climate change and environment expert, decentralized planning expert, M&E expert. 2.3. Reassess the selection of project and priority villages in consultation with the Forest Department/PA	GEF/FAO	Within three months of acceptance of MTR report

Sl. No.	Rationale for recommendation	Recommendations that project may consider	Responsibility	Timing/ date for action
	change and environment, decentralized planning) in the NPMU as recommended by the ProDoc. These experts and M&E experts are not available at the SPMU and GLIU levels as well. The selection of project and priority villages in Mizoram and Odisha is not in consultation with Forest Department/PA management. Frequent transfers of government officials deployed on the project impacts implementation and sustained institutional memory. There is a visible lack of convergence between the agriculture and allied departments and the forest, environment and climate change departments.	management, with a focus on including those villages which are on the fringes of PAs in the project. 2.4. Advocating with the OPs for longer term engagement of government officials deployed on the project, for sustained institutional memory and understanding of the project. 2.5. Hold frequent one-on-one discussions with the forest, environment and climate change departments, individually in all project states, landscapes and districts and ensure their active participation and technical and financial convergence in GLMP activities.		
	3. The approved GLMPs do not emphatically articulate environmental challenges of the selected villages using the landscape approach, and they also lack clear indication of how the proposed interventions will address the barriers/challenges identified in the project's ToC and how will they lead to mainstreaming and meeting the targets of GEF focal areas. Community engagement under the project is primarily through entry point activities in the high priority villages. The community at large is	3.1. As recommended in 1.1 and 1.2 above 3.2. Conduct a series of awareness generation activities with communities on the importance of aligning interventions/priority actions in GLMPs with GEF focal areas. 3.3. Restructure the approach to GLMP implementation, by developing community-based GLMP investment plans through engagement of communities in the planning and decision-making processes. It is recommended to initially work with FPOs and expand the coverage of communities, to address specific local challenges and	NPMU, SPMU	Within three months of acceptance of MTR report

Sl. No.	Rationale for recommendation	Recommendations that project may consider	Responsibility	Timing/ date for action
	not aware about the environmental objectives and outcomes of the project and their linkage with GLMP activities. Even the FFS has been used as the entry point activity to engage with the community. Additionally, implementation of GLMPs is yet to happen, and the FFSs are still to be integrated into the GLMPs.	opportunities, fostering a sense of ownership and commitment to the project's goals. 3.4. Integrate and align FFS in GLMP with broader landscape objectives and GEF focal area targets, in order to foster more impactful engagement with communities and enhance the sustainability and resilience of the agricultural ecosystem synergistic to PA management plans.		
C. EFFICIENCY (refer to section 6.2)				
C1. Efficiency	4. The implementation efficiency of the project activities has been impeded by administrative delays and the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic, especially in establishing the SPMUs and GLIUs and recruiting personnel for them, project procurements, etc. In Rajasthan, the SPMU and GLIU are not yet established, and government officials have been designated to coordinate the project at the state level. There is lack of technical human resource at the NPMU level, and there is reliance on junior staff and technical experts engaged for short-term. There is no decentralized planning expert, environment and climate change expert, M&E expert at the NPMU, SPMU and GLIU levels. GLIU personnel also have varied understanding about the project's objectives and outcomes, and developing GLMP aligned with GEF focal targets.	4.1. Recommendations 1.1, 1.2, 2.1 and 2.2 above. 4.2. Augment the staff in GLIUs managing project activities spread over two administrative jurisdictions (districts). 4.3. Adopt a hybrid execution model in order to circumvent the persistent issues of staffing and bureaucratic delays in Rajasthan, with the Government of Rajasthan maintaining a supervisory role, while FAO engages third-party entities such as government institutions or NGOs to man and execute project activities. 4.4. Extensive handholding of GLIUs and CRPs for templatized development of GLMPs aligned with linkage to GEF focal area targets. 4.5. Ensure the availability of at least one CRP per priority project village, especially a person from the village/area. This will aid higher acceptance of the person in the community and make for effective local planning and implementation of activities for the village. 4.6. Advocate with OPs to offer performance-based incentive for CRPs, and facilities like group medical insurance, life insurance, etc.	NPMU/FAO	Within three months of acceptance of MTR report

Sl. No.	Rationale for recommendation	Recommendations that project may consider	Responsibility	Timing/ date for action
	CRPs have to cover multiple villages in most of the Gram Panchayats where they work. Some CRPs have quit and those in position do not have any performance-based incentives. In two of the five landscapes (Mizoram and Madhya Pradesh), the project area is spread over two districts, and the respective GLIUs face challenges in managing the project across two administrative jurisdictions.	4.7. Deploy local active and vocal women/women self-help group members as CRPs in ensuing project duration, as required.		
	5. Utilization of the project funds is low. Some budget line items do not correspond with the operational modalities of project execution, and this has resulted in non-utilization/ underutilization of funds (e.g. limited availability for funds like meetings, no flexibility to cross utilize funds under budget heads of salary and consulting). There is limited flexibility in the OP agreements for making variations not exceeding 10 percent on any budget heading. Any variation above this requires FAO's prior approval and revision to the project document amending the budget. The difference in the approval processes and timelines for the annual financial planning of GLMP and that of the line departments requires more attention, including the limited flexibility at the district level to change any	5.1. Under the oversight of the NPMU, offer more budgetary flexibility to OPs, while remaining under the overall limit as per the OPA, and augment the budget for certain activities, such as GLMP preparation, state dialogues, studies, etc. 5.2. Realign/reappropriate/merge certain budget heads to provide the requisite purse for fund-intensive activities; cross-utilization of funds under different heads (e.g. reappropriating funds for budget heads for state/ national level meetings, merging the budget heads of salary and consulting fee, etc.) to enable adequate allocations for emerging/changing project needs. 5.3. Review the project budget annually to realign with emerging requirements and for efficient utilization of funds. 5.4. Align with the planning cycles of line departments. 5.5. Augment the budget for certain activities, such as GLMP preparation, state dialogues, studies, etc.	GEF/ FAO/ NPMU	Within three months of acceptance of MTR report

Sl. No.	Rationale for recommendation	Recommendations that project may consider	Responsibility	Timing/ date for action
	activity/financial outlay, which has resulted in the limited financial convergence.			
D. SUSTAINABILITY OF PROJECT OUTCOMES (refer section 6.5)				
Sustainability	6. It is too early to measure the sustainability of project initiatives/interventions. Limited participation of women in FFS sessions. TSG meetings are being organized but are anchored largely by GLIU staff.	6.1. Incorporate sustainability and replicability aspects in GLMPs and Annual Work Plans and Budget. 6.2. Operationally realign the FFS session timings for increasing the participation of women, and for their continued engagement in the project. 6.3. Structured organization of TSG meetings, and capacity building of the TSG and GLU members for the same, in order to ensure that by the end of the project, the meetings between the host OP department and the other line departments, are being organized on the agreed frequency without the project facilitation support.	NPMU and SPMU	Within three months of acceptance of MTR report
E. Cross-cutting Issues - Monitoring and Evaluation (refer section 5.9)				
Monitoring & Evaluation	7. The project has a M&E framework integrated into its MIS. Besides, there is a M&E tracker Excel sheet, that is being used to collect data on project indicators However, there is no dedicated &E expert at the NPMU, SPMU, GLIU levels, and the M&E responsibilities are being managed by the existing staff in these units.	7.1. Deploying an M&E expert NPMU, SPMU and GLIU levels 7.2. Monthly review of the M&E tracker sheet, coordinated by the M&E expert(s) and tracking progress on PDO indicators 7.3. Mid-course corrections based on M&E reviews	NPMU	Within three months of acceptance of MTR report
The state-wise key MTR observations and recommendations are presented at Annexure-10				

9. Conclusions

Project rating

At an aggregate at the mid-term, the Green Ag has been accorded a rating of Moderately Unsatisfactory (MU).

There are three major findings of the MTR:

- The project, in effect, is in the first year of its operations.
- The thought leadership that needed to be articulated in GLMPs, the most critical tool for achieving the project objectives and outcomes, is lacking.
- Only about one-fifth of the GEF project fund has been utilized.

These three findings would suggest that the overall project rating should be 'Unsatisfactory (U)'. However, due to the administrative challenges in establishing mechanisms for funds flow and the restrictions and delays caused by the COVID-19 pandemic, which are outside the control of FAO and OPs, the project has been accorded overall rating of 'Moderately Unsatisfactory (MU)'. More details of the 'GEF evaluation criteria rating as per the MTR' are presented at Annexure-8.

Rating justifications

The project endeavours to facilitate a transformative shift in current practices and future planning by advocating for sustainable practices and addressing the underlying causes of environmental decline. Through the adoption of a holistic approach, as elucidated in the ToC, the project strives to generate a lasting positive influence, aligning agricultural progress with environmental safeguarding and bolstering India's endeavours to realize both domestic and global environmental advantages. However, the MTR's observations indicate that despite efforts made by the project, there is still lack of coordinated and informed decision-making processes at the state and village level aligned to the project's ToC.

Common project understanding: The project's strategy is centred around comprehending and surmounting the numerous challenges and obstacles affecting India's agricultural sector and environmental preservation. Though the proposed inputs to overcome the identified barriers outlined in the ToC are sufficient and suitable to attain the anticipated results and impacts, there is lack of a common understanding about this among the current project stakeholders at the state and landscape levels. This adversely affects the planning of interventions to address the challenges/barriers/threats with linkage to GEF focal area targets.

Focus of GLMPs: The entry point activities of the three approved GLMPs focus on activities to engage the communities. They do not clearly articulate how the activities will address the landscape level threats, and how are they aligned to achieve GEF focal area targets. Additionally, the GLMPs also do not specify how the proposed activities will address the four core barriers identified at the project design stage. This results in lack of effective incentives and programmes to promote the widespread adoption of sustainable agriculture and integrated natural resources management, ensuring multiple benefits at scale.

Evolving implementation: As mentioned earlier, the project implementation was impacted due to the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic, including delays in establishing and staffing the project structures at the state and landscape levels. Project implementation evolved by adjusting to the delayed implementation. Though there has been an intent to align with the project priorities (as per the initial design), it has not been actualized on the ground.

Progress towards achievement of project's development objectives

- The project builds upon convergence as a strategy for implementation. However, there is lack of, and varied, understanding on project concepts/design/threats and envisioned outcomes/results among the project staff and current government officials and stakeholders at the state, district and landscape level.
- For Component 1 of the project, 'Strengthening the enabling framework and institutional structures to mainstream BD, SLM, CCM and SFM policies, priorities and practices into India's agricultural sector', the institutional structure has been established from the national to the village level.
- For Component 2 of the project, 'Improved agricultural and conservation practices demonstrating sustainable production, livelihood advancements, habitat improvements and delivery of tangible BD, LD, CCM, and SFM benefits', though the set of activities in the existing GLMPs have interventions for sustainable production and livelihood advancements, they do not have a linkage with how they would lead to tangible BD, LD, CCM, and SFM benefits.

Progress on achievement of outcome indicators

Out of the 14 outcome indicators of the project, 12 were to be rated at the MTR stage, and 2 did not have mid-term targets. Of the 12, mid-term targets have been achieved for only 3 indicators and achievement is lagging in the case of 9 indicators.

Effectiveness challenges

The project encountered challenges in its initial roll-out phase, including delays in establishing a mechanism for funds flow to the states, recruitment difficulties at the level of OPs, among others. Additionally, the COVID-19 pandemic also impacted the pace of project execution and community engagement. Owing to these impediments, though the project is at its mid-term stage, it is, in effect, still in its first year of implementation. However, with the institutional structures established, the project is now poised on a platform that can effectively support and coordinate implementation.

Further, despite the signing of MoU with NTCA to collaborate in Mizoram, Odisha and Uttarakhand and having letters of consent from the CWLWs for Madhya Pradesh and Rajasthan, the impact of these partnerships is not visible at the landscape level. There is a visible lack of convergence between the agriculture and the forest, environment and climate change departments at the landscape level.

Impacted implementation efficiency

- Delayed implementation of the project has affected budget utilization.
- Lack of senior technical human resource has been observed at the NPMU, with reliance on junior staff members and technical experts engaged for short-term assignments.
- The project prioritizes environment and climate change as a focal area and its underlying principle is bottom-up and need-based decentralized planning. However, there is no designated position for an environment and climate change expert and decentralized planning experts at the NPMU, SPMU and GLIU levels.
- The SPMU, GLIUs and VICs have been established and are functional in all the selected landscapes, except in Rajasthan.

Annexures

Annexure 1. Terms of reference for the MTR

Terms of reference for the mid-term review of Green-Agriculture: Transforming Indian Agriculture for Global Environmental Benefits and the Conservation of Critical Biodiversity and Forest Landscapes Project GCP/IND/183/GFF

GEF ID - 9243

FOOD AND AGRICULTURE ORGANIZATION OF THE UNITED NATIONS

Representation in India

[March 2023]

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Acronyms and abbreviations

BH	Budget holder
GLIU	Green Landscape Implementation Unit
GP-PSU	Gram Panchayat Support Unit
FAO	Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations
FLO	Funding liaison officer
FPMIS	Field Project Management Information System
LTO	Lead technical officer
MTR	Mid-term review
NPD	National Project Director
NPMC	National Project Monitoring Committee
NPMU	National Project Management Unit
NPSC	National Project Steering Committee
OED	FAO Office of Evaluation
OP	Operational Partners
OPIM	Operational Partners Implementation Modality
PMU	Project management unit
PSC	Project Steering Committee
PTF	Project Task Force
SPMU	State Project Management Unit
SSC	State Steering Committee
TSG	Technical Support Group
VIC	Village Implementation Committee

Introduction

The purpose of the Mid-term Review (MTR) is to assess progress made towards achievement of the project's outcomes and outputs, identify challenges faced and provide inputs to help enhance the implementation of the GEF funded project, GCP/IND/183/GFF, Green-Ag: Transforming Indian agriculture for global environmental benefits and the conservation of critical biodiversity and forest landscapes.

The Green-Ag project is being implemented in five States: Madhya Pradesh, Mizoram, Odisha, Rajasthan and Uttarakhand. These project landscapes are representative of different agroecological conditions with high conservation value and serve as habitats of critical biodiversity. Each landscape is unique and includes a mix of conservation and production areas. In recent times, intensive agricultural practices, development activities, and other anthropogenic pressures have negatively impacted the fragile ecosystems and resulted in the degradation of these natural habitats.

The project will achieve multiple global environmental benefits (biodiversity, sustainable land management, high conservation value forest management, and greenhouse gas emission reduction) in five landscapes with mixed land-use systems totalling 1,800,000 hectares. Some of the project targets include covering at least 104,070 hectares of farms under sustainable land and water management. The project is also targeted to reduce the Greenhouse gas emissions by 49,906,455 tCo2eq (tCO2eq newly sequestered or avoided) through improved agroecosystems management, including climate resilience issues.

The mid-term review seeks to provide recommendations to enhance the implementation of the project in fully realizing its targets of national and global environmental benefits without compromising the country's ability to provide and develop rural livelihoods and meet its food and nutrition security and social (particularly gender) goals.

Project/programme background and context

Background

1. Agriculture sector has made immense progress in contributing to the country's food security. India is one of the largest exporters of agricultural produce. Over the years, the contribution of agriculture to the GDP has diminished considerably. However, it continues to be the largest source of livelihood in India.
2. The Government of India (GoI) invests significantly to boost agricultural production by promoting modern intensive agricultural practices, which has facilitated the country to make great strides in production and productivity, thus emerging as a net exporter of food grains. However, the current farming practices are proving to be increasingly unsustainable due to resource intensive practices, usage of high yielding varieties and dependence on external inputs. Consequently, there is a growing pressure on the ecology, especially, critical habitats and protected areas of high biodiversity importance along with pronounced negative impacts on natural resources like land, soil, and water, particularly groundwater aquifers. On the other hand, the GoI and other partners invest significantly in protected area management to support and conserve a host of globally significant species. Thus, these different streams of Government's investments are often misaligned and incompatible with each other leading to agricultural and environmental activities acting at cross-purposes, resulting in net economic loss to the country and wasted financing.
3. The agriculture sector in the country is critically poised to address issues of its long-term sustainability. This requires the sector to fully integrate environmental concerns in its policies, plans and programmes, so as to ensure that the sector's negative environmental impacts are mitigated and positive contributions are enhanced. Therefore, environmental mainstreaming is of key importance, especially in the context of the changing climate.
4. In this context, the Green-Ag project aims to harmonize and facilitate coherence between policies, priorities and investments concerned with conservation and agricultural production at landscape level so that they are mutually compatible and at the same time resilient to impacts of climate change. Instead of a piecemeal approach, it seeks to rather adopt an integrated approach at landscape level, combining natural resource management with environmental and livelihood considerations. The project is funded by the Global Environment Facility (GEF) through its sixth funding cycle. The Ministry of Agriculture and Farmers' Welfare (MoA&FW) is the National Executing Agency and FAO is the designated GEF Implementing Agency. The Ministry of

Environment Forests and Climate Change (MoEF&CC) is the GEF Operational Focal Point and coordinates all GEF projects in the country.

Description of the project, project objectives and components

Title	Green-Agriculture: Transforming Indian agriculture for global environmental benefits and the conservation of critical biodiversity and forest landscapes (FSP)
GEF Project ID	9243
Project Name	Green-Ag: Transforming Indian agriculture for global environmental benefits and the conservation of critical biodiversity and forest landscapes
GEF Agency	Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO)
GEF Financing	USD 33,558,716
Co-finance	USD 868.39 million
National Executing Agency	Ministry of Agriculture & Farmers Welfare, Government of India
State Executing Agencies/ Operational Partners	1. Farmers Welfare and Agriculture Development Department, Government of Madhya Pradesh 2. Department of Agriculture (Crop Husbandry), Government of Mizoram 3. Institute on Management of Agricultural Extension (IMAGE), Government of Odisha 4. Department of Agriculture, Government of Rajasthan 5. Department of Watershed Development, Government of Uttarakhand
Project Duration	01 April 2019 to 31 March 2026
CEO Endorsement Date	17 May 2018

5. The project is being implemented in five landscapes. These landscapes are representative of different agro-ecological conditions with high conservation value. Each landscape includes a mix of conservation and production areas. They serve as habitats of critical biodiversity with Protected Areas embedded within their boundaries and productive landscapes within the adjoining areas of these Protected Areas.
   i) Chambal Landscape, Madhya Pradesh
   ii) Dampa Landscape, Mizoram
   iii) Similipal Landscape, Odisha
   iv) Desert Landscape, Rajasthan
   v) Corbett-Rajaji Landscape, Uttarakhand

State	District	Latitude	Longitude
Madhya Pradesh	Morena	26.16667	77.5
	Sheopur	25.8	77
Mizoram	Mamit	23.78492	92.46939
	Lunglei	22.9	92.75
Odisha	Mayurbhanj	21.75	86.5
Rajasthan	Jaisalmer	26.99382	71.00889
	Barmer	25.75	71.5
Uttarakhand	Pauri Garhwal	29.96366	78.92853

6. The project aims to catalyse transformative change for India's agricultural sector to support achievement of national and global environmental benefits and conserve critical biodiversity and forest landscapes. The project's overall objective will be realized through the implementation of two components. The first component will set in place the tools required to strengthen the country's enabling environment to enhance the capacity of the agricultural sector to deliver Biodiversity (BD), Sustainable Land Management (SLM), Sustainable Forest Management (SFM), and Climate Change Mitigation (CCM) benefits. The first component will help coordinate national, state and local approaches, including facilitating the adoption of appropriate fiscal and market incentives to promote or conserve diversity on-farm and across

productive landscapes. The project will assist GoI in prioritizing efforts through the identification of high conservation-value areas where practices associated with unsustainable agricultural practices threaten ecological integrity. Strategically directing attention towards priority landscapes will help increase efficiency, innovation, and impact. The second component will demonstrate on-the-ground conservation improvements designed to drive higher-level changes. Under the second component, the project will work in high conservation priority landscapes to demonstrate replicable 'best practices'. Interventions will be designed to show how ecosystem-based agricultural improvements can deliver social, production, and ecological benefits. The project will provide an evidential basis for transformational policy change. Decision-makers responsible for India's agricultural and environmental sector will have the tools required to activate a new way of doing business. This new way of doing business will result in substantially addressing the sustainability of the agricultural sector and the ecological integrity of India's most important ecosystems. The final results will positively impact high conservation value landscapes and be amplified to inform the India's broader agricultural policy framework. This will ensure sustainable, transformative change across India's agricultural landscape.

7. The project is expected to deliver four outcomes under two project components. A total of 17 outputs contribute to the achievement of the outcomes, which in turn would contribute to project's overall objective.

Component 1: Strengthening the enabling framework and institutional structures to mainstream BD, SLM, CCM and SFM policies, priorities and practices into India's agricultural sector

- **Outcome 1.1.** National and state-level institutional, policy and programme frameworks strengthened to integrate environmental priorities into the agriculture sector to enhance the delivery of global environmental benefits (GEB) and resilience across landscapes of highest conservation concern.
- **Outcome 1.2.** Cross-sectoral knowledge management and decision-making systems at national and state levels to support development and implementation of agro-ecological approaches at landscape levels that deliver global environmental benefits as well as socio-economic benefits enhanced

Component 2: Empowering and incentivizing households and communities to adopt agro-ecological practices across landscapes.

- **Outcome 2.1**. Institutional frameworks, mechanisms and capacities at District and Village levels to support decision-making and stakeholder participation in Green Landscape planning and management strengthened, with Green Landscape Management Plans developed and under implementation for target landscapes
- **Outcome 2.2.** Households and communities able and incentivized to engage in agro ecological practices that deliver meaningful GEBs at the landscape level in target high conservation priority landscapes.

8. **Target group/beneficiaries**: Local decision makers at Gram Panchayat/Village Council; District level technical and extension staffs from different government sectors; Individual farmers including women/ households and communities.

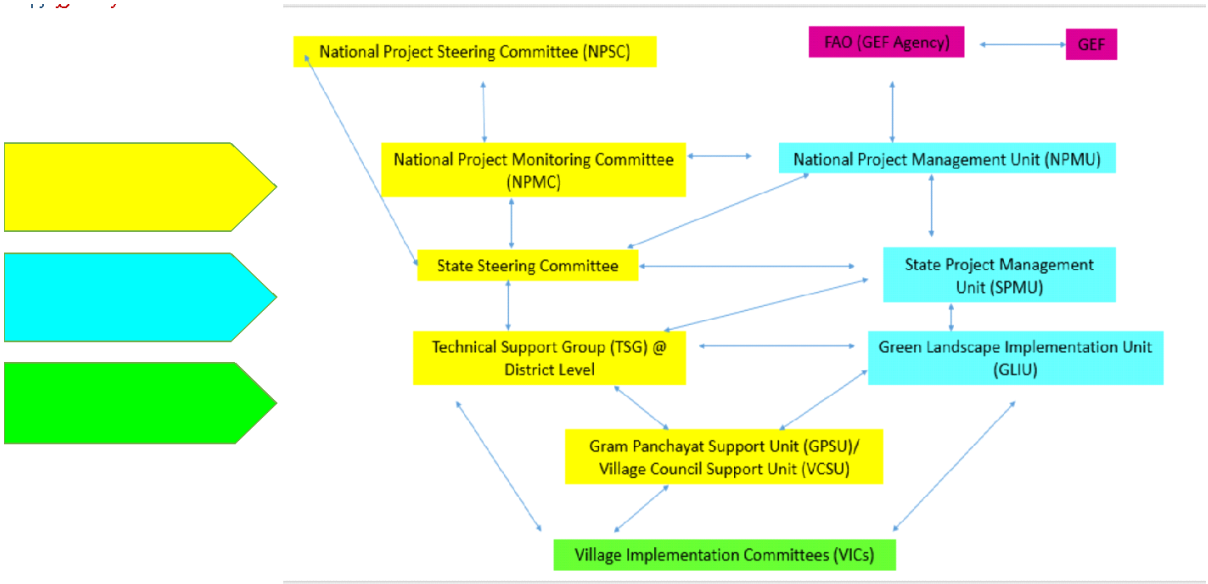
9. **Project set up**:

Implementation Units	Primary Responsibilities
National Project Management Unit (NPMU)	Established by the **FAO.** Provides **technical assistance** and ensures effective **implementation of project components** and coordinates all **monitoring and reporting tasks** at national level.
State Project Management Unit (SPMU)	Established by the **Operational Partner (OP)** in each state. Works in close coordination with the NPMU for **effective implementation** of project components and **coordinates all monitoring and reporting tasks at state-level.**
Green Landscape Implementation Unit (GLIU)	Established by the **Operational Partner (OP)** in the landscape. The GLIU will be responsible for **the day-to-day project implementation in the landscape.** GLIU works in close coordination with the SPMU for effective implementation of project components and coordinates all monitoring and reporting tasks at landscape level.

10. **Policy Guidance and Coordination Units Multisectoral platforms**

Project Policy Guidance and Coordination	Primary Responsibility
National Project Steering Committee (NPSC)	Provides overall guidance and strategic leadership to create synergies for a multi-sectoral coordination in project implementation; and facilitates 'mainstreaming' of relevant project findings and recommendations in National policy.
National Project Monitoring Committee (NPMC)	Monitors project implementation and is responsible for providing general oversight in the project execution
State Steering Committee (SSC)	Provides overall guidance to the State Project Management Unit (SPMU) in project implementation; and facilitates mainstreaming of relevant project findings and recommendations into state policy.
Technical Support Group (TSG) District	Under the leadership of the District Collector, monitor project implementation at the field-level and will be responsible for providing general oversight in the project execution.
Gram Panchayat /Village Council Project Support Unit (GP-PSU)	Plays a critical role in project implementation. Facilitates synergy between GP development plans and project activities.

Fig: Implementation- Institutions design



11. **FAO specific roles and responsibilities**

The Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) is this project's GEF Implementing Agency. FAO's primary roles in the project as a GEF Implementing Agency[8] summarized in the table below. These services will be funded from the GEF agency fee it receives for this project, in consonance with the GEF's operational policies and procedures for GEF

8

Implementing Agencies. Any additional technical or project management services provided by FAO, if requested by the government, will be funded through project budget.

Summary of GEF Implementing Roles and FAO Approach to fulfilling those roles

GEF Implementing Agency Roles	Summary of FAO approach for its IA role
Mount at least one supervision mission per year, including briefing operational focal points on project progress	FAO will nominate Lead Technical Officer (LTO) for this project from its Asia Pacific Regional Office with project-relevant background. LTO or his/ her nominee will mount at least one mission per year to supervise the project. In addition, a dedicated *technical* Funding Liaison Officer (FLO) will also be associated with this project from the FAO GEF Coordination Unit (the Unit is based in FAO's Headquarters in Rome, Italy). She/he will also undertake supervision missions as necessary. FAO's Country Office in India (FAOIN) will also have a supervisory role for this project. The head of this office will be the Budget Holder (BH).
Provide technical guidance, as necessary, for project implementation.	The LTO, FLO and FAOIN will provide technical guidance as necessary. A committee composed of the LTO, FLO and BH, with other relevant FAO Officers is called FAO's "Project Task Force". As this project, will be implemented through OPIM modality, the PTF will also include designated national Officers/experts from the government. This Task Force will meet regularly (usually virtually).
As necessary, include technical consultants during supervision missions to advise government officials on technical matters and provide technical assistance for the project as needed.	The LTO, FLO and BH and/or his/her designate from the Country Office will provide technical support. The LTO has an additional task of clearing TORs of technical consultants and their reports to ensure high technical quality.
Oversee the preparation of annual project implementation reports for submission to the GEF Secretariat.	The LTO, FLO and BH all have roles in supporting this process and will also provide their ratings on project's annual implementation, as well as its overall progress since project start.
Undertake the mid-term review, including possible project restructuring. Send a copy to the GEF Secretariat.	The BH will commission the mid-term review, in consultation with the LTO, FLO, and FAO's Office of Evaluation (OED) as well as with the Government of India (Chairman, NPMC).
Project completion and evaluation: Oversee the preparation of the Project Completion Report/Independent Terminal Evaluation, submit the report to the GEFEO and send a copy to the GEF Secretariat.	FAO's OED will commission the final/ terminal evaluation in consultation with project executing agencies at national and State levels and the PTF.
Prepare project closing documents	BH will lead this, in partnership with the executing agencies
In addition, FAO will also play important role in financial	● Finance staff from FAO's Country Office in India, Regional Office and FAO Headquarters will play a role in this.

GEF Implementing Agency Roles	Summary of FAO approach for its IA role
management of the project, such as: Pay advances to the executing entity and review financial reports. Monitor and review project expenditure reports. Prepare periodic revisions to reflect changes in annual expense category budgets. Prepare the financial closure of the project for submission to the GEF	● FAO's GEF Coordination Unit (based in FAO HQ, Rome) will also have a *financial* Funding Liaison Officer (FLO) who deals exclusively on finance/ budget issues. She/he will also support the project.

Further details on the FAO's roles and responsibilities may be read from the ProDoc Para No. 218, Page No. 105-107.

12. **Project Implementation status and Key dates**

	Madhya Pradesh	**Mizoram**	**Odisha**	**Rajasthan**	**Uttarakhand**
National Inception workshop	07-09 November 2019				
Operational Partner Agreements	Signed in January 2020	Signed in May 2019	Signed in September 2019	Signed in January 2020	Signed in August 2019
Inter-departmental institutional mechanisms at State and District-levels (State Steering Committee & Technical Support Group)	Constituted	Constituted	Constituted	Constituted	Constituted
State and GLIU Inception workshop	SPMU : 3-4 June 2022 GLIU:10-12 October 2022	SPMU : 28 July 2020 GLIU : 31 July 2020 SPMU/GLIU combined : 6-16 October 2022	SPMU: 26-29 October 2021 GLIU : 25-27 April 2022	SPMU: 22-25 September 2021 GLIU:13-15 May 2022	SPMU: 14 June 2021 SPMU/GLIU : 4-6 October 2021

13. **Project's alignment with National Priorities**: The project is well aligned with National development priorities, some of which are listed below. Further details are available in ProDoc, Para 162 to 170 No. Page No. 85 to 88

- ***Biodiversity***- The project is designed to respond directly to National Biodiversity Action Plan (NBAP) priorities. The project will contribute directly the several NBSAP National Biodiversity Targets for 2020. These include: measures are adopted for sustainable management of agriculture, forestry and fisheries; genetic diversity of cultivated plants, farm livestock, and their wild relatives, including other socio-economically as well as culturally valuable species, is maintained; strategies have been developed and implemented for minimizing genetic erosion and safeguarding their genetic diversity; and, a significant proportion of the country's population, especially the youth, is aware of the values of biodiversity and the steps they can take to conserve and use it sustainably
- ***Climate Change***- The project is consistent with India's National Action Plan on Climate Change (NAPCC) in general, and specifically with the following National Missions under the NAPCC and the corresponding State Action Plans for Climate Change (SAPCCs). The National Mission on Sustainable Agriculture (NMSA) by its emphasis on key dimensions of water-use efficiency (water-pumping emissions), nutrient management (CH_4 for NH_3 production; NO_x emissions), and livelihood diversification (reduced deforestation and land degradation). The National Mission for a Green India (NMGI) by linking mitigation objectives with extensive co-benefits for adaptation, biodiversity conservation, sustainable land management, and livelihood improvement. Specifically, this proposed project will contribute to the following NMGI targets: (i) increasing forest/tree cover to the extent of 5 MHa and improving the quality of forest/ tree cover on another 5 MHa of forest/ non-forest lands, (ii) improving the ecosystem and provisioning services of forests and other ecosystems, and (iii) increasing forest-based livelihood income of about 3 million households. The National Water Mission, through initiatives aimed at water conservation and water use efficiencies (water-pumping emissions). The National Mission on Strategic Knowledge for Climate Change (NMSKCC), by integrating critical aspects of knowledge management into programming and strengthening the policy-related linkages between climate change, biodiversity conservation, and sustainable management of land and forests.
- ***Land degradation***- The project is aligned with India's current draft National Action Programme (NAP) to Combat Desertification, Land Degradation and Drought of 2015-2030. The document recommends adoption of sustainable land management practices, diversification of high value agriculture for food and nutritional security, focus on small and marginal farmers, regions lagging, such as dryland/ rain-fed areas and Eastern India and empowerment of women in the agricultural sector. This project is aligned with those efforts and initiatives, which include several of the aforementioned programmes and: National Initiative on Climate-resilient Agriculture (NICRA), Integrated Watershed Management Programme (IWMP), National Water Policy, National Watershed Development Project in Rain fed Areas (NWDPRA), the National Programme on Organic Production (NPOP), National Mission for Sustaining the Himalayan Ecosystem (NMSHE), National Mission for Integrated Development of Horticulture (NMIDH), National Livestock Mission (NLM), Watershed Development in Shifting Cultivation Areas (WDSCA), and Integrated Nutrient Management (Soils).
- ***Sustainable Forest Management***- The National Forest Policy aims to increase forest cover through afforestation, elimination of clear-cutting, agroforestry, substitutions for commercial and fuel woods, improved forest inventories, prioritization of wildlife corridors, and significant national investments. This policy established the Joint Forest Management Programme. Additional programming includes the National Afforestation Programme, the National Agroforestry Policy, the National Guidelines on Joint Forest Management (1990), the National Conservation Strategy, the Policy Statement on Environment and Development (1992), the Compensatory Afforestation Fund Management Planning Authority (CAMPA, 2009), the National Bamboo Mission, and the National Green India Mission. The Forest Rights Act (2006) provides tenurial security for sustainable production in and around forests, community-based forest management, and prioritized conservation of critical wildlife habitats. 169 As an example of GoI's continuing commitment to SFM, the Steering Committee for India's 12th Five-year Plan (2013-2017) emphasized the importance of joint forest management (JFM): "JFM also needs to be evolved into a higher platform 'JFM Plus'

where the livelihood promotion of the communities, especially women Self Help Groups (SHGs) formed for such activities, gets increased importance in the conservation and development of forests. To achieve this, JFM Committees are required to be adequately and strategically revitalized and empowered." Forest management responsibilities also extend to the state level. This proposed project is aligned with these national and state initiatives and priorities, including strong support for aligning JFM, sustainable use, and conservation objectives.

- ***Agricultural priorities***- The project aligns with the National Mission for Sustainable Agriculture, including priorities related to Rain fed Area Development, On Farm Water Management, Soil Health Management, Climate Change and Sustainable Agriculture - Monitoring, Modelling and Networking (CCSAMMN). The project is consistent with the imperatives and strategies in the National Mission for Integrated Development of Horticulture (NMIDH), the National Initiative on Climate-resilient Agriculture (NICRA), the National Agro-forestry Policy, the National Water Policy, the Integrated Watershed Management Programme (IWMP), the National Watershed Development Project in Rain fed Areas (NWDPRA), the National Programme on Organic Production (NPOP), National Livestock Mission (NLM), the Watershed Development in Shifting Cultivation Areas (WDSCA) as well as the Integrated Nutrient Management (Soils).

14. **Contribution to FAO's Country Programming Framework (CPF)**: The Food and Agricultural Organization of the United Nations (FAO) has enjoyed a valuable partnership with India since 1948. FAO continues playing a catalytic role in India's progress in the areas of crops, livestock, fisheries, food security, and natural resources management. The Green-Ag project outputs will contribute towards FAO India's Country Programming Framework (CPF) priority area two: '**effective natural resource management and community resilience'.** The government of India's priorities serves as the primary driver for the FAO's programme in India. The CPF represents a confluence of India's development goals and the FAO's Strategic Framework. The CPF was prepared with a strong involvement of national stakeholders, including the private sector and civil society. The CPF is motivated by FAO's own vision and key corporate principles that promote sustainability in production systems and balance the social, economic and environmental dimensions of sustainable food and agriculture. Further details are available in ProDoc, Para No. 189 to 190 Page No. 94 to 95
15. **Contribution to GEF Focal Area Strategic Objectives and Programmes**: This is a landscape level project that will integrate productive and protected lands. The project will cover forested areas where SFM will be a critical element in the maintenance of ecosystem services. This includes areas where communities rely upon forest products for fodder and fuelwood as well as areas that are dominated by shifting agriculture. **Likewise, the project will cover highly degraded landscapes. These are areas where grazing and intensive agriculture have taken their toll and resulted in the loss of soil, fertility, and even extensive degradation of aquatic wildlife habitat**. Climate change mitigation will be an important element of the project approach and the Green Landscape programme. Current agricultural practices too often contribute to CC through the over-use of fertilizers, emphasis upon high emission crops, livestock management techniques, and of course forest management approaches. Finally, biodiversity is essential to this project. India is a centre for agro-biodiversity and these crops are vitally important, particularly for the extremely rural, small holder farmers who are often associated with these marginally productive landscapes. Agro-biodiversity is also an often overlooked – but are quickly emerging as economic opportunity for rural families. These crops are generally well adapted to local conditions and they are now sought after by high-end retailers in metropolitan areas. Each of the project areas is selected because of its association with globally significant wildlife. This includes tigers, elephants, Gangetic dolphins, clouded leopards, and the Great Indian Bustard. These are some of the world's finest examples of conservation areas and they are under threat from agriculture. At the same time, as climate change and other factors impact protected area integrity, it is increasingly important that wildlife have access to areas beyond the protected area boundaries. This includes buffer and corridor habitat. This creates an increasing opportunity for human-wildlife conflict. This project will assist policy makers, extension Officers, private stakeholders and farmers to identify, incorporate, and address these issues in an integrated, ecosystem-based manner.

BD-3 Programme 7: Securing agriculture's future: sustainable use of plant and animal genetic resources
BD-4 Programme 9: Managing the human-biodiversity interface
LD-1 Programme 1: Agro-ecological intensification
LD-1 Programme 2: Sustainable land management for climate-smart agriculture
LD-3 Programme 4: Scaling-up sustainable land management through the landscape approach
CCM-2 Programme 4: Promote conservation and enhancement of carbon stocks in forests and other land-uses, and support climate-smart agriculture
SFM-1: Reduce the pressures on high-conservation-value forests by addressing the drivers of deforestation.

16. Further details are available in ProDoc, Para No. 172 to 185 Page No. 90 to 93

Project stakeholders and their role

Table A4.1. Stakeholder matrix

Key stakeholders (disaggregated as appropriate)[9]	What is their role in the project?	What is the reason for their inclusion in or exclusion from the MTR?	Priority for MTR (1-3)[10]	How and when should they be involved in the MTR?
1. Active stakeholders with direct responsibility for the project, e.g. FAO, executing partners				
1. Director, Farmers Welfare and Agriculture Development Department, Government of Madhya Pradesh 2. Director, Department of Agriculture (Crop Husbandry), Government of Mizoram 3. Director, Department of Soil Conservation and Watersheds, Government of Odisha (The Department is the project implementing agency in the state) Director, Institute on Management of Agricultural Extension (IMAGE), Government of Odisha; 4. Director, Department of Agriculture, Government of Rajasthan 5. Director, Department of Watershed Development,	Operational partners with whom FAO has signed the Operational Partner Agreement and oversees the project implementation at state level.	They are the project implementing agencies in the states and will be able to provide an account of project activities at state level.	1	Throughout the MTR process through meetings, interviews and correspondences

[9] Include the names of relevant individuals, if known, and be as specific as possible

[10] 1 = essential; 2 = desirable; 3 = if time and resources allow

Key stakeholders (disaggregated as appropriate)[9]	What is their role in the project?	What is the reason for their inclusion in or exclusion from the MTR?	Priority for MTR (1-3)[10]	How and when should they be involved in the MTR?
Government of Uttarakhand				
District Nodal Officer, Madhya Pradesh Morena-Deputy Director Agriculture Sheopur-Deputy Director Agriculture	Responsible for overseeing project implementation and coordination at the field level	Will be able to provide a first-hand account of the project status, progress and challenges at the field level	1	Throughout the MTR process through meetings and interviews and correspondence
District Nodal Officer, Mizoram Mamit - Deputy Director Agriculture, Mamit Lunglei - Deputy Director Agriculture, Lunglei	Responsible for overseeing project implementation and coordination at the field level	Will be able to provide a first-hand account of the project status, progress and challenges at the field level	1	Throughout the MTR process through meetings and interviews and correspondence
District Nodal Officer, Odisha: Project Director, Watershed Department, Mayurbhanj	Responsible for overseeing project implementation and coordination at the field level	Will be able to provide a first-hand account of the project status, progress and challenges at the field level	1	Throughout the MTR process through meetings and interviews and correspondence
District Nodal Officer, Rajasthan: Barmer: Deputy Director Agriculture, Barmer Jaisalmer: Deputy Director Agriculture, Jaisalmer	Responsible for overseeing project implementation and coordination at the field level	Will be able to provide a first-hand account of the project status, progress and challenges at the field level	1	Throughout the MTR process through meetings and interviews and correspondence
District Nodal Officer, Uttarakhand: Deputy Project Director, Watershed Management, Pauri Garhwal	Responsible for overseeing project implementation and coordination at the field level	Will be able to provide a first-hand account of the project status, progress and challenges at the field level	1	Throughout the MTR process through meetings and interviews and correspondence
FAO Representative in India/ Budget Holder	The FAO Representative in India, will be the Budget Holder (BH) and responsible for the management of the GEF resources and all aspects of the Operational Partners Agreement		1	Throughout the MTR process through virtual meetings, interviews and correspondence.
FAO Lead Technical Officer	The LTO will ensure the application of FAO technical standards and policies during project implementation		1	Aside from periodical meetings, LTO and FLO to be contacted as

Key stakeholders (disaggregated as appropriate)[9]	What is their role in the project?	What is the reason for their inclusion in or exclusion from the MTR?	Priority for MTR (1-3)[10]	How and when should they be involved in the MTR?
				needed through the Budget Holder.
Funding Liaison Officers (FLOs)	The FLOs will maintain corporate relations with resource partners throughout the project cycle. During Implementation, she/he submits progress reports to resource partners and supports budget holders as required in all areas of operations, including budget revisions		1	Aside from periodical meetings, LTO and FLO to be contacted as needed through the Budget Holder.
National Project Management Unit (NPMU)	Provides technical assistance and ensures effective implementation of project components and coordinates all monitoring and reporting tasks at national-level.		1	Throughout the MTR process through meetings and interview.
State Project Management Unit (SPMU)	Works in close coordination with the NPMU for effective implementation of project components and coordinates all monitoring and reporting tasks at state-level.		1	Throughout the MTR process through meetings and interview.
Green Landscape Implementation Unit (GLIU)	The GLIU will be responsible for the day-to-day project implementation in the landscape. GLIU works in close coordination with the SPMU for effective implementation of project components and coordinates all monitoring and reporting tasks at state-level.		1	Throughout the MTR process through meetings and interview.
2. Active stakeholders with authority to make decisions on the project, e.g. members of the PSC (Put as annex)				
Secretary, Department of Agriculture & Farmers Welfare, Govt.	Provides overall guidance and strategic leadership to		2	To be contacted as needed through the Budget Holder.

Key stakeholders (disaggregated as appropriate)[9]	What is their role in the project?	What is the reason for their inclusion in or exclusion from the MTR?	Priority for MTR (1-3)[10]	How and when should they be involved in the MTR?
of India, cum Chairman, National Project Steering Committee (NPSC)	create synergies for a multi-sectoral coordination in project implementation; and facilitates 'mainstreaming' of relevant project findings and recommendations in National policy			
Joint Secretary, RFS Division, Department of Agriculture & Farmers Welfare, Govt. of India, cum Chairman, National Project Monitoring Committee (NPMC)	Monitors project implementation and is responsible for providing general oversight in the project execution.	Will be able to provide an update on the status of project implementation, various challenges being faced by project in different states and reasons for delays in field implementation	1	To be contacted as needed through the Budget Holder.
Joint Secretary, Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change (MoEFCC) cum GEF Operational Focal Point	MoEFCC is responsible for the administration of the protected areas of India and for planning, promoting, coordinating, and overseeing the implementation of environmental and forestry programs and policies. MoEFCC plays a key role in the project as a member of the Project Steering Committee and, as host ministry of India's GEF Operational Focal Point.	MoEFCC facilitates coordination with GEF Secretariat and with other projects in India's GEF portfolio	2	To be contacted as needed through the Budget Holder.
1.Agriculture Production Commissioner cum Chairman State Steering Committee, Madhya Pradesh 2. Commissioner and Secretary, Agriculture Department cum Chairman State Steering Committee, Mizoram 3. Agriculture Production	Provides overall guidance to the State Project Management Unit (SPMU) in project implementation; and facilitates mainstreaming of relevant project findings and recommendations into state policy		2	As and when need arises, to be contacted through the Budget Holder

Key stakeholders (disaggregated as appropriate)[9]	What is their role in the project?	What is the reason for their inclusion in or exclusion from the MTR?	Priority for MTR (1-3)[10]	How and when should they be involved in the MTR?
Commissioner cum Chairman State Steering Committee, Odisha 4. Chief Secretary cum Chairman State Steering Committee, Rajasthan 5. Agriculture Production Commissioner cum Chairman State Steering Committee, Uttarakhand 6. Vice Chancellor, Odisha University of Agriculture & Technology cum Chairman State Level Technical Committee Odisha				
Additional Chief Secretary (Agriculture), Madhya Pradesh	Responsible for the working of Agriculture department and therefore, overall supervision of the project at the state level.		2	As and when need arises, to be contacted through the Budget Holder.
Additional Chief Secretary (Watershed), Uttarakhand	Responsible for the working of Watershed Directorate and therefore, overall supervision of the project at the state level		2	As and when need arises, to be contacted through the Budget Holder.
Principal Secretary (Agriculture), Rajasthan	Responsible for the working of Agriculture department and therefore, overall supervision of the project at the state level		2	As and when need arises, to be contacted through the Budget Holder.
Principal Secretary (Agriculture), Odisha	Responsible for the working of Agriculture department and therefore, overall supervision of the project at the state level		2	As and when need arises, to be contacted through the Budget Holder.
Chairman, Technical Support Group Madhya Pradesh: District Collector, Morena District Collector, Sheopur	Under the leadership of the District Collector, monitor project implementation at the field-level and will be responsible for	Since they are directly overseeing the project implementation at the field level, they will be able to better explain the	1	As and when need arises, to be contacted through the Budget Holder

Key stakeholders (disaggregated as appropriate)[9]	What is their role in the project?	What is the reason for their inclusion in or exclusion from the MTR?	Priority for MTR (1-3)[10]	How and when should they be involved in the MTR?
	providing general oversight in the project execution	current status and challenges of the project in their respective districts.		
Chairman, Technical Support Group, Mizoram: Mamit- Deputy Commissioner, Mamit Lunglei - Deputy Commissioner, Lunglei	Under the leadership of the District Collector, monitor project implementation at the field-level and will be responsible for providing general oversight in the project execution	Since they are directly overseeing the project implementation at the field level, they will be able to better explain the current status and challenges of the project in their respective districts.	1	As and when need arises, to be contacted through the Budget Holder
Chairman, Technical Support Group, Odisha: District Collector, Mayurbhanj	Under the leadership of the District Collector, monitor project implementation at the field-level and will be responsible for providing general oversight in the project execution	Since they are directly overseeing the project implementation at the field level, they will be able to better explain the current status and challenges of the project in their respective districts.	1	As and when need arises, to be contacted through the Budget Holder
Chairman, Technical Support Group, Rajasthan: Barmer- District Collector, Barmer Jaisalmer- District Collector, Jaisalmer	Under the leadership of the District Collector, monitor project implementation at the field-level and will be responsible for providing general oversight in the project execution	Since they are directly overseeing the project implementation at the field level, they will be able to better explain the current status and challenges of the project in their respective districts.	1	As and when need arises, to be contacted through the Budget Holder
Chairman, Technical Support Group, Uttarakhand: District Magistrate, Pauri Garhwal	Under the leadership of the District Collector, monitor project implementation at the field-level and will be responsible for providing general oversight in the project execution	Since they are directly overseeing the project implementation at the field level, they will be able to better explain the current status and challenges of the project in their respective districts.	1	As and when need arises, to be contacted through the Budget Holder
3. Stakeholders at grassroots level who benefit directly or indirectly from the intervention (gender disaggregated where possible)				
Sarpanch/Village Council President and Panchayat and Village Council members	They are the chosen representatives of the village and by virtue of this they are the	They are responsible for the overall development of	1	During the data collection process through meeting or interview

Key stakeholders (disaggregated as appropriate)[9]	What is their role in the project?	What is the reason for their inclusion in or exclusion from the MTR?	Priority for MTR (1-3)[10]	How and when should they be involved in the MTR?
	chairperson of the Village Implementation Committee (VIC)	village and play a key role in providing basic amenities to the rural communities.		
Farmers	They will be direct beneficiaries from the project	They will be able to provide a first-hand account of their current livelihood status, their expectation from the project	1	During the data collection process through meeting or interview
Livestock keepers	They will be direct beneficiaries from the project	They will be able to provide a first-hand account of their current livelihood status, their expectation from the project	1	During the data collection process through meeting or interview
Poultry farmers	They will be direct beneficiaries from the project	They will be able to provide a first-hand account of their current livelihood status, their expectation from the project	1	During the data collection process through meeting or interview
Women Self Help Groups	They will be direct and/or indirect beneficiaries from the project	They will be able to provide a first-hand account of their current livelihood status, their expectation from the project	1	During the data collection process through meeting or interview
Community institutions members	They will be direct and/or indirect beneficiaries from the project	They will be able to provide a first-hand account of their current livelihood status, their expectation from the project	1	During the data collection process through meeting or interview
Indigenous communities	They will be direct beneficiaries from the project	They will be able to provide a first-hand account of their current livelihood status, their expectation from the project	1	During the data collection process through meeting or interview

Theory of change

17. GoI recognizes that to ensure future sustainability of agriculture to meet India's long-term food and nutrition requirements, and to achieve social and gender goals in rural areas, while contributing to the country's global environmental commitments, it needs to undertake greater efforts to mainstream environmental concerns into agriculture policies, plans and investments, and harmonise the country's agricultural and environmental sectors. Achieving this will require

greater coherence between GoI policies, investments and institutions concerned with agricultural production and conservation, particularly in the face of changing climate and at the landscape scale where ecosystem management is most effective.

18. The Green-Ag project seeks to address these needs, which is reflected in its overarching objective to "catalyse transformative change of India's agricultural sector to support achievement of national and global environmental benefits and conservation of critical biodiversity and forest landscapes". To address this, the project's strategy, based on its Theory of Change, seeks to overcome the four barriers identified above through the delivery of four interlinked project outcomes, organised under two components. These are:

Component 1: Strengthening the enabling framework and institutional structures to mainstream BD, SLM, CCM and SFM policies, priorities and practices into India's agricultural sector

- **Outcome 1.1. National and state level institutional, policy and programme frameworks strengthened to integrate environmental priorities into the agriculture sector to enhance delivery of global environmental benefits (GEB) across landscapes of highest conservation concern**
- **Outcome 1.2. Cross-sectoral knowledge management and decision-making systems at national and state levels to support development and implementation of agro-ecological approaches at landscape levels that deliver global environmental benefits as well as socioeconomic benefits enhanced**

Component 2: Improved agricultural and conservation practices demonstrating sustainable production, livelihood advancements, habitat improvements and delivery of tangible BD, LD, CCM, and SFM benefits

- **Outcome 2.1 – Institutional frameworks, mechanisms and capacities at District and Village levels to support decision-making and stakeholder participation in Green Landscape planning and management strengthened, with Green Landscape Management Plans developed and under implementation for target landscapes**
- **Outcome 2.2 - Households and communities able and incentivized to engage in agro-ecological practices that deliver meaningful GEB at the landscape level in target high conservation priority landscapes.**

19. The central hypothesis for this GEF initiative is that the agriculture sector can be reorientated towards more sustainable practices incorporating environmental priorities, particularly in landscapes of high ecological value, through realignment of agricultural policy and investments at the national and state scales and through building capacity and developing and facilitating incentives for farming communities at the local level to adopt agro-ecological practices, including climate resilient ones. It is assumed that the increasing demand for responsibly sourced farm products and improved access to the market opportunities, combined with greater knowledge of the negative impacts on livelihoods of unsustainable agricultural practices and realigned and supportive government policies and investments, will stimulate behavioural change at the farm and community levels towards more sustainable agriculture and land uses in high value conservation landscapes.

20. To achieve this, the project's first Component, which addresses the first two barriers, largely targets the key national and state level processes and institutions, helping to strengthen the enabling environment leading to better integration of environmental priorities in the agriculture sector and stronger alignment of associated investments that are directed at landscapes of significant importance for biodiversity and ecosystem services, as well as of agriculture value. Allied to this, the project seeks to strengthen national and state institutional capacity and systems for evidence-based decision-making (particularly spatial analysis systems and georeferenced and climate data) in support of agroecological approaches that can deliver multiple livelihood, food security and global environmental benefits at landscape level.

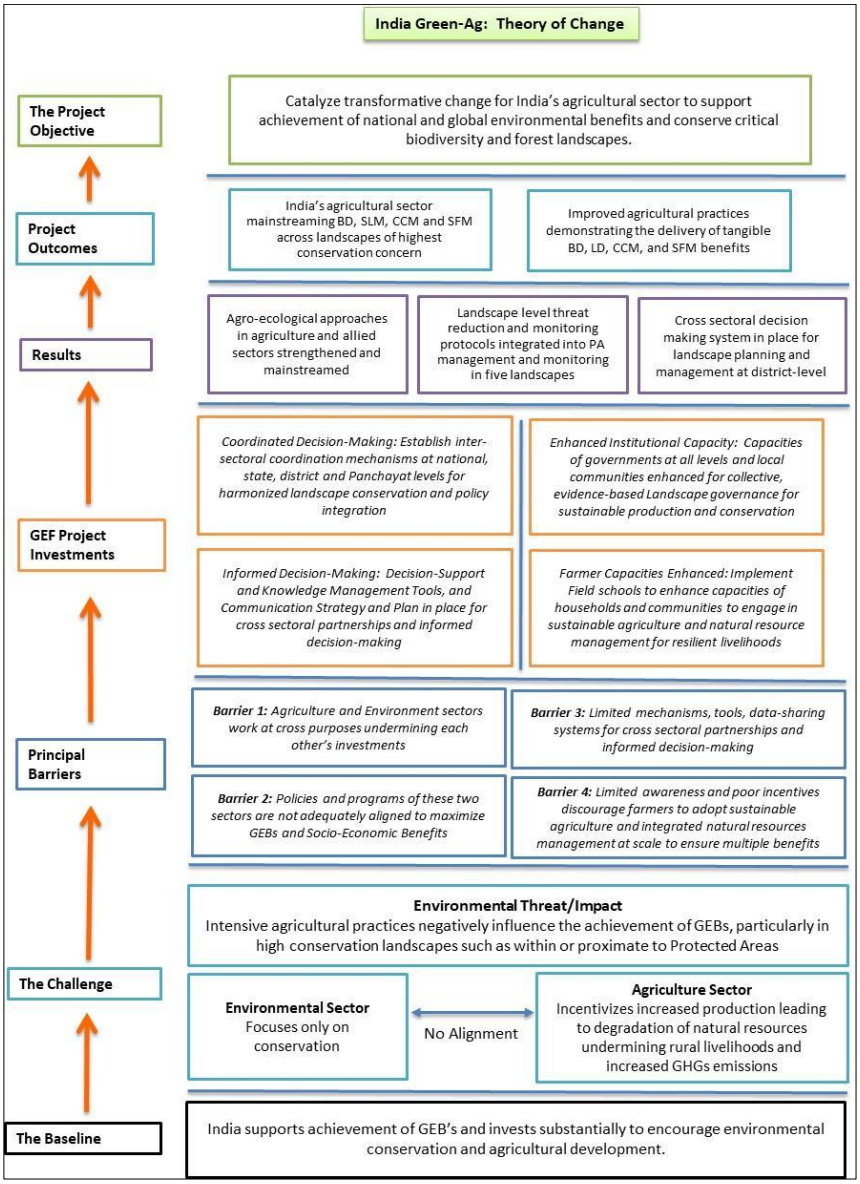
21. The second component, which aims to overcome the third and fourth barriers, focuses on building institutional capacity and structures at a more local level in the project target areas, particularly through the District and Gram Panchayat/Village Council decision-making processes, with the establishment of new, or co-opting of existing, governance structures combined with local capacity building in governance skills to empower farming communities and other local land users to fully participate in Green Landscape planning and management.

22. There are a number of intermediate stages/states in the Theory of Change between the project's four immediate Outcomes and its final desired (long-term) impacts, including two medium-term outcomes (not considered achievable in the project's lifetime) and longer-term intermediate states (changes in state only achievable through the actions of many others and over a longer time period). Over the medium term (so not considered achievable in the project's lifetime) the project is expected to contribute to two further outcomes: (i) national, state, and district level decision-making systems and processes in place and ready to direct agricultural policy, planning, programmes and investments to incentivize the adoption of agro-ecological practices across high priority landscapes, focused upon high ecological value landscapes associated with protected areas; and (ii) farmers and other land users across the 5 target States incentivized and with capacity to adopt improved agricultural techniques that can deliver GEBs at landscape level as well as social and economic benefits.

23. There are also a number of assumptions (where the project has no control, or influence) and drivers (over which the project or its partners may have a certain level of control) that operate over different scales and at different points along the causal chain in the Theory of Change that may impede or promote the likelihood of achieving the Project's desired long-term impacts.

24. The Theory of Change, showing the causal relationships between the project's Outputs (goods and services delivered by the project) and immediate project Outcomes (changes resulting from the use of project outputs by key stakeholders), medium-term outcomes and longer-term intermediate stages and states and the project's ultimate desired impact, as well as the drivers and assumptions, is depicted graphically below.

25. The detailed Theory of Change is available in the ProDoc, Para No. 58 to 71. (Page Number 21 to 25)



Implementation progress and main challenges to date

26. **Project Progress**: A brief account of project progress is as follows.

- State Steering Committee (SSC) at state level and Technical Support Group (TSG) at the district levels have been established in all states and districts.
- Orientation workshops in each landscape have been conducted at state and district level to orient the key government officials as well the state and the district level teams about the project in detail.
- Owing to the impact of COVID-19, the project developed a risk mitigation strategy with an assessment of current risks, revised work plan and suggestive measures to expedite project implementation. The risk mitigation plan was endorsed by all Operational Partners.
- As part of landscape assessment, geospatial analysis (completed in all states except Madhya Pradesh) and secondary literature review (completed in all states) have been completed. Based on the findings of these priority areas have been identified in the landscape for initial intervention of the project activities. Baseline assessment report is being finalized.
- Community consultations on various thematic areas such as natural resources, agriculture, livestock etc. have been conducted in the priority areas. As part of the community consultations, the findings from the geospatial analysis and secondary literature review were presented to the communities. Further, major challenges, priority issues and priority actions have been identified by the communities to address those issues.

- Green Landscape Management Plans are being developed taking into considerations the findings from the geospatial analysis, secondary literature review and the community consultations.
- A Spatial Decision Support System is being developed. This technology will help support the farmers, government officials, other decision makers in the landscape etc. in making decisions on various interventions in the landscape, choosing crop and crop varieties in a particular area.
- A fully functional financial MIS is in place for the project which is hosted on the cloud server of the National Informatics Centre, Government of India. The physical MIS to monitor the physical progress of the project activities is currently under development.
- The in-house project team has developed an android application for collection of data through household level. A user manual has also been developed and shared with the states. Currently, the surveys have been completed in Mizoram and Uttarakhand.

27. **Major challenges**: The project has faced several challenges which are listed as below.
    - The project delivery was hampered severely due to COVID-19 pandemic and its resurgence.
    - Weak capacity for implementation of multi-sectoral projects with emphasis on convergence of resources across various government departments
    - Lesser priority to FAO projects in comparison to large Government programmes/schemes by the respective Central / State Government departments
    - Lack of awareness on Result Based Management approach by partners and service providers for effective achievement of results under FAO implemented projects
    - Frequent interventions required by FAO to resolve conflicts/speedup roadblocks – service providers, implementing partners, operational partners etc.
    - Frequent changes in key positions at relevant Central and State Government levels required more time and efforts in taking decisions in support of the projects.
    - Ambiguity and lack of consensus in recruitment process for the state and district level teams.

2. MTR purpose and scope

28. The purpose of the MTR is to inform the FAO GEF Coordination Unit, and the LTO and FLO, the National executive agency and the state implementing partners and other stakeholders (including SSC members and the GEF OFP) about the progress and effectiveness in achieving expected project objectives and outputs – as well as about the progress as a whole, in terms of effectiveness of the programmatic approach in generating synergies and amplifying impact.
29. The main purpose of the MTR is to:
    - Provide information whether the current status of the project is in line with what was envisaged at the design stage.
    - Provide recommendations to reorient the project to the specific needs of each state so as to help improve the implementation and delivery of the project without affecting the overall objective of the project
    - Provide recommendations related to any financial changes such as change in budget heads etc. to improve that the on-field implementation of the project
    - Provide lessons and recommendations from the impediments being faced in the current project of particular benefit to the FAO GEF CU, FAO staff and future developers and implementers
30. The primary intended users of the project MTR are (1) to which most of the lessons and recommendations will be addressed, are the FAO Representative/BH, Project Manager and Project's staff, and the Department of Agriculture & Farmers Welfare, Ministry of Agriculture & Farmers Welfare, Government of India (2) other important users of the evaluation are the Regional and Sub-regional Offices including technical divisions and the funding liaison officer (FLO) and the lead technical officer (LTO) and other FAO technical staff at headquarters), SSC and TSG members, and other stakeholders that will benefit and build on lessons learnt and good practices.

3 MTR objectives and key questions

3.1 MTR objectives

31. The MTR should provide inputs and recommendations regarding the relevance, effectiveness, efficiency, sustainability and the cross-cutting themes of the project. It should also highlight the main factors affecting the performance of the project at both National and state level. Here below details are provided on the assessment criteria of the project.

Relevance – the extent to which the intervention's design and intended results are consistent with local, national, sub-regional and regional environmental and development priorities and policies and to GEF and FAO strategic priorities and objectives; its complementarity with existing interventions and relevance to project stakeholders and beneficiaries; its suitability to the context of the intervention over time.
Effectiveness – the degree to which the intervention has achieved or expects to achieve results (project outputs, outcomes, objectives and impacts, including Global Environmental Benefits) (GEF, 2019c) taking into account key factors influencing the results, including an assessment of whether sufficient capacity has been built to ensure the delivery of results by the end of project and beyond and the likelihood of mid- and longer-term impacts.
Efficiency – the cost-effectiveness of the project and timeliness of activities; the extent to which the intervention has achieved value for resources by converting inputs (funds, personnel, expertise, equipment, etc.) into results in the timeliest and least costly way compared with alternatives.
Sustainability – the (likely) continuation of positive effects from the intervention after it has ended and the potential for scale-up and/or replication; any financial, socio-political, institutional and governance, or environmental risks to sustainability of project results and benefits; any evidence of replication or catalysis of project results.
Factors affecting performance – the main factors to be considered are:

- project design and readiness for implementation (e.g. sufficient partner capacity to begin operations, changes in context between formulation and operational start);
- project execution, including project management (execution modality as well as the involvement of counterparts and different stakeholders);
- project implementation, including supervision by FAO (BH, LTO and FLO), backstopping, and general PTF input;
- financial management and mobilization of expected co-financing;

- project partnerships and stakeholder involvement (including the degree of ownership of project results by stakeholders), political support from government, institutional support from operating partners (such as regional branches of agricultural extension services or forestry authorities);
- communication, public awareness and knowledge management; and
- application of an M&E system, including M&E design, implementation and budget.

Cross-cutting dimensions – considerations such as gender, indigenous-peoples and minority-group concerns and human rights; the environmental and social safeguards applied to a project require, among other things, a review of the Environmental and Social Safeguards (ESS) risk classification and risk-mitigation provisions identified at the project's formulation stage.[11]

3.2 MTR questions

32. The following questions should be taken into consideration for the evaluation. Further questions may be developed by the MTR team in consultation with the state executing partners and the FAO during the inception phase to tailor to the particular needs of the project.

MTR questions

1. Relevance (rating required)	• Are the project outcomes congruent with country priorities, GEF focal areas/operational programme strategies, the FAO Country Programming Framework and the needs and priorities of targeted beneficiaries (local communities, men and women, and indigenous peoples, if relevant)? • Has there been any change in the relevance of the project since its formulation, such as the adoption of new national/state policies, plans or programmes that affect the relevance of the project's objectives and goals? If so, are there any changes that need to be made to the project to make it more relevant?
2. Effectiveness of project results (rating required)	• (Delivery of results) To what extent has the project delivered on its outputs, outcomes and objectives? What broader results (if any) has the project had at regional and global level to date? Were there any unintended consequences? • To what extent has the project implementation and achievement of results been impacted by COVID-19? • (Likelihood of impact) Are there any barriers or other risks that may prevent future progress towards and the achievement of the project's longer-term objectives? What can be done to increase the likelihood of positive impacts from the project? To what extent can the progress towards long-term impacts be attributed to the project? • (Project Targets)
3. Efficiency (rating required)	• To what extent has the project been implemented efficiently and cost effectively? To what extent has project management been able to adapt to any changing conditions to improve the efficiency of project implementation? • To what extent has the project built on existing agreements, initiatives, data sources, synergies and complementarities with other projects, partnerships, etc. and avoided duplication of similar activities by other groups and initiatives? • To what extent has the OPIM modality been instrumental for effective project implementation and achievement of project objectives?
4. Sustainability (rating required)	• *(Sustainability)* What is the likelihood that the project results will be useful or persist after the end of the project? What are the key risks that may affect the sustainability of the project results and its benefits (consider financial, socioeconomic, institutional and governance, and environmental aspects)? • *(Replication and catalysis)* What project results, lessons or experiences have been replicated (in different geographic areas) or scaled up (in the same geographic area, but on a much larger scale and funded by other sources)? What results, lessons or experiences are likely to be replicated or scaled up in the near future?
5. Factors affecting progress	• *(Project design) Is the project design suited to delivering the expected outcomes? Is the project's causal logic (per its theory of change) coherent and clear? To what extent are the project's objectives and components clear, practical and feasible*

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

(ratings required)	*within the timeframe allowed? To what extent were gender aspects integrated into the project's objectives and results framework? Were other actors – civil society, indigenous peoples or private sector – involved in project design or implementation and what was the effect on project results? Considering that a vast amount of the project's beneficiaries are Indigenous Peoples, to what extent their needs and priorities have been integrated into the project's objectives and results framework?* • *(Project execution and management) To what extent did the executing agency effectively discharge its role and responsibilities in managing and administering the project? What have been the main challenges in terms of project management and administration? How well have risks been identified and managed? What changes are needed to improve delivery in the latter half of the project?* • *(Financial management and co-financing) What have been the financial-management challenges of the project? To what extent has pledged co-financing been delivered? Has any additional leveraged co-financing been provided since implementation? How has any shortfall in co-financing or unexpected additional funding affected project results?* • *(Project oversight, implementation role) To what extent has FAO delivered oversight and supervision and backstopping (technical, administrative and operational) during project identification, formulation, approval, start-up and execution?* • *(Partnerships and stakeholder engagement) To what extent have stakeholders, such as government agencies, civil society, women's groups, indigenous populations, disadvantaged and vulnerable groups, people with disabilities and the private sector, been involved in project formulation and implementation? What has been the effect of their involvement or non-involvement on project results? How do the various stakeholder groups see their own engagement with the project? What are the mechanisms of their involvement and how could these be improved? What are the strengths and challenges of the project's partnerships? Has the stakeholder engagement plan been adhered to and documented? Have all stakeholders been made aware of the ESS plan and the grievance complaint mechanism?* • *(Communication and knowledge management) How effective has the project been in communicating and promoting its key messages and results to partners, stakeholders and a general audience? How can this be improved? How is the project assessing, documenting and sharing its results and lessons learned and experiences? To what extent are communication products and activities likely to support the sustainability and scaling up of project results?* • *(M&E design) Is the project's M&E system practical and sufficient? How has stakeholder engagement and gender assessment been integrated into the M&E system? How could this be improved?* • *(M&E implementation) Does the M&E system operate per the M&E plan? Has information been gathered in a systematic manner, using appropriate methodologies? To what extent has information generated by the M&E system during project implementation been used to adapt and improve project planning and execution, achieve outcomes and ensure sustainability? Are there gender-disaggregated targets and indicators? Are gender- and age- disaggregated data collected? How can the M&E system be improved?*
6. Cross-cutting priorities	• *(Gender equality aspects and vulnerable groups, including rural women, minority groups, Indigenous Peoples, disadvantaged, and people with disabilities)To what extent were gender considerations taken into account in designing, formulating and implementing the project? Has the project been designed, formulated and implemented in a manner that ensures gender equality in access to resources and services, participation and benefits? Was a gender analysis done? Has the project addressed gender gaps/inequalities based on the outcome of the gender analysis?* • *To what extent were Indigenous Peoples' considerations taken into account in project implementation? Has the project conducted FPIC in a manner that enables Indigenous Peoples to be aware of the implications of their participation and benefits thereof? (ESS) To what extent were environmental and social concerns taken into consideration in the design and implementation of the project? Has the project been implemented in a manner that ensures the ESS Mitigation Plan (if one exists) has been adhered to?*

4. Methodology

33. The MTR will adhere to the UNEG Norms & Standards (UNEG, 2016) and align with the FAO–GEF MTR Guide and annexes detailing methodological guidelines and practices.

34. The MTR will adopt a consultative and transparent approach, keeping internal and external stakeholders informed throughout the MTR process. The evidence and information gathered will be triangulated to underpin its validity and analysis and to support its conclusions and recommendations.

35. The information will be collected primarily through three sources: 1. Review of the Project information package (listed under Box A.4.2) 2. Through interview and meetings with relevant stakeholders, 3. Direct observations at project sites.

36. Additional information needed could be collected through a combination of methodologies including (but not limited to) group discussions, telephonic conversations, online surveys and other data collection tools. In evaluating the capacity development and gender mainstreaming, the MTR uses the frameworks and definitions adopted in FAO's corporate policy and strategies and the GEF's Gender Policy and guidelines to which the project adheres. Project's context analyses will be undertaken during the inception phase. As part of the context analyses the evaluation team will have detailed discussion with FAO BH and the National Project Director. Meetings may also be conducted with the LTO and the FLO.

37. As part of the MTR inception phase, the MTR team will be expected to develop an inception report that will include a methodological note based on the suggested MTR questions above and suggesting additional questions or modifications to tailor the MTR to the project needs. Final decisions about the specific design and methodology for the MTR will emerge from consultations between the project team, the MTR consultants and key stakeholders on what is appropriate and feasible in order to meet the MTR's purpose and objectives and answer the MTR's questions.

38. An MTR matrix will be prepared, identifying indicators, sources of information, methods and tools, and a set of criteria to rate the strength of the evidence collected to answer each evaluation question and sub-question accordingly. The evaluation matrix and the various data collection tools will be finalized prior the main MTR phase.

39. The link between evaluation questions, data collection, analysis, findings and conclusions must be clearly made and set out in a transparent manner in the presentation of the evaluation findings. Conclusion and recommendations should be underpinned by a strong set of evidences. The evaluation team should ensure that the sample of project stakeholders consulted equitably represent the various possible perspectives, including in terms of gender balance.

5. Roles and responsibilities

40. The **BH** is accountable for the MTR process and report and is responsible for the initiation, management and finalization of the MTR process. Depending on availability and commitments, the BH may designate another individual, the **RM**, to act on their behalf**.**

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

coordinating the preparation of the FAO Management Response and the associated follow-up report, supported by the LTO and other members of the PTF. Further details on the Management Response can be found in the MTR Guide.

42. The **FAO GEF CU** will appoint a focal point to provide technical backstopping throughout the MTR process, including guidance and punctual support to the BH/RM and MTR team on technical issues related to the GEF and the MTR. This includes support in identifying potential MTR team members,[12] reviewing candidate qualifications and participating in the selection of consultants, as well as briefing the MTR team on the MTR process, relevant methodology and tools. The FAO GEF CU also follows up with the BH to ensure the timely preparation of the Management Response.

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

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

45. The relevant **GEF Operational Focal Point** (OFP) must be involved in any GEF project or programme evaluation process, in accordance with the GEF Evaluation Policy (2019). The BH should inform the OFP of the MTR process and the MTR team is encouraged to consult with him/her during the review process. The team should also keep the OFP informed of progress and send him/her a copy of the draft and final MTR reports.

46. More detailed guidance on the roles and responsibilities of the key individuals and groups involved in the MTR can be found in Annexes 2 and 3 of the MTR Guide.

6. MTR team composition and profile

47. The mid-term review team will include following:

- Team Leader- 1
- Monitoring and Evaluation specialist- Minimum 2
- Agriculture Value Chain Specialist- Minimum 2
- Natural Resource Management Specialist- Minimum 2
- Budget and Finance Specialist-Minimum 2
- Gender and social inclusion specialist- Minimum 2

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

48. The general qualification for each team member is listed below.

Team leader

- At least 10 years' experience of evaluating donor-funded environment projects (multi-focal area) related to community-based natural resource management, sustainable agriculture, and sustainable livestock management with emphasis on gender and social inclusion
- Demonstrated work experience in multi-stakeholder environment including working with government agencies, donor agencies such as the GEF and GCF, in Asia and the Pacific Region. Strong technical knowledge and management skills to provide technical oversight and lead project evaluations

Monitoring and Evaluation Specialist

- At least 5 years' experience in monitoring and evaluating donor-funded environment projects (multi-focal area) related to community-based natural resource management, sustainable agriculture, and sustainable livestock management with emphasis on gender and social inclusion
- Experience in Results-based M & E systems preferably in bilateral or multi-lateral agency projects and programs

Agriculture Value Chain Specialist

- At least 5 years of experience of developing and implementing agricultural value chains in varied geographies
- Experience of working in multi-disciplinary teams to design and evaluate suitable agricultural value chains/interventions

Natural Resource Management Specialist

- At least 5 years of experience of implementing natural resources projects in varied agro-ecologies
- Experience of working in multi-disciplinary teams to design and evaluate suitable interventions related to natural resource management

Budget & Finance Specialist

- At least 5 years of experience in designing and assessing financial management plans and budgets of large donor-funded projects
- Experience of working in multi-disciplinary teams and in the context of projects with complex budgets / financial management plans

Gender & Social Inclusion Specialist

- At least 5 years of experience of designing and implementing gender and social inclusion strategies in varied geographies and in donor-funded environment projects
- Experience of working in multi-disciplinary teams to design and assess interventions to integrate gender and social inclusion dimensions

7 MTR products (deliverables)

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

- **The MTR inception report.** The MTR team should prepare an inception report before beginning data collection. This should detail the MTR team's understanding of what is being assessed and why, and their understanding of the project and its aims (set out in a theory of change). It serves as a map and reference for planning and conducting an MTR and as a useful tool for summarizing and visually presenting the MTR design and methodology in discussions with stakeholders. The inception report details the GEF evaluation criteria, the questions the MTR seeks to answer (in the form of an MTR matrix), the data sources and data collection methods, analysis tools or methods appropriate for each data source and data collection method, and the standard or measure by which each question will be evaluated. The inception report should include a proposed schedule of tasks, activities and deliverables, designating a team member with lead responsibility for each task or product (as appropriate).
- **The draft MTR report(s).** The project team, BH/RM, FAO GEF CU and key stakeholders in the MTR should review the draft MTR report to ensure its accuracy and quality in two review rounds: (a) a first review, taking around 10 working days, by the project team and FAO (BH, LTO, FLO and FAO GEF CU MTR focal point), then a second review, also taking around 10 working days, by the government counterpart(s), key external partners and stakeholders.

- **The final MTR report.** This should include an executive summary and be written in an official language of the country where the project is taking place (English is preferred if there is a choice and if the project involves more than one country with no common official language). It is important that the executive summary is presented in both the official national language and in English. Supporting data and analysis should be annexed to the report, if deemed important, to complement the main report. Translations into other official UN languages, if required, will be FAO's responsibility. The executive summary should include the following paragraphs in order to update the GEF Portal: (1) information on progress, challenges and outcomes on stakeholder engagement; (2) information on progress on gender-responsive measures; and (3) information on knowledge activities and products. The template for the MTR report can be found in Annex 11 and guidance on writing the report in Annex 12 of the MTR Guide.
- **A two-page summary** of key findings, lessons, recommendations and messages from the MTR report, produced by the RM and PMU, in consultation with the MTR team, that can be disseminated to the wider public for general information on the project's results and performance to date. This can be posted as a briefing paper on the project's website but more creative and innovative multimedia approaches, such as video, photos, sound recordings, social media, short stories (for suitable cases or country studies), infographics or even comic or cartoon format, may be more effective depending on the circumstances.
- **Participation in knowledge-sharing events**, such as stakeholder debriefings, as needed.

8. MTR timeframe

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

Table A4.2 Suggested MTR timeline

Task	When/duration (recommended)	Responsibility
Team recruitment	1 month before the MTR field mission	BH with input from the Project Director, FAO GEF CU
Travel arrangements and organization of the agenda and travel itinerary in country for the field mission	4–6 weeks before the MTR field mission	MTR Manager
Briefing of MTR team	2–3 weeks before the MTR field mission	BH/RM, supported by Project Director, LTO/FLO and FAO GEF CU as necessary
MTR inception report	2 weeks before the MTR field mission	MTR Agency
Quality assurance and clearance of the MTR inception report	1 week before the MTR field mission	BH/RM and the FAO GEF CU MTR focal point
MTR missions – confirmation of interviews, meetings and visits	1–3 weeks for the MTR field mission	MTR team recruited by MTR Agency with the support of the NPMU
Production of first draft report for circulation	Timeline for each landscape to be provided by the MTR team based on the briefing meeting.	MTR Agency
Circulation and review of first draft MTR report	5–10 working days for review	BH/RM, NPMU, FAO GEF CU MTR focal point, LTO for comments and quality control (organized by BH/RM)
Production of second draft MTR report	Timeline for each landscape to be provided by the MTR team.	MTR Agency
Circulation of second draft MTR report	5–10 working days for review	BH/RM and key external stakeholders (organized by BH/RM)
Production of final MTR report	Timeline for each landscape to be provided by the MTR team.	MTR Agency
Management Response	1 month after the final report is issued	BH
Follow-up reporting in FAO PPR or GEF PIR	Maximum 6 months after the MR is issued	BH

Annexes

- *FAO–GEF project MTR report outline, including the GEF rating table*
- *Documents to be consulted* – This isa list of important documents the MTR team can consult at the outset, before finalizing the MTR's design and inception report. A list of key documents to be included in the "project information package" are as follows.

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

1. GEF PIF with technical clearance
2. Comments from the GEF Secretariat, the GEF Scientific and Technical Advisory Panel (STAP) and GEF Council members on project design, plus FAO responses
3. GEF-approved project document
4. Project inception report
5. Six-monthly FAO Narrative Progress Reports (NPRs)
6. All annual GEF PIR reports
7. Annual work plans and budgets
8. Risk mitigation plan
9. List of stakeholders
10. List of project sites and site location maps (for planning mission itineraries and fieldwork)
11. Execution agreements under OPIM and letters of agreement
12. Relevant technical, backstopping and project-supervision mission reports, including back-to-the-office reports by relevant project and FAO staff, including any reports on technical support provided by FAO headquarters or regional office staff
13. Minutes of the meetings of the NPSC, NPMC, SSC, SLTC (Odisha), TSG , FAO PTF and other relevant groups
14. Any awareness-raising and communications materials produced by the project, such as brochures, leaflets, presentations for meetings, project web address, etc.
15. GEF-6 Programming Directions
16. Finalized GEF focal-area tracking tools at CEO endorsement,
17. Financial management information, including an up-to-date co-financing table, a summary report on the project's financial management and expenditures to date, , and copies of any completed audits for comment (as appropriate)

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

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

Annexure 2. MTR itinerary for field missions

Field visit to Similipal Landscape, Mayurbhanj, Odisha (September 4-8, 2023)

Date	Place	Field interactions and visits
05.09.2023	Baripada	• Interaction with GLIU team and PD, Watersheds cum DNO, Green-Ag Project, Mayurbhanj, Odisha.
	Tulasibani, Jashipur	• Field visit to crop diversification demonstration plot of Smt. Sabita Rani Mahakud. • Interaction with VIC members including SHG members, Tribal communities (Kolha, Bhumija), Van Suraksha Samiti members, Field level workers of Line departments
		• Field visit to SRI demonstration field, Perennial fodder demonstration field, • Vermicompost units, Convergence activities of Govt. line department
	Kasipal, Jashipur	• Millet Field (Convergence with Odisha Millets Mission), Poultry cage and other convergence activities of line dept.
	Badagaon, Karanjia	• Interaction with VIC members including SHG members, Tribal communities (Bathudi, Bhuinya, Matia), Field level workers of Line departments
		• Field visit to Vermicompost Unit, Subabul fodder tree, convergence activities of other line departments
	Ranipat, Karanjia	• Field visit to SRI demonstration field
06.09.2023		• Interaction with VIC members including SHG members, Tribal communities (Gonda, Bathudi, Kolha), Field level workers of Line departments
	Kadamsul, Kaptipada	• Field visit to vermicompost unit, Subabul tree plantings and Crop diversification demonstration plot (legume and Non-legume), Convergence activities of another line departments
	Nuagaon, Kaptipada	• Field visit to SRI demonstration plot, Interaction with progressive farmer preserving 106 nos. of Indigenous varieties of paddy.
	Sansul, Shamakhunta	• Interaction with VIC members including SHG members, Tribal communities, Van Suraksha Samiti members, Field level workers of Line departments
		• Field visit to Crop diversification plot, vermicompost, Subabul saplings, Sprinkler irrigation system, Perennial fodder demonstration plot, Cashew plantation (Soil Conservation dept.)
	Godipokhari	• Check dam (Soil Conservation dept.), Goat Shed (Veterinary dept.) and convergence activity of other line departments and leave for Baripada

Date	Place	Field interactions and visits
		• Visit to PVTG villages selected for collecting and processing honey.
07.09.2023	Baripada	• Interaction with the collector and District Magistrate, Mayurbhanj cum Chairman, TSG, Green-Ag Project, Mayurbhanj, Odisha and TSG members • Interaction with Field Director, Similipal (South)
08.09.2023	Bhubaneshwar	• Debriefing meeting with Principal Secretory, DAFE and Director Soil conservation and WD

Field visit to Chambal Landscape, Madhya Pradesh (September 20-22, 2023)

Date	Place	Field interactions and visits
20.09.2023	Sheopur	• Interaction with GLIU team, District Collector and District Forest Officer and Deputy Director Agriculture
21.09.2023	Kisanpura	• Interaction with community members including VIC members and TSC
	Divercha	• Interaction with community members including VIC members and TSC
22.09.2023	Morena	• Interaction with GLIU team, District Collector and District Forest Officer and Deputy Director Agriculture
	Kaimara Kalan	• Interaction with community members including VIC members and TSC

Field visit to Desert Landscape, Rajasthan (October 11-13, 2023)

Date	Place	Field interactions and visits
11.10.2023	Jaisalmer	• Interaction with DFO, JD Agriculture, AD Agriculture • Joint Director, Animal Husbandry Department
12.09.2023	Jaisalmer	• Interaction with DC and JD Animal Husbandry
	Beriyala	• Interaction with community members
13.09.2023	Barmer	• Meeting was scheduled with the Additional Director Agriculture at Barmer but it was cancelled by him due his unavailability. Hence, the MTR Team had to return back

Field visit to Corbett-Rajaji Landscape, Uttarakhand (October 31- November 3, 2023)

Date	Place	Field interactions and visits
31-10-2023	Pauri	• Presentation on Project Progress by DPD Pauri and discussions with GLIU team
	Pauri	• Meeting with District Officers from line departments

Date	Place	Field interactions and visits
01-11-2023	Village- Juledi, Cluster 4, Block- Yamkeshwar	• Visit to project village, discussions with VIC members
02-11-2023	Village- Dharkot, Cluster 5, Block- Yamkeshwar	• Visit to project village, discussions with VIC members
03-11-2023	Dehradun	• Meeting with PD GEF and SPMU officials
	Dehradun	• Meeting with Directors, Rajaji and Corbett National Parks
31-10-2023	Pauri	• Presentation on Project Progress by DPD Pauri and discussions with GLIU team

Field visit to Dampa -Thorangtlang Landscape, Mizoram (November20-24, 2023)

Date	Field interactions and visits of Team A	Field interactions and visits of Team B
20/11/2023	TSG Meeting at Lunglei and interaction with Green-Ag staff at Lunglei	
21/11/2023	Depart from Lunglei to West Phaileng, Mamit	Depart from Lunglei to West Bunghmun
		VIC Meeting at West Bunghmun
22/11/2023	VIC Meeting & Site visit at West Phaileng	Site visit at West Bunghmun Proceed to Tleu
	Proceed to Damparengpui VIC Meeting & Site visit at Damparengpui Depart from Damparengpui to West Phaileng	VIC Meeting & site visit at Tleu Depart from Tleu to Lunglei
23/11/2023	Meeting with Field Director- Dampa Tiger Reserve; and Depart from West Phaileng to Aizawl	Depart from Lunglei to Aizawl
24/11/2023	Interaction with SSC members	

Annexure 3. Stakeholders interviewed during the MTR

S.NO	Level	First Name	Last Name	Position	Organization/location
1.	FAO	Takayuki	Hagiwara	FAO Representative in India/Budget holder	FAOIN
2.		Ms. Sheila Avelina	Wertz	FAO Lead Technical Officer (LTO)	FAO
3.		Pierre	Ferrand	Alternate Lead Technical Officer (LTO)	FAO
4.		Sameer	Karki	Funding Liaison Officer (FLO)/ GEF Technical Officer	FAO
5.		Yedidiya	Abera	FAO- Regional Office for Asia and the Pacific (RAP)	FAO
6.		Konda Reddy	Chavva	FAO- Assistant Representative, India Country Office	FAO
7.	National	Franklin	Khobung	Joint Secretary, RFS Division, cum Chairman, National Project Monitoring Committee (NPMC)	Department of Agriculture & Farmers Welfare, Govt. of India New Delhi
8.		R. B.	Sinha	Project Director and Senior Policy advisor	NPMU
9.		Divya	Shah	NRM, Assistant Project Officer	NPMU
10.		Devashree	Nayak	Gender & Social Inclusion Specialist	NPMU
11.		Seema	Sharma	Budget and Finance Specialist	NPMU
12.		Uma	Balaji	Administration and Operations Specialist	NPMU
13.		Hitesh	Awasthi	Animal Husbandry Specialist	NPMU
14.		Abhishek	Saini	IT Specialist	NPMU
15.		Athira	Sobhana	Junior NRM Specialist	NPMU
16.		Ajay	Singh	Junior NRM & Biodiversity Specialist	NPMU
17.		Disha	Sandilaya	Project Assistant, NRM	NPMU
18.		Ankit	Nagar	Budget & Finance Associate	NPMU
19.		Gagan	Kumar	Senior Project Assistant	NPMU
20.		Upasana	Nair	Junior Project Assistant	NPMU
21.	State	Arabinda Kumar	Padhee	Principal Secretary	(Agriculture), Odisha
22.		Subham	Saxena	Director	Soil Conservation and WD, Odisha
23.		Sukanta Kumar	Samal	State Technical Coordinator	SPMU, Odisha
24.		Silla	Pattanayak	Communication Officer	SPMU, Odisha

S.NO	Level	First Name	Last Name	Position	Organization/location
25.		Dr. Sujan	S. Bimal	State Technical Coordinator, SPMU	SPMU, MP
26.		Neena	Grewal	Project Director	SPMU, Uttarakhand
27.		Deepak	Bhatt	Finance Controller	SPMU, Uttarakhand
28.		D.S.	Rawat	Deputy Director (Plan)	SPMU, Uttarakhand
29.		J.C.	Pandey	State Technical Coordinator	SPMU, Uttarakhand
30.		Gulsan	Bisht	Assistant Statistical Officer	SPMU, Uttarakhand
31.		Kahkashan	Naseem	Conservator of Forest	Forest Department, Uttarakhand
32.		Vanlalthlamuana		Additional Director	Agriculture department, Mizoram
33.		Pu	Lalmalsawma	Joint Director & State project coordinator	Agriculture department, Mizoram
34.		Pradip	Chhetri	Deputy Director(EAP)	Agriculture department, Mizoram
35.		Lalramthara		Deputy Director,(F)	Horticultre department, Mizoram
36.		K.	Lalrinmawia	Assistant Director, Fisheries	Fisheries department, Mizoram
37.		Lalfamkima		Deputy Director, Animal Husbandry and Veterinary	Animal Husbandry and Veterinary department, Mizoram
38.		Vanlalmuanpuia	Chhangte	Joint Director (W)	Land resource, soil and water conservation department, Mizoram
39.		Lalnuntluanga		Project officer, Rural department	Rural development department, Mizoram
40.		R.	Lalrinchhani	Deputy Director, Tourism	Tourism department, Mizoram
41.		Lalthlamuana	Pachuau	Scientist, Sericulture	Sericulture deaprtment, Mizoram
42.		Kenny	Vanlalhriatpuia	State Technical Coordinator	SPMU, Mizoram
43.		Jerry	Vanlalremruata	Communication Officer	SPMU, Mizoram
44.		T.	Lalramdinmawii	Budget & Finance Officer	SPMU, Mizoram
45.		Vanlalruati	Ralte	Administration and Operations Officer	SPMU, Mizoram
46.		Daniel	Lalchhanhima	Office Assistant	SPMU, Mizoram
47.	District	Akshay Sunil	Agrawal	Additional District Magistrate (ADM), Mayurbhanj	Mayurbhanj ,Odisha
48.		Prakash Chand	Gogineni	PCCF, Project Director	Similipal Tiger Reserve (STF), Odisha
49.		Samaresh Kumar	Biswal	ACF	Similipal Tiger Reserve (STF), Odisha
50.		Falguni	Behera	ACF	Karanjia Forest Division, Odisha

S.NO	Level	First Name	Last Name	Position	Organization/location
51.		Bhabani Shankar	Kalo	Project Director, Watersheds cum District Nodal Officer	
52.		Sukant Kumar	Subudhi	Deputy Director Horticulture	Horticulture department, Odisha
53.		Siba Narayan	Singh	Block Agriculture officer	Soil Conservation & WD, Odisha
54.		Amarjeet	Mishra	Team Leader & NRM Expert	GLIU, Odisha
55.		Sushanta Kumar	Barik	Rural Livelihood & Community Institution Expert	GLIU, Odisha
56.		Raj Kishore	Panda	Gender & Social Inclusion Expert	GLIU, Odisha
57.		Shashanka Kumar	Panigrahi	MIS Expert	GLIU, Odisha
58.		Sanjay	Kumar	District Collector	Sheopur, Madhya Pradesh
59.		P. K.	Gujre	Deputy Director Agriculture	Sheopur, Madhya Pradesh
60.				Deputy Director Agriculture	Morena, Madhya Pradesh
61.		C.S.	Chauhan	District Forest Officer	Sheopur, Madhya Pradesh
62.		Ankit	Asthana	District Collector	Morena, Madhya Pradesh
63.		Ramswaroop	Dixit	District Forest Officer and In-charge National Chambal Sanctuary	Morena, Madhya Pradesh
64.		P K	Verma	District Forest Officer, Kuno	Sheopur, Madhya Pradesh
65.		Dr. Kalyan	Singh	Senior Scientist and Head	Krishi Vikas Kendra
66.		R. N.	Sharma	Executive Engineer	Water Resource Department, Sheopur
67.		Dr. Subhash	Dohare	Deputy Director Veterinary Services	Veterinary Department
68.		Shilpi	Rathore	Budget and Finance Officer	GLIU, MP
69.		Amritesh	Vasista	Animal Husbandry Expert	GLIU, MP
70.		Pooja	Chaudhry	Admin and operation Officer	GLIU, MP
71.		Sardar Singh	Prajapati	Horticulture Expert	GLIU, MP
72.		Sanjay Singh	Tomar	FFS Expert	GLIU, MP
73.		Shakeel	Khan	MIS Expert	GLIU, MP
74.		Ram Avtar	Sharma	Rural Livelihood Expert	GLIU, MP
75.		Munesh Kumar	Shakya	ASCO	GLIU, MP
76.		Atul Kumar	Pal	Group Leader and NRM Expert	GLIU, MP
77.		Roshni	Singh	Gender and social inclusion expert	GLIU, MP

S.NO	Level	First Name	Last Name	Position	Organization/location
78.		Ashish	Gupta	District Collector	Jaisalmer, Rajasthan
79.		Ashish	Vyas	District Forest Officer	Forest department, Jaisalmer, Rajasthan
80.		R.S.	Narwal	Joint Director, Agriculture	Agriculture department, Jaisalmer, Rajasthan
81.		Mahavir Prashad	Chhimpa	Additional Director, Agriculture	Agriculture department, Jaisalmer, Rajasthan
82.		Ashok	Jahangir	Joint Director, Animal Husbandry Department	Animal Husbandry Department, Jaisalmer, Rajasthan
83.		Aproova	Pandey	Chief Development officer	Pauri, Uttarakhand
84.		Devender Singh	Bisht	Chief Veterinary Officer	Pauri, Uttarakhand
85.		Rajesh	Tiwari	Director, Horticulture	Horticulture department, Pauri, Uttarakhand
86.		S.S	Srivastava	Deputy Project Director/Team leader	GLIU, Uttarakhand
87.		Geeta	Rawat	Gender Expert	GLIU, Uttarakhand
88.		Ramdinliani		District Collector	Chairman Green-Ag project, Lunglei, Mizoram
89.		C.	Malsawmkima	DAO	Secretary Green-Ag. Project, Lunglei, Mizoram
90.		Laldinliana	Hrahsel	EE, IWRD	Irrigation & Water Resources Department, Lunglei, Mizoram
91.		Henry	S.	SS and Head, KVK	KVK, Lunglei, Mizoram
92.		C.	Phiamphu	DDM, NABARD	NABARD, Lunglei, Mizoram
93.		ST.	Lalvensargi	PD, DRDO	DRDO, Lunglei, Mizoram
94.		F.	Lalramcherani	Animal Husbandry and Veterinary department	Animal Husbandry and Veterinary department, Lunglei, Mizoram
95.		R.	Lalsanglura	Account Assistant , DPO office WCD	WCD, Lunglei, Mizoram
96.		B.	Lalzarzova	District Horticulture Officer, Lunglei	Horticulture Officer, Lunglei, Mizoram

S.NO	Level	First Name	Last Name	Position	Organization/location
97.		R.	Lalremruata	Sericulture Inspector	Sericulture department, Lunglei, Mizoram
98.		Agni	Mitra	Field Director, Dampa National Park, Mizoram	Forest Department, Mizoram
99.		Lalchhuanawmi	Pachuau	Team Leader/ NRM expert	GLIU, Mizoram
100.		R.	Lalruatmawia	District Support officer	GLIU, Mizoram
101.		R.	Lalhriatpuia	District Support officer	GLIU, Mizoram
102.		Hmangaihnalaltlingzova		MIS expert	GLIU, Mizoram
103.		Zohmingmawii	Sailo	Community Institution expert	GLIU, Mizoram
104.		Vanlalchhandama		Animal Husbandry expert	GLIU, Mizoram
105.		C.	Lalnuntluangi	Gender Expert	GLIU, Mizoram
106.		H.	Ramchhanliana	FFS expert	GLIU, Mizoram
107.		Eric	Siamchungnunga	Budget and Finance officer	GLIU, Mizoram
108.		H.	Lalramluahpuia	Administration and Operations Officer	GLIU, Mizoram
109.		Grace Sailopari	Sailo	Office Assistant	GLIU, Mizoram

In addition, MTR team also interacted with CRPs in Odisha, Uttarakhand, Mizoram and Madhya Pradesh and conducted 14 FGDs in all landscapes covering VIC members, Women SHGs, farmers etc.

Annexure 4. MTR matrix (review questions and sub-questions)

Evaluation Questions	Indicators/Probes	Sources	Methodology
1. Strategic Relevance			
Extent to which the project's objective and are outcomes are consistent with national, state and sub-state environmental priorities and policies	• Number of consultation/needs/relevance assessments exercises carried out (number)- at national, state, sub-state levels • Whether the project objective and outcomes have been planned based on the environmental needs of the states/landscape	Project data, MoEFCC, MoAFW, FAOIN, NPMU, OPs[13], project staff[14] / district level stakeholders[15]	Secondary data/ document analysis, interviews/ discussions with MoEFCC, MoAFW, FAOIN, NPMU and OPs representatives, project staff / district level stakeholders
Extent to which the project's objectives and results outcomes are consistent with national, state and sub-state development priorities and policies (poverty reduction/livelihoods)	• Number of needs/relevance assessments exercises carried out (number)- at national, state, sub-state levels • Whether the project objective and outcomes have been planned based on the livelihoods/income generation needs of the community (relevance for the beneficiaries) - Number of community consultations carried out	Project data, FAOIN, NPMU, OPs, beneficiaries, project staff / district level stakeholders, community institutions	Secondary data/ document analysis, interviews/ discussions with NPMU and OPs representatives, project staff / district level stakeholders, beneficiaries, community institutions
Is the project objective and outcomes matching to the country, GEF and FAO priorities	• Are the project outcomes congruent with country priorities (Yes/No)? How? • Are the project outcomes congruent with GEF focal areas/operational programme strategies and policy (Yes/No)? How? • Are the project outcomes congruent with FAO Country Programming Framework and policy (Yes/No)? How?	MoEFCC, MoAFW, FAOIN, NPMU, GEF's and FAO's policy documents	Interviews/ discussions with MoEFCC, MoAFW, FAOIN, and NPMU representatives
Relevance of project to landscape level needs	• Are the project outcomes complimenting the needs and priorities of targeted beneficiaries (local communities, men and women, and indigenous peoples) (Yes/No)? How? • Number of detailed landscape assessment(s), including socio-economic assessment of the situation of women, indigenous people and other marginalised groups carried out - In all five landscapes (Y/N) - Number of times - Agencies and stakeholders involved - Issues/challenges faced	Project data, OPs, FAOIN, NPMU, project staff / district level stakeholders	Secondary data/ document analysis, interviews/ discussions with FAOIN, NPMU and OPs representatives, project staff / district level stakeholders

[13] OPs include the host department officials and SPMU personnel

[14] Project Staff: the project personnel at landscape/district level

[15] District level stakeholders include the district administration and TSG

Evaluation Questions	Indicators/Probes	Sources	Methodology
Coherence with other existing policies and priorities	● Is the project's objectives, outcomes and interventions in coherence with other existing policies and priorities	Project data, MoEFCC, MoAFW, FAOIN, NPMU, OPs, project staff / district level stakeholders	Secondary data/ document analysis, interviews/ discussions with MoEFCC, MoAFW, FAOIN, NPMU and OPs representatives, project staff / district level stakeholders
Coherence with other similar initiatives	● Is the project's objectives, outcomes and interventions in line (coherence) with other similar initiatives	Project data, MoEFCC, MoAFW, FAOIN, NPMU, OPs, project staff / district level stakeholders	Secondary data/ document analysis, interviews/ discussions with MoEFCC, MoAFW, FAOIN, NPMU and OPs representatives, project staff / district level stakeholders
Continued relevance and suitability of the project intervention over time.	● Are the project interventions still relevant for the state/landscape/community - Which interventions are relevant now and why - Which interventions are NOT relevant now and why ● Will the project interventions hold their relevance and suitability for the landscape/community needs for next three years - Which interventions will hold their relevance, and why - Which interventions will NOT hold their relevance, and why ● Is the project addressing the developmental barriers (political, social, economic, environmental/climate, gender, etc.) to bring out the desired change? How? ● Has there been any change in the relevance of the project since its formulation (like the adoption of new national/state policies, plans or programmes) that affects the relevance of the project's objectives and goals? What has changed? - What changes are required to be made to make the project more relevant?	FAOIN representatives, NPMU OPs, project staff / district & landscape level stakeholders, beneficiaries, community institutions	Interviews/ discussions with NPMU and FAOIN representatives OPs representatives, project staff / and landscape/district level stakeholders, beneficiaries, community institutions
2. Effectiveness – Progress towards Results			
Project execution on track to achieve its planned results	● To what extent the project has delivered planned outputs/targets to meet each outcome?? - Number of new policy recommendations approved by multi-stakeholder platforms of policy makers to strengthen agro-ecological approach in agriculture and allied sectors at national and	Project data, OPs, NPMU, project staff / district level stakeholder, community institutions	Secondary data/ document analysis, interviews/ discussions with NPMU and OPs and community institution representatives, project staff / district level stakeholders

Evaluation Questions	Indicators/Probes	Sources	Methodology
	State levels (Target=3). Are they technical sound enough to generate the desired outcome? - Number of protected areas in five target landscapes with landscape level threat reduction protocols and indicators (such as hunting, encroachment) integrated into protected area management and monitoring in five target landscapes (Target=3) - Number of stories published in newspapers and other media reports on Green Landscape approach, highlighting the importance of agroecological approaches in the agriculture sector for multiple benefits (within the 5 states and at the national level) - (Target=15) - Number of local plans (including Gram Panchayat (GP)/ Village Council (VC)/ Community level) developed based on spatial decision support systems in five landscapes (Target=8). Are they technical sound enough to generate the desired outcome? - Number of lessons learnt reports published on different themes (environmental, economic, social) documenting relevant lessons learnt (Target=3) - Number of Green Landscape management plans promoting agroecological approaches, with clear environmental targets and sustainable livelihoods, gender and social inclusion considerations included, and synergistic to protected areas management plans within the landscape endorsed and implementation by stakeholders (Target=5 plans covering 350, 000 Ha). Are they technical sound enough to generate the desired outcome? - Number of district level agencies using Green Landscape plans to realign multi- sectoral investments in project areas (Target=3). Are they technical sound enough to generate the desired outcome? - Amount of Government's agriculture sector investment at district levels realigned to support objectives of Green Landscape plans in five landscapes per annum - Number of households that have adopted sustainable agriculture practices on their farms, including agrobiodiversity conservation measures (Target=10,500) - Number of households involved in community natural resources management plans development and implementation in line with overall Green Landscape management objective/s (Target=30000)		

Evaluation Questions	Indicators/Probes	Sources	Methodology
	- Number of new value chains and associated business plans developed for landscape products, linked to agro-ecological farming and sustainable natural resources management in target areas, and under implementation (Target=5) o Value chains have been developed for which all products? o Number of value chains operational? o Inclusivity of the value chains (gender and indigenous people) o Issues/challenges faced and suggestions thereof - Number of households implementing improved livestock management – including nutrition and fodder management (e.g. community fodder banks) –contributing to conservation of global environmental values (Target=5,000) - Number of women participating in and benefitting from female cohort specific Green-Ag (agro ecological) Farmer Field Schools (FFS)- (Target=5,000) - Number of FPIC activities carried out (where and how many) - Number of GLMPs (prepared, approved, under implementation) - Number of Action Plans developed from the GLMPs? Prepared, approved, under implementation ● Have there been any unintended consequences due to project implementation? Details		
Alignment with best practices	● How are the project's completed actions in alignment with the best practices, both in India and globally? ● How aligned are the project's planned activities in alignment with the best practices, both in India and globally?	MoEFCC, MoAFW, FAOIN representatives, NPMU OPs	Discussions with MoEFCC, MoAFW, and representatives of FAOIN, NPMU, and OPs
Impact on the lives of beneficiaries	● Any community infrastructure created/strengthened? - Type and number ● Number of households benefitted from sustainable agriculture practices on their farms, ● What has been the monetary and non-monetary impact on the beneficiaries/communities ● Number of women benefitted from farm field schools ● Number of Farmers Producer Organizations/ Farmers Producer Companies (FPOs/FPCs) developed/strengthened under the project - Membership (%) of women and indigenous people in the FPO/FPC - Representation (%) of women in FPO/FPC management	Project staff , Community institutions, beneficiaries	Discussions with project staff, community institution representatives and beneficiaries

Evaluation Questions	Indicators/Probes	Sources	Methodology
	- Number of households benefitted from value chains and associated business		
Complimenting Natural Resource Management (NRM), Climate Change, and Biodiversity aspects	● Number of community initiatives being implemented under the project to support conservation of globally important species such as the tigers, elephants and the Great Indian Bustard? ● Has any analysis been done to assess the reduction in threat index ● Total Hectares of farms under/brought under sustainable land and water management ● Has any analysis been done to assess the Greenhouse gas (GHG) emission reduction (CO_2 sequestered) ● How have the biodiversity related aspects been integrated into project planning and preparation of GLMPs - Role of Biodiversity Management Committees in project planning, implementation and management (including M&E)? - Use of Biodiversity Register in project planning, implementation and management (including M&E)? ● How have the Climate Change Mitigation (CCM) and NRM aspects been integrated into project planning and preparation of GLMPs ● How have the chemicals and waste management aspects been integrated into project planning and preparation of GLMPs ● How have been the Sustainable Forest Management (SFM) strategy integrated into project planning and preparation of GLMPs - Role of Joint Forest Management Committees (JFMCs) in project planning, implementation and management (including M&E)? - Role of Eco Development Committees (EDCs) in project planning, implementation and management (including M&E)?	MoEFCC, MoAFW, FAOIN, NPMU, OPs	Interviews/ discussions with FAOIN, NPMU and OPs representatives
Consultation and capacity building to ensure the delivery of results	● Number of national dialogue/consultation events held under the project on agricultural environment, environmental concerns, poverty reduction/livelihood - Processes followed - Challenges faced and mitigation measures ● Number of state level dialogue/consultation events held on agricultural environment, environmental concerns, poverty reduction/livelihood - Processes followed - Challenges faced and mitigation measures	FAOIN representatives, NPMU, OPs, project staff / district level stakeholders	Secondary data/ document analysis, interviews/ discussions with FAOIN, NPMU and OPs representatives, project staff

Evaluation Questions	Indicators/Probes	Sources	Methodology
	• Number of NPMU personnel trained (of the total sanctioned and deployed) • Number of SPMU personnel trained (of the total sanctioned and deployed) • Number of GLIU personnel trained (of the total sanctioned and deployed) • Number of Gram Panchayat Support Units (GPSUs) covered for capacity building • Number of Village Council Support Unit (VCSUs) covered for capacity building • Number of Village Implementation Committees (VICs) covered for capacity building		
Policy recommendations generated/ advocacy efforts	• Number of new policy recommendations generated • Number of new policy recommendations approved • Challenges faced and mitigation measures adopted • Policy advocacy efforts undertaken with stakeholders {like Indian Council of Agricultural Research (ICAR), Protection of Plant Varieties and Farmers' Rights Authority, Department of Agriculture, Cooperation and Farmers' Welfare, MoA&FW}, to mainstream agro-biodiversity into national level agricultural programme architecture. - Number of events - Policy/guidelines developed, approved and under implementation	MoEFCC, MoAFW, FAOIN representatives, NPMU, OPs	Secondary data/ document analysis, interviews/ discussions with MoEFCC, MoAFW, FAOIN, NPMU and OPs representatives
Adoption of generated policies	• Number of new approved policy recommendations under implementation • Challenges faced and mitigation measures adopted		
Feedback on possible extent of achievement	• To what extent the project achieved its outputs and outcomes (during its life cycle) • What can /should be done to achieve maximum outputs and outcomes during project life cycle	MoEFCC, MoAFW, OPs, NPMU, project staff / district-level stakeholders	Interviews/ discussions with MoEFCC, MoAFW, NPMU and OPs representatives, project staff / district-level stakeholders
Impact of COVID-19 on project implementation	• Has the project implementation and achievement of results been impacted by COVID-19? - What has been impacted and the extent of the impact - What can/should be done to bring the implementation/progress back on track? • What has been the impact of COVID-19 on - Project beneficiaries	MoEFCC, MoAFW, OPs, NPMU, project staff / district-level stakeholders	Interviews/ discussions with MoEFCC, MoAFW, NPMU and OPs representatives, project staff/district-level stakeholders

Evaluation Questions	Indicators/Probes	Sources	Methodology
	• Project personnel		
Attribution of impact to project	• To what extent can the progress towards impacts be attributed to the project? • Why?	OPs, NPMU, project staff / district-level stakeholders	Interviews/ discussions with NPMU and OPs representatives, project staff / district-level stakeholders
Likelihood of achieving the intended impact	• Are there any barriers/ risks that may prevent future progress towards and the achievement of the project's longer-term objectives? • What can/should be done to increase the likelihood of positive impacts from the project?	OPs, NPMU, project staff / district-level stakeholders	Interviews/ discussions with NPMU and OPs representatives, project staff / district-level stakeholders
Coherence with TOC	• To what extent does the program align with the theories of change, indicators, and anticipated/attained outcomes of its child projects? • What advantages does combining different interventions under one program bring, compared to investing the same amount through comparable alternatives?	OPs, NPMU, project staff / district-level stakeholders	Interviews/ discussions with NPMU and OPs representatives, project staff/district-level stakeholders
3. Efficiency			
Efficient and cost effective implementation	• To what extent has the project been implemented efficiently and cost effectively? - Timeliness of project activities implementation - Cost-effectiveness of activities {the extent to which the interventions have achieved value for resources by converting inputs (funds, personnel, expertise, equipment, etc.) into results in the timeliest and least costly way compared with alternatives}	MoEFCC, MoAFW, FAOIN representatives, NPMU, OPs, project staff / district level stakeholders	Secondary data/ document analysis, interviews/ discussions with MoEFCC, MoAFW, FAOIN, NPMU and OPs representatives, project staff / district level stakeholders
	• "Has management been able to adapt to any changes in conditions and improve the efficiency of project implementation?		
	• To what extent has the project built on existing agreements, initiatives, data sources, synergies and complementarities with other projects, partnerships, etc. and avoided duplication of similar activities by other groups and initiatives?		
	• What can/should be done to improve project delivery and to increase the likelihood of longer-term sustainability of project results?		
	• How is the project management process currently being executed? Are there well-defined mechanisms in place to ensure quality assurance?		
Effective implementation/ instrumentality of Operational Partners Implementation Modality	• To what extent has the OPIM modality been instrumental for effective project implementation and achievement of project objectives?	FAOIN representatives, NPMU,	Interviews/ discussions with FAOIN and NPMU representatives

Evaluation Questions	Indicators/Probes	Sources	Methodology
(OPIM) modality in effective project implementation			
Institutionalization for effective implementation	● National level inter-sectoral coordinating committees - Established and functional - Number of meetings held (in last three years) - Challenges faced and mitigation measures	Project data, FAOIN, OPs, NPMU, project staff / district level stakeholders, community institutions	Secondary data/ document analysis, interviews/ discussions with FAOIN, NPMU and OPs and community institution representatives; project staff / district level stakeholders
	● National Project Steering Committee (NPSC) - Established and functional - Number of meetings held (in last three years) - Challenges faced and mitigation measures		
	● National Project Monitoring Committee (NPMC) - Established and functional - Number of meetings held (in last three years) - Challenges faced and mitigation measures		
	● State Steering Committees (SSC) - Established in all five states - Functional in all five states - Number of SSC meetings held (at least twice a year) - Challenges faced and mitigation measures		
	● Number of project inception workshops organized at national level ● Processes followed ● Challenges faced and mitigation measures		
	● Number of project inception workshops organized at State level (in all 5 states) ● Processes followed ● Challenges faced and mitigation measures		
	● Number of GLIU (District) inception workshops organized in all five landscapes ● Processes followed ● Challenges faced and mitigation measures		
	Technical Support Group (TSG) - Established in all 8 districts - Functional in all 8 districts - Number of TSG meetings held (at least 4 times a year) - Challenges faced and mitigation measures		
	● National Project Management Unit (NPMU)		

Evaluation Questions	Indicators/Probes	Sources	Methodology
	- Established and functional - Staffed with all required personnel - Challenges faced and mitigation measures		
	● State Project Management Units (SPMUs) - Established and functional in all five states - Staffed with all required personnel - Challenges faced and mitigation measures		
	● Green Landscape Implementation Unit (GLIUs) - Established and functional in all 5 landscapes - Staffed with all required personnel - Challenges faced and mitigation measures		
	● Gram Panchayat Support Units (GPSUs) / Village Council Support Unit (VCSUs) - Number established in all 5 landscapes and 8 districts - Functional and staffed with all required personnel - Number of meetings held (in last three years) - Challenges faced and mitigation measures		
	● Village Implementation Committees (VICs) - Numbers of VICs Established in all 5 landscapes and 8 districts - Functional and staffed with all required personnel - Number of meetings held (in last three years) - Challenges faced and mitigation measures		
4. Factors affecting performance			
Effective planning (project design) and readiness for implementation	● Is the project design suited to delivering the expected outcomes? Any changes needed? ● Is the project's causal logic (per its theory of change) coherent and clear? ● To what extent are the project's objectives, outputs, outcomes and components clear, practical and feasible within the timeframe allowed? ● Were there any formal modifications/revisions or appropriate measures taken to address any weaknesses in project design or to respond to changes made between project approval, the securing of funds and project mobilization (prior to project inception). ● What are your views regarding the project's quality and its global value addition? Additionally, do you have any recommendations on how to enhance the value addition of GEF funding and FAO involvement?	MoEFCC, MoAFW, FAOIN representatives, NPMU, OPs	Secondary data/ document analysis, interviews/ discussions with MoEFCC, MoAFW, FAOIN, NPMU and OPs representatives

Evaluation Questions	Indicators/Probes	Sources	Methodology
	● Whether any gender sensitization trainings/activities have been organized for the project personnel and community at the national, state, landscape and GP/village level? Numbers ● To what extent were gender aspects integrated into the project's objectives and results framework? ● Were other actors – civil society, indigenous peoples or private sector – involved in project design/formulation or implementation and what was the effect on project results? (Y/N) - What has been the effect of their involvement or non-involvement on project results? - What are the mechanisms of their involvement and how could these be improved? - How do the various stakeholder groups see their own engagement with the project? ● To what extent the needs and priorities of the Indigenous Peoples have been integrated into the project's objectives and results framework? ● Do the states perceive that the project is contributing to their capacity building in any significant manner?		
Efficacious project implementation approaches	● Is the state/district ready to with capacity to begin/support project operations? - Any changes in context between formulation and operational start ● What are the roles and responsibilities of the executing /execution support agencies in managing and administering the project? - NPMU, SPMU, GLIU ● What have been the main challenges in terms of project management and administration? - How well have risks been identified and managed? - What changes are needed to improve delivery in the latter half of the project? ● Whether any new approach/strategy has been adopted for project execution? - Type of innovation (like technological, financial, institutional, policy, business model) - Why it stands out as an innovation.	MoAFW, FAOIN representatives, NPMU, OPs	Secondary data/ document analysis, interviews/ discussions with MoEFCC, MoAFW, FAOIN, NPMU, OPs
Effective financial management	● What is the process of funds flow for the project? - Is it effective	MoEFCC, MoAFW, FAOIN representatives, NPMU, OPs,	Secondary data/ document analysis, interviews/ discussions

Evaluation Questions	Indicators/Probes	Sources	Methodology
	- Issues and challenges faced and suggestions thereof - Total budget sought (through AWPB), approved, disbursed and utilised – landscape-wise - Under/over utilization, on which heads ● Is a Financial and Procurement Manual available/developed for the project? ● What have been the financial-management challenges of the project? ● To what extent has pledged co-financing been delivered? Percentage of co-financing pledged ● Has any additional leveraged co-financing been provided since implementation? (amount, agency/institution) ● How has any shortfall in co-financing affected project results? ● How has any unexpected additional funding affected project results?	project staff / district level stakeholders	with MoEFCC, MoAFW, FAOIN, NPMU, OPs and; and project staff / district level stakeholders
Efficacious project supervision	• To what extent is the project's governance and supervision model comprehensive, clear, and suitable? ● To what extent has FAO delivered oversight and supervision and backstopping (technical, administrative and operational) during the following stages: - Project identification - Project formulation - Project approval - Project start-up - Project execution ● Whether oversight responsibilities and reporting lines clear? ● Has decision-making been transparent and conducted in timely manner? ● Have there been any notable challenges or shortcomings in the quality of FAO's supervision and technical support to the project? ● To what extent has project management heeded the direction and guidance offered by the PSC and PTF? ● To what extent has the PTF been effective and valuable in its contributions to the project? In what ways could its contribution be improved for better project outcomes?	MoEFCC, MoAFW, FAOIN representatives, NPMU, OPs	Interviews/ discussions with MoEFCC, MoAFW, FAOIN, NPMU, OPs
Effective and enhanced stakeholder engagement	● Is there a stakeholder engagement plan for the project? - Has the stakeholder engagement plan been adhered to and documented?	FAOIN representatives, NPMU, OPs	Secondary data/ document analysis, interviews/ discussions

Evaluation Questions	Indicators/Probes	Sources	Methodology
	- Which all stakeholders are engaged in the project - Specify whether any new stakeholders have been identified/engaged: ● Have all stakeholders been made aware of the ESS plan and the grievance complaint mechanism? ● Does the project work with Civil Society Organizations and/or NGOs? - Activities involved in - Nature of engagement/role - Process of engagement - How can the engagement be enhanced ● Does the project work with private sector? - Activities involved in - Nature of engagement/role - Process of engagement - How can the engagement be enhanced ● To what extent have other stakeholders been involved in project formulation and implementation (like government agencies, women's groups, indigenous populations, disadvantaged and vulnerable groups, people with disabilities)? - What has been the effect of their involvement or non-involvement on project results? - How do the various stakeholder groups see their own engagement with the project? - What are the mechanisms of their involvement and how could these be improved? ● What are the strengths and challenges of the project's partnerships? ● Is the project effectively utilizing national mechanisms for peer reviews?		with FAOIN, NPMU and OPs representatives
Availability of Grievance Redressal mechanism	● Is there a grievance redressal mechanism for the project - National, state, landscape/district, project site/village level - Number of grievances received and resolved - Grievance redressal turnaround time ● What is the process to inform/make aware all the communities/stakeholders, including indigenous communities in the target landscapes, about the grievance mechanism	MoEFCC, MoAFW, FAOIN representatives, NPMU, OPs, project staff / district level stakeholders community institutions, beneficiaries	Secondary data/ document analysis, interviews/ discussions with MoEFCC, MoAFW, FAOIN, NPMU, OPs and; project staff / district level stakeholders; community institutions representatives; and beneficiaries

Evaluation Questions	Indicators/Probes	Sources	Methodology
Effective knowledge management and communications	● What is the knowledge management strategy of the project? - How are the good practices collected and documented? (Collect details of relevant good practices documented under the project thus far) - What all types (and numbers) of knowledge products have been developed under the project; including those for mainstreaming and inclusion of women and indigenous people ● What is the communication strategy of the project? - Communications successes and challenges faced in last three years ● Does the project have a communication and/or knowledge management focal point? - National, state, landscape level ● How effective has the project been in communicating and promoting its key messages and results to partners, stakeholders and a general audience? - How can this be improved? - How is the project assessing, documenting and sharing its results and lessons learned and experiences? - To what extent are communication products and activities likely to support the sustainability and scaling up of project results? ● What all types of knowledge/communication material ● Are there good practices and lessons learned to be shared?	FAOIN representatives, NPMU, OPs	Secondary data/ document analysis, interviews/ discussions with FAOIN, NPMU and OPs representatives
Availability and utilization of Monitoring & Evaluation (M&E) system	● Is the M&E system adequately designed and implemented for the project? - National, state, landscape/district, project site/village level - Number of dedicated M&E personnel deployed at national, state, landscape/district, project site/village level - Number of M&E capacity building activities organized for project M&E personnel and stakeholder ● Is adequate budget available for M&E activities? - National, state, landscape/district, project site/village level ● Is the project's M&E system practical and sufficient (not cumbersome)? (Yes/No) - Why ● How has stakeholder engagement and gender assessment been integrated into the M&E system?	FAOIN representatives, NPMU, OPs, project staff / district level stakeholders, community institutions	Secondary data/ document analysis, interviews/ discussions with FAOIN, NPMU, OPs and community institutions representatives; and project staff / district level stakeholders

Evaluation Questions	Indicators/Probes	Sources	Methodology
	- How could this be improved? ● Does the M&E system operate per the M&E plan? ● Has information been gathered in a systematic manner, using appropriate methodologies? ● To what extent has information generated by the M&E system during project implementation been used to adapt and improve project planning and execution, achieve outcomes and ensure sustainability? ● Are there gender-disaggregated targets and indicators? - Are gender- and age- disaggregated data collected? - Are gender- and age- disaggregated data being reported under the Project? ● How can the M&E system be improved?		
5. Sustainability of project results			
Possibilities of sustaining project impacts	● What is the likelihood that the project results will be useful or persist after the end of the project? ● What are the key risks that may affect the sustainability of the project results and its benefits (considering financial, socioeconomic, institutional and governance, and environmental aspects)? ● Whether any project results, activities lessons or experiences have been replicated (in different geographic areas) or scaled up (in the same geographic area, but on a larger scale and funded by other sources)? - Which project results, lessons or experiences? - Why and how ● What project results, lessons or experiences are likely to be replicated or scaled up in the near future? - Which project results, lessons or experiences? - Why and how ● Are there any financial, socio-political, institutional and governance, or environmental risks to sustainability of project results and benefits; any evidence of replication or catalysis of project results.	MoEFCC, MoAFW, FAOIN representatives, NPMU, OPs, project staff / district level stakeholders, community institutions	Interviews/ discussions with MoEFCC, MoAFW, FAOIN, NPMU, OPs and community institutions representatives; and project staff / district level stakeholders
6. Cross-cutting issues – equity issues (e.g. gender, youth, vulnerable groups) and environmental and social safeguards (ESS)			
Integration of gender equality and inclusion aspects	● Was a gender analysis or an equivalent socio-economic assessment undertaken at project formulation stage or during the execution stage? Details thereof - To what extent were gender considerations taken into account in designing, formulating and implementing the project?	FAOIN representatives, NPMU, OPs, project staff / district level stakeholders	Interviews/ discussions with FAOIN, NPMU, OPs and representatives; and project staff / district level stakeholders

Evaluation Questions	Indicators/Probes	Sources	Methodology
	- Has the project been designed, formulated and implemented in a manner that ensures gender equality in access to resources and services, participation and benefits? - Has the project addressed gender gaps/inequalities based on the outcome of the gender analysis? ● Is a gender inclusion and mainstreaming policy available for the project? ● What are the challenges for the project for gender mainstreaming and inclusion? Suggestions thereof ● Does the project staff have gender expertise? ● Whether any specialised Gender and Social Inclusion Experts are deployed at NPMU and five GLIUs? - Number deployed, and working ● Whether any training(s) on mainstreaming gender in climate change and sustainable agriculture been organized for project stakeholders? - Number of trainings in last three years ● Is there any convergence plan to ensure inclusion of women and women's agencies (from project and other government schemes) in project activities? ● Does the M&E system have gender-disaggregated data? - How is the project tracking gender results and impacts? ● Which results area(s) of the project are expected to contribute to gender equality? (like improving women's participation and decision making; and generating socio-economic benefits or services for women) ● How is the participation of women in project meetings, especially those related to decision making? - Landscape level - Community/village level ● What is the role of TSG in improving the access of women to existing government programmes, schemes and services on forest management, sustainable agriculture production and marketing, livestock management, etc. ● Are there any success stories of project wherein the women were an integral part?		

Evaluation Questions	Indicators/Probes	Sources	Methodology
Integration of the needs of indigenous people and social inclusion aspects in project	● To what extent have the Indigenous Peoples' considerations been taken into account in project planning and implementation? ● Has the project conducted FPICs? - Numbers, landscapes, results ● How has the project made the indigenous people aware about the implications of their participation in the project and benefits thereof? ● Are Indigenous Peoples involved in the project? - How (in planning and implementation of activities)? - Issues/challenges faced; and suggestions to mitigate the same. ● What are the challenges for the project for mainstreaming and inclusion of Indigenous Peoples? Suggestions thereof ● What is the process of obtaining Free, Prior and Informed Consent (FPIC) with the indigenous communities - Any FPIC capacity building activities organized? Details thereof ● Is there a dedicated staff on FPIC at state/landscape level? Number deployed and working. ● Whether any training(s) on mainstreaming and inclusion of Indigenous Peoples been organized for project stakeholders? - Number of trainings in last three years ● What is the role of TSG in improving the access of women to existing government programmes, schemes and services on forest management, sustainable agriculture production and marketing, livestock management, etc. ● How is the project working in convergence with ITDA? Details thereof ● Are there any success stories of project wherein the women were an integral part?	MoEFCC, MoAFW, FAOIN representatives, NPMU, OPs, project staff / district level stakeholders	Interviews/ discussions with MoEFCC, MoAFW, FAOIN, NPMU, OPs and representatives; and project staff / district level stakeholders
Integration of Environmental and Social Safeguards (ESS) and concerns in project	● Was an environmental and social safeguards assessment done for the project? Details thereof - Environmental and Social Safeguards (ESS) risks assessment ● To what extent were environmental and social concerns taken into consideration in the design and implementation of the project? ● Has the project been implemented in a manner that ensures the ESS mitigation plan? - Any deviations? Details thereof ● How has the proximity of project locations to protected areas impacted the project implementation?	MoEFCC, MoAFW, FAOIN representatives, NPMU, OPs, project staff / district level stakeholders	Interviews/ discussions with MoEFCC, MoAFW, FAOIN, NPMU, OPs and representatives; and project staff / district level stakeholders

Evaluation Questions	Indicators/Probes	Sources	Methodology
	● How is the project converging with agencies like National Tiger Conservation Authority, State Forest Departments? ● What all difficulties were faced in the process of setting up inter-departmental institutional mechanisms? What are your suggestions for the same? ● How does the project assess the threats to Protected Areas while planning the activities/interventions? Whether any activities have an adverse impact on these critical habitats? Details thereof		

Annexure 5. List of documents consulted ("Reference list")

Sr. No.	List of Document
1.	GEF PIF with technical clearance
2.	Comments from the GEF Secretariat, the GEF Scientific and Technical Advisory Panel (STAP) and GEF Council members on project design, plus FAO responses
3.	Request for GEF CEO endorsement
4.	FAO concepts note and FAO Project Review Committee report
5.	FAO–GEF project preparation grant document
6.	GEF-approved project document and any updated approved document following the inception workshop, with latest budgets showing budget revisions.
7.	Project inception report
8.	Six-monthly FAO PPRs
9.	Annual workplans and budgets (including budget revisions)
10.	All other monitoring reports prepared by the project
11.	Documentation detailing any changes to the project framework or components, such as changes to originally designed outcomes and outputs
12.	List of stakeholders
13.	List of project sites and site location maps (for planning mission itineraries and fieldwork)
14.	Execution agreements under OPIM and letters of agreement
15.	Technical, backstopping and project-supervision mission reports, including back-to-the-office reports by project and FAO staff, including any reports on technical support provided by FAO headquarters or regional office staff
16.	Any ESS analysis and mitigation plans produced during the project design period and online records on FPMIS
17.	Any awareness-raising and communications materials produced by the project, such as brochures, leaflets, presentations for meetings, project web address, etc.
18.	FAO policy documents in relation to topics such as FAO Strategic Objectives and gender
19.	Contribution to GEF-7 core indicators (retrofitted) for GEF-6 projects
20.	Financial management information, including an up-to-date co-financing table, a summary report on the project's financial management and expenditures to date, a summary of any financial revisions made to the project and their purpose, and copies of any completed audits for comment and co-financing letters submitted at endorsement stage
21.	The GEF Gender Policy (GEF, 2017), GEF Gender Implementation Strategy (GEF, 2018a), GEF Guidance on Gender Equality (GEF, 2018b) and the GEF Guide to Advance Gender Equality in GEF Projects and Programmes (GEF, 2018c), or the most recent versions of these policies
22.	FAO Country Programme Framework documents
23.	FAO Guide to the Project Cycle (FAO, 2012b),

Sr. No.	List of Document
24.	FAO Environment and Social Management Guidelines (FAO, 2015)
25.	FAO Policy on Gender Equity
26.	Guide to Mainstreaming Gender in FAO's Project Cycle (FAO, 2017a)
27.	Free, Prior and Informed Consent Manual (FAO, 2016)
28.	Presentation on project achievement received from visited landscapes
29.	GLMP of Mizoram, Odisha and Uttarakhand

Annexure 6. Results matrix showing achievements at mid-term and MTR observations

Outcomes	Outcome indicators[16]	Baseline	Level at first PIR (self-reported)	Mid - term Target[17]	End-of-project Target	Cumulative progress[18] since project start Level (and %) at 30 June 2023	Mid-term level & assessment	Achievement rating	Justification for rating
To *catalyse a transformative change of India's agricultural sector to support the achievement of national and global environmental benefits and conservation of critical biodiversity and forest landscapes*"									
Outcome 1									
Outcome 1.1. National and state-level institutional, policy, and program frameworks strengthened to integrate environmental priorities ***and resilience*** into the agriculture sector to enhance the delivery of global environmental benefits (GEB) across landscapes of highest conservation concern.	1. Number of new policy recommendations approved by multi-stakeholder platforms of policymakers to strengthen agroecological approach in agriculture and allied sectors at national and State levels	0	0	3	12 (at least 2 per State and 2 at the national level)	**0 (0%)**		Unsatisfactory (U)	Till midterm, there was a target of three lessons learned reports published on different themes (environmental, economic, social) documenting relevant lessons learned. However, to date; reportedly no study report has been formally published/shared.
	2. Number of national and State plans to continue the Green Landscape approach at five landscapes and expand beyond project-targeted landscapes endorsed by multi-stakeholders and with financing committed	0	0	N/A	6 (1 national and 5 states)	**0 (0%)**	N/A	N/A	Planned in Year-6
Outcome 1.2. Cross-sectoral knowledge management and decision-making systems at national	3. Number of protected areas in five target landscapes with threat landscape-level reduction monitoring protocols and indicators (such as hunting, and	0	0	3	7 (Desert National Park, Corbett, Rajaji, Similipal,	**3 (100%)**		Highly Satisfactory (HS)	The target for mid-term has been achieved. However, the Protected Area representative from all five landscapes, have not reported this

[16]This is taken from the approved results framework of the project.

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

[18]Please report on results obtained in terms of Global Environmental Benefits and Socio-economic co-benefits as well.

Outcomes	Outcome indicators[16]	Baseline	Level at first PIR (self-reported)	Mid - term Target[17]	End-of-project Target	Cumulative progress[18] since project start Level (and %) at 30 June 2023	Mid-term level & assessment	Achievement rating	Justification for rating
and state levels to support the development and implementation of agro-ecological approaches at landscape levels that deliver global environmental benefits as well as socioeconomic benefits enhanced	encroachment) integrated into protected area management and monitoring in five target landscapes				Chambal, Dampa, and Thorangtlang)				
	4. Number of stories published in newspapers and other media reports on the Green Landscape approach, highlighting the importance of agroecological approaches in the agriculture sector for multiple benefits (within the 5 states and at the national level)	0	9	15	At least 30 including national and state level	**111 (>100%)**		Highly Satisfactory (HS)	The target for mid-term has been achieved
	5. Number of local plans (including Gram Panchayat/ Village Council/ Community level) developed based on spatial decision support systems in five landscapes	0	0	8	At least 20	**0 (0%)**		Unsatisfactory (U)	Significant work has been done toward the development of the SDSS and the finalization is expected by December 2024. Use of SDSS in development of local plans is yet to happen.
	6. Number of lessons learned reports published on different themes (environmental, economic, social) documenting relevant lessons learned	0	0	3	12	**0 (0%)**		Unsatisfactory (U)	The field implementation of the project started only in November 2022 and it is too early to report and document any lesson learned
Outcome 2									
2.1 Institutional frameworks, mechanisms and capacities at District and Village levels strengthened to support decision-	7. Number of Green Landscape management plans promoting agro-ecological approaches, with clear environmental targets and sustainable livelihoods, gender and social inclusion	0	0	5 plans covering 350 000 ha	5 plans covering at least 1 800 000 ha	**3 plans covering 116193 ha (60%)** (Mizoram, Odisha and Uttarakhand)		Satisfactory (S)	GLMP in Uttarakhand, Mizoram, and Odisha have been developed and approved. GLMP for Madhya Pradesh is yet to be approved whereas for

Outcomes	Outcome indicators[16]	Baseline	Level at first PIR (self-reported)	Mid - term Target[17]	End-of-project Target	Cumulative progress[18] since project start Level (and %) at 30 June 2023	Mid-term level & assessment	Achievement rating	Justification for rating
making and stakeholder participation in Green Landscape planning and management	considerations included, and synergistic to protected areas management plans within the landscape endorsed (developed) and under implementation by stakeholders.								Rajasthan it is yet to be prepared. the GLMPs approved for the three landscapes, do not clearly articulate consultative, informed and coordinated decision making process for adopting agro-ecological approaches synergistic to protected areas management plans, with clear environmental targets and sustainable livelihoods, gender and social inclusion considerations.
	8. Number of district-level agencies (line departments) using Green Landscape plans to realign multi-sectoral investments in project areas.	0	0	15	25 (at least 5 in each Landscape)	**30 (100%)**		Satisfactory (S)	Though target has been achieved, it is only in 3 states (Odisha 8, Mizoram 10, and Uttarakhand 12)
	9. Amount (Percentage) of Government's agriculture sector investment at district levels realigned to support objectives of Green Landscape plans in five landscapes per annum	0	0	To be determined upon completion of Landscape Assessment /Approval of Green Landscape Management Plans.	To be determined up on approval of Green Landscape Management Plans and its actual implementation at the field level.	**Odisha – 95.12%** **Mizoram – 78.68%** **Uttarakhand - 65.43%**		Moderately Satisfactory (MS)	Though reported achievement indicates meeting midterm target; there is little convergence and co-financing due to different planning and approval cycle of Green-Ag and line departments.
Outcome 2.2 - Households and communities able and incentivized to	10. Number of households that have adopted sustainable agriculture practices on their farms,	0	0	N/A	**Total – 68,352** MP: 7,500; Mz: 5,490;	**0 (0%)**	N/A	N/A	Planned from Year 6 onwards

Outcomes	Outcome indicators[16]	Baseline	Level at first PIR (self-reported)	Mid - term Target[17]	End-of-project Target	Cumulative progress[18] since project start Level (and %) at 30 June 2023	Mid-term level & assessment	Achievement rating	Justification for rating
engage in agro-ecological practices that deliver meaningful GEB at the landscape level in target high conservation priority landscapes	including agrobiodiversity conservation measures				Od: 37,500; Rj:3162 Uk:14,700				
	11. Number of households (HHs)involved in community natural resources management plans development and implementation in line with overall Green Landscape management objective/s	0	0	30000	185000	**20496 HHs (68%)** (Mz- 5,190; Od- 11,911; Uk- 3,395)		Moderately Satisfactory (MS)	The achievement is 68%; but only in three states.
	12. Number of new value chains and associated business plans developed for landscape products, linked to agro-ecological farming and sustainable natural resources management in target areas, and under implementation	0	0	5	At least 20 value chains	**0 (0%)**		Unsatisfactory (U)	The value chain plans are being developed.
	13. Number of households implementing improved livestock management – including nutrition and fodder management (e.g. community fodder banks) – contributing to the conservation of global environmental values	0	0	5000	**Total – 46 500** MP: 8000 Od: 22,500 Rj: 6,000 Uk:10,000	**6870 HHs (100%)** MP- 1110; Mz- 435; Od- 4485; Uk- 840)		Satisfactory (HS)	The target for mid-term has been achieved; but there is no visibility on ground.
	14. Number of women participating in and benefitting from female cohort-specific Green-Ag (agro-ecological) Farmer Field Schools	0	0	5 000	**40,000 females** (MP: 4,000; Mz: 2,000 RJ: 3,000 Od: 12,000 Uk: 19,000	**1,557 (31%)**		Moderately Satisfactory (MS)	Reported only in Uttarakhand, Odisha and Madhya Pradesh

Annexure 7. Co-financing table

Sources of Co-financing[19]	Name of Co-financer	Type of Co-financing[20]	Amount Confirmed at CEO endorsement / approval		Actual Amount Materialized at 30 June 2023		Actual amount materialized at midterm (*Confirmed by the review/ evaluation team*[21])	Expected total disbursement by the end of the project
			Cash	In Kind	Cash	In kind		
National and State Government (Govt.)	Govt. of Madhya Pradesh and Govt. of India (GoI)	i) Government Schemes ii) State Project Director/ Deputy Project Director's time	US$ 199.36 million	-	US$ 2,298,021	-	US$ 2,298,021	-
National and State Govt.	Govt. of Mizoram and GoI	i) Government Schemes ii) State Project Director/ Deputy Project Director's time	US$ 61.93 million	-	US$ 153,851	-	US$ 153,851	-
National and State Govt.	Govt. of Odisha and GoI	i) Government Schemes ii) State Project Director/ Deputy Project Director's time	US$ 131.16 million	-	US$ 502,143	-	US$ 502,143	-
National and State Govt.	GoI[22]	i) Government Schemes ii) State Project Director/ Deputy Project Director's time	US$ 193.53 million	-	US$ 42,281	-	US$ 42,281	-
National and State Govt.	Govt. of Uttarakhand and GoI	i) Government Schemes ii) State Project Director/ Deputy Project Director's time	US$ 279.21 million	-	US$ 12,088,795	-	US$ 12,088,795	-
UN Agency	FAO		US$ 3.5 million	-	US$ 812,187	-	US$ 812,187	-
TOTAL			**US$ 868.39 million**	**-**	**US$ 15,897,278**	**-**	**US$ 15,897,278**	**-**

[19]Sources of Co-financing include: GEF Agency, Donor Agency, Recipient Country Government, Private Sector, Civil Society Organization, Beneficiaries, Others.
[20]Grant, Loan, Equity Investment, Guarantee, In-Kind, Public Investment, Other (please refer to the *Guidelines on co-financing* for definitions https://www.thegef.org/sites/default/files/documents/GEF_FI_GN_01_Cofinancing_Guidelines_2018.pdf
[21] As per the information shared by the NPMU-Green-Ag Project
[22]Govt. Of Rajasthan did not provide Co-Financing information for the reporting period June 2022-July 2023

Annexure 7-A. Analysis of Project Funds Utilization

- **Total Budget: USD 902.27 million (33.55+ 868.69)**
- **Project Financing (GEF): USD 33.55 million**
- **Co-financing: Total:- 868.69 USD Million**
  - State of Madhya Pradesh and Government of India (GoI): US$ 199.36 million
  - State of Mizoram and GoI: US$ 61.93 million
  - State of Odisha and GoI: US$ 131.16 million
  - State of Rajasthan and GoI: US$ 193.53 million
  - State of Uttarakhand and GoI: US$ 279.21 million
  - FAO: US$ 3.5 million

Despite the project becoming operational in August 2019, the agreements with operational partners (OPs) were signed and finalized in the first quarter of 2020. The initiation of the project in the states occurred between June 2021 and October 2022. Delays in establishing state and district units have adversely affected project delivery, impacting the utilization of funds. Consequently, significant planned activities such as training, vital research studies, and the appointment of key consultants, which collectively contribute over 80% of the total project cost, could not be achieved within the project timelines. Furthermore, planned studies, another essential component constituting 8.85% of the total allocation, could not be initiated. The allocated budget for the period 2019-2026 is $33.56 million, of which only $2.61 million, or 7.78%, has been spent from June 2018 to the present date.

The table below provides a detailed breakdown of budget allocation versus actual expenditure under different expenditure account heads.

#	Exp Account Head	Budget allocated (BA)	Weight on Total allocation in %	Actual Exp (AE)	% of AE over BA	Balance (BE less AE)	Balance in %
1	Training	16,569,189	49.37%	65,244	0.39%	16,503,945	99.61%
2	Contracts	2,968,964	8.85%	73,836	2.49%	2,895,128	97.51%
3	Consultants	9,994,245	29.78%	1,920,039	19.21%	8,074,206	80.79%
4	Travel	1,803,154	5.37%	126,029	6.99%	1,677,125	93.01%
5	Expandable Procurement	251,077	0.75%	56,944	22.68%	194,133	77.32%

#	Exp Account Head	Budget allocated (BA)	Weight on Total allocation in %	Actual Exp (AE)	% of AE over BA	Balance (BE less AE)	Balance in %
6	Non-expandable Procurement	189,077	0.56%	82,574	43.67%	106,503	56.33%
7	GOE Budget	559,090	1.67%	287,546	51.43%	271,544	48.57%
8	Salaries	1,223,921	3.65%	312	0.03%	1,223,609	99.97%
Total		**33,558,717**	**-**	**2,612,524**	**7.78%**	**30,946,193**	**92.22%**

Based on the available information MTR team has following recommendations to make;

1. **Analysis of activities with respect to project outcomes and mapping of resources.**
   a. Planned activities to be re-assessed with respect to current time and changed environment,
   b. Project objectives / outcomes should be thoroughly analyzed and to be mapped with allocated resources. These resources could be either in house/available or to be procured from outside/open market.
   c. Budget allocations be re-estimated and
   d. DPRs/management Plan to be reviewed for feasibility of implementation.
2. **Identification of Resources**
   a. After analysis of activities, there is an immediate requirement to identify the resources and map with the activities to be performed.
   b. Capability and competence of the required resources in line with the project objectives to be assessed and recruited at highest priority.
3. **Procurement Plan and Procurement Process**
   a. Building upon the identification, it is essential to develop a comprehensive procurement plan outlining target timeline, procurement methods, and conducting the procurement process to acquire the necessary resources.
4. **Continuous monitoring and evaluation**
   a. Proactive measures and continuous monitoring are imperative. Timely and appropriate actions should be taken. The project must establish a systematic monitoring and evaluation system to oversee the progress of project activities and offer proactive guidance. Assigning a dedicated team for supervision and monitoring would enhance the project's timeliness.
5. **Annual Calendar for Training (Total project Cost USD 1,65,69,189)**
   a. As Training is the integral and important part of the project; hence annual calendar for the training to be prepared in advance and to be implemented accordingly.

6. **Restructuring of the cost in line with Project Development Objectives.**
   a. Analysis of activities with respect to project outcomes and mapping of resources will lead to saving and additional funds requirement to perform the activities. Further, the project was conceived during FY 2018-19 and there would be requirement to restructure of the project due to time gap, inflation, change of requirements, change in scope of works etc.
   b. Project should be restructured in line with the Project Development Objective and to take approvals from the competent authorities.
7. **To strengthen the process of Preparing Annual Work Plan and Budget.**
   a. It is essential to enhance the Annual Work Plan (AWP) and Budgeting process. Forming a committee comprising technical and finance personnel can aid in crafting the AWP for the National Project Management Unit (NPMU) and scrutinizing the AWP and Budget of other implementing agencies. The AWP should initially be drafted based on the Overall Work Plan (OWP) with detailed, realistic targets (both physical and financial). Subsequently, the Annual Budget should be formulated based on the finalized AWP.

OWP (Based on the revision of the activities)----→ Annual Work Plan----→ Budget

Following steps are recommended: -

#	By NPMU	By Operation Partners
1	To fix a specified timelines for operational partners to prepare Annual Work Plan cum Budget and submit to NPMU for consolidation and review.	To prepare Annual Work Plan and Budget and to submit the same to NPMU for review and consolidation.
2	To develop a standard format for Annual Work Plan (Physical and Financial Targets) and Budget Formats.	To take approval from the State Steering Committee.
3	To Constitute a committee consisting Technical and Finance staff.	
4	Consolidation and Review of Annual Work Plan and Budget at NPMU level.	
5	To submit and take approval from PMU at MoAFW or competent authority.	
6	To provide necessary training to the staff of Operational Partner to prepare AWP cum Budget.	
7	Regular review of Annual Work Plan and Budget so that all proactive steps could be taken to initiate the process and complete the project within the timeframe.	
8	Variance analysis of Budget is also required on time to time.	

8. **Appointment of Auditors and no regular audits.**

a. As per the information provided following is the status of Audit during 2018 to till date:

Sl. No	State/Implementing Agency	Number of Audit
1	Odisha	1
2	Uttarakhand	1
3	Madhya Pradesh	1
4	Mizoram	2
5	Rajasthan	1

b. NPMU should ensure to plan with auditors to cover at least one detailed audit of all Ops and GLIUs during the FY or as per the mandate given.

9. **To augment the capacity of Finance and Procurement cell and coordination with Ops.**

a. Due to involvement of multiple OPs, activities, sub-activities, there is requirement to augment the capacity of NPMU with some professional staff/firm who can support the Finance and Procurement cell and to coordinate with OPs.

The above system would help: -

i. To prepare AWP cum Budget of the project.
ii. To prepare the Procurement plans.
iii. To support in Finance and Procurement related matters.
iv. To support in audits etc.
v. Preparation and submission of various financial reports required under the project.
vi. Variance analysis of Budget Vs Actual Expenditures.

b. Further, there should be regular capacity building, cross-training Programme for finance and procurement staff of NPMUs, OPs, GLIU etc. so that their capacity can be augmented.

Annexure 8. GEF evaluation criteria rating table and rating scheme

The GEF criteria rating as per the MTR observations is presented below:

GEF criteria/sub-criteria	Rating	Summary comments
A. STRATEGIC RELEVANCE		**Refer section 4.1**
A1. Overall strategic relevance	HS	The project aligns with the nation's priorities, employing a robust country-driven approach; and remains relevant to the country, landscapes, intended beneficiaries and the donor.
A1.1. Alignment with GEF and FAO strategic priorities	HS	The project's objectives and outcomes closely adhere to the ToC, prevailing policies, programs, national priorities, GEF focal areas, operational program strategy, and FAO Country Programming.
A1.2. Relevance to national, regional and global priorities and beneficiary needs	HS	The project is aligned with the policies national-level policies like the National Agriculture Policy (NAP) 2000, National Policy for Farmers 2007, National Mission for Sustainable Agriculture (NMSA), Sub Mission on Agro-forestry, etc., which emphasize conservation and biodiversity, aiming to promote sustainable agricultural practices that safeguard the environment and uphold ecosystem services.
A1.3. Complementarity with existing interventions	HS	The project demonstrates a convergence with pre-existing and emerging national and state-level schemes such as MGNREGA, National Food Security Mission, Millets Mission, etc.
B. EFFECTIVENESS		**Refer section 4.2**
B1. Overall assessment of project results	U	Owing to procedural delays during roll-out and impacted implementation, in effect, the project is in its first year of execution. Thus, no significant results were observed during the MTR. The project states/landscapes are in different stages of implementation with two states/landscapes still not having an approved GLMP.
B1.1 Delivery of project outputs	U	As per B1 above. Till the MTR stage, the project has utilized about a fifth of the total GEF project budget. There are only three approved GLPMs, which have resulted in limited activities under execution.
B1.2 Progress towards outcomes and project objectives	MU	As per B1 and B1.1 The project staff, government officials, stakeholders, and most of the interacted community members lack and vary in their understanding of project concepts/design/threats and envisioned outcomes/results. The GLMPs do not clearly articulate consultative, informed, and coordinated decision-making processes for adopting agroecological approaches synergistic to protected areas management plans, with clear environmental targets and sustainable livelihoods, gender, and social inclusion considerations. The GLMPs, also do not emphatically articulate the threats and needs and challenges of the selected villages and districts

GEF criteria/sub-criteria	Rating	Summary comments
		using the landscape approach, and do not clearly present he linkage of how the proposed interventions will address the barriers/challenges identified in the project's ToC and how will they lead to mainstreaming BD, CCM, LD, and SFM. Interventions/activities proposed in the GLMPs primarily emphasize economic aspects as the entry-point activity for community engagement. Reportedly, this was done for better buy-in for the project in the landscape and among the community. However, such economic activities has not yet demonstrated a clear linkage with environmental benefits.
B1.3 Likelihood of impact	UA	Not rated at MTR
C. EFFICIENCY		**Refer section 4.3**
C1. Efficiency	MU	The institutional structure has been established right from the national down to the village level in the four states. However, there are vacancies in the NPMU. It was also noted that despite being core to project planning and implementation, the ProDoc does not specifies deployment of decentralised planning and environment/climate experts at NPMU and GLIU levels. As per B1.1 above. There appears a need of offering more flexibility in budgetary utilization and revision of some budget line items that do not correspond with operational modalities. GLIU staff in two landscapes (Mizoram and Madhya Pradesh) are facing difficulties in managing project activities spread over two administrative jurisdictions. In all the landscapes, the CRPs have to travel to remote/treacherous locations across different villages of the GPs. Thus, impacting their operational efficiency. In addition, the issue of CRPs being outsiders may affect their operational efficacy.
D. SUSTAINABILITY OF PROJECT OUTCOMES[23]		**Refer section 4.4**
D1. Overall likelihood of risks to sustainability	UA[24]	It is too early to measure the sustainability of project. Hence, the risk to sustainability cannot be rated at midterm.

[23] Sustainability and the likelihood of impact are rated from likely (L) down to unlikely (U), where L means little or no risk to sustainability and U means severe risks to sustainability

[24] UA- Unable to assess the expected incidence and magnitude of risks to sustainability

GEF criteria/sub-criteria	Rating	Summary comments
D1.1. Financial risk	MU[25]	Aligning with current national and state-level schemes/programs, the project envisions to mitigate the financial risks. However, financial convergence is a challenge faced in all landscapes, with no concerted measures in place to ensure the same.
D1.2. Socio-political risks	ML[26]	Despite conducting FPIC and identifying interventions through stakeholder consultation (for social and community acceptance), the project may be affected in the future by changes in government, government policies, and frequent transfers of officials engaged in project implementation.
D1.3. Institutional and governance risks	MU	Frequent turnover in leadership positions at the state level can disrupt organizational continuity and institutional memory, and impact strategic direction and implementation of the project. Additionally, despite efforts made by FAO and the NPMU, there is a lack of coordinated and informed decision-making processes and a visible lack of convergence between the Agriculture and the Forest, Environment and Climate Change Departments.
D1.4. Environmental risks	L	The project is designed to mitigate environmental risks emerging from various policies of the agriculture sector.
D2. Catalysis and replication	UA	The implementation of activities has recently been initiated. Thus, the parameter cannot be rated at the midterm stage.
E. FACTORS AFFECTING PERFORMANCE		**Refer section 4.5**
E1. Project design and readiness	MS	The project's objectives and outcomes strongly align with its ToC, existing policies, programs, global and national priorities, GEF focal areas, operational program strategy, and the FAO's country program and national-level policies. The project is also coherent with the existing national and state-level schemes; and also supports the current national priorities, and maintains a strong country-driven approach. The project persists in confronting the identified barriers to change as outlined in the project document and builds upon convergence as a strategy for implementation. All the OPs have also committed to support the project, and the project with its institutional structure established, is ready for the implementation. However, limited technical experts are available in the NPMU.

[25] MU- Moderately unlikely
[26] ML- Moderately likely

GEF criteria/sub-criteria	Rating	Summary comments
E2. Quality of project implementation	U	Project activities such as FPIC, baseline survey, identification of priority villages, and preparation and approval of GLMP (Uttarakhand, Mizoram, Odisha) have been completed. There is notable engagement of district administration heads in the project, especially in regular review of the project's progress. However, the efforts to facilitate the integration between the departments at the landscape level need more attention and more effort, especially on ensuring financial convergence. As mentioned in B1.2, the three approved GLMPs lack a clear articulation on consultative, informed and coordinated decision-making processes for adopting agroecological approaches synergistic to PA management plans. The activities implemented based on the GLMPs are focussed on economic aspects without a clear integration of the GEF focal areas and the environmental targets. There is a strong need to address threats and challenges as well as livelihood needs of the target villages and districts using the landscape approach. This approach should clarify how the proposed interventions will remove or alleviate the barriers and challenges identified in the project's ToC and how will they lead to mainstreaming BD, CCM, LD, and SFM.
E2.1 Quality of project implementation by FAO (BH, LTO, PTF, etc.)	U	The BH is actively engaged in the NPMU and with the OPs. The NPMU is being managed by FAO. However, the vacancy rate in the NPMU is high. During the COVID pandemic, no Lead Technical Officer (LTO) visits were feasible and the LTO mission happened in September 2022. In 2023, the LTO support was strengthened by providing timely response time for clearance requests. The other Project Task Force (PTF) members, such as GEF Technical Office (GTO) also provided technical insights and support. However, in 2023 no LTO mission was organized, and the plan for 2024 are still pending. LTO's interventions with the NPMU have remained ad-hoc and the BH-LTO exchange took place only twice in 2023. Considering the scope and scale of the Green Ag project, the engagement is lagging and needs to be more frequent.
E2.2 Project oversight (PSC, project working group, etc.)	MU	The institutional structure is in place right from the national down to the village levels. However, the meetings/interactions SSC and TSGs are not as per the suggested frequency, and further deeper convergence between the Agriculture and the Forest, Environment and Climate Change Departments are needed.
E3. Quality of project execution	U	Despite concerted efforts, there is an observed lack in coordinated and well-informed decision-making processes at the landscape level. This is especially apparent in the area of coordination with the forest department (largely limited to activities like providing saplings, training on preventing forest fire, etc.). In addition, the financial convergence (and thus co-financing) remains a challenge. Thus, efforts to facilitate

GEF criteria/sub-criteria	Rating	Summary comments
		integration between different departments at the landscape level require more attention and efforts. The lack of clear understanding among project implementors has been impacting implementation to achieve project's envisioned objectives, while creating linkages for mainstreaming BD, CCM, LD, and SFM among the target communities and for achieving the environmental targets. The planning and implementation project activities, guided by the existing approved GLMPs, need to underscore the environmental advantages of the interventions and align the targets more closely with the project's overarching framework.
E3.1 Project execution and management (PMU and executing partner performance, administration, staffing, etc.)	MU	As mentioned in point E1, E2.1, and E2.2. The institutional structure including the placement of CRPs is established and functioning except in Rajasthan and the state and district administrations are committed to support the project. However, the NPMU needs to recruit various experts (vacant positions of experts as well as experts like those for decentralized planning, environment and climate change, and M&E) . With limited staff, the GLIUs of especially Mizoram and Madhya Pradesh, are facing difficulties in managing project activities spread across two administrative jurisdictions/districts.
E4. Financial management and co-financing	MU	The utilization of the budget remains a challenge. The project became operational in August 2019. However, the agreements with OPs were signed and finalized by the first quarter of 2020. The co-financing is impacted due to different planning cycles of the line departments and the GLPs. The FAO and the OPs need to develop a mechanism to foster financial convergence.
E5. Project partnerships and stakeholder engagement	U	As per E2.1, E2.2 An MOU has been signed between NTCA and FAO for working together in three landscapes (Mizoram, Odisha, Uttarakhand) and Letters of Consent are also available from the SWLW from the other two landscapes (Madhya Pradesh and Rajasthan). However, the efforts to facilitate the convergence and integration of activities with those of the Forest department at the landscape level appear to be limited (to activities like forest department providing saplings, training/orientation on prevention of forest fire and human-animal conflict, etc.), and needs more attention and efforts for streamlined working at the landscape level.

GEF criteria/sub-criteria	Rating	Summary comments
		There are notable engagements of district administration heads in the project, especially in regular review of the project's progress. However, the current district officials have varied understanding of the project's ToC, outcomes and targets.
E6. Communication, knowledge management, and knowledge products	MU	There is a lack of communication material and knowledge products relating to threats faced by the protected areas. This has resulted in varying understanding of the project objectives and outcomes amongst project staff and government stakeholders, and hence the design of GLMPs. The project is supposed to produce three lessons learned reports on different themes (environmental, economic, social). However, no report has been produced. Thus, the corresponding knowledge management activities are also delayed. In Mizoram, the target is set to produce three planned studies. However, only one has been completed and the second study is currently undergoing review, while the third study is awaiting finalization by the State team. The Uttarakhand has produced one study, which has been reviewed by the NPMU and feedback has been provided to the OP. The status of other studies are not clear to the MTR Team in other three states.
E7. Overall quality of M&E	MU	The M&E framework has been integrated with the project's MIS, which is currently in the development phase. However, it is delayed considering that the project has been rolled out almost four years earlier and is already at the midterm stage. Further, there is no ProDoc recommended M&E Expert in the NPMU, SPMUs and GLIUs. A baseline has been conducted in all the project landscapes, but no further studies/assessments have been conducted to compare the change in the situation at the landscape level (in comparison with baseline).
E7.1 M&E design	MU	
E7.2 M&E plan implementation (including financial and human resources)	MU	
E8. Overall assessment of factors affecting performance	MU	Delays in project implementation were due to the COVID 19 pandemic lockdown in 2020 and restriction in 2021. There was also lack of senior technical experts in the NPMU, and delays in onboarding project staff in states (SPMU and GLIU). Additionally, the lack of coordinated and informed decision-making processes, especially the lack of integration of Agriculture and the Forest, Environment and Climate Change Departments at landscape level impacted the project performance.
F. CROSS-CUTTING CONCERNS		**Refer section 4.6**
F1. Gender and other equity dimensions	MS	The gender imbalance was observed within the CRP team in Mizoram, where all 18 CRPs are male. However, despite the remote locations of the selected landscape, there is notable participation of female CRPs and commendable representation of women members in VICs. However, albeit high enthusiasm, there is limited female participation in FFS.

GEF criteria/sub-criteria	Rating	Summary comments
F2. Human rights issues	HS	The project through its Outcome/ Component 1 and 2 aims to contribute directly to Human Rights Based Approaches. For this, FPIC has been conducted. All socio-economic groups have been included in community consultation exercises for needs assessment. Efforts have been made to ensure 30%-40% membership of women in the VICs, including that from the local Women Self Help Groups (WHGs).
F3. Environmental and social safeguards	MS	It is too early to forecast its effects on the environmental and socio-cultural aspects of the landscapes. However, the project addresses the environmental aspects through landscape-specific interventions outlined in GLMPs. As mentioned in Point F2 above, social safeguards (huma rights issues) have been complied in the project landscapes. However, environmental safeguards will come into play when larger set of activities are rolled out in project areas.
Overall project rating	**MU**	**Considering the abovementioned three major findings: (1) the progress of the project is still early stage of its operation; (2) the strong need for thought leadership to be articulated in GLMPs, which is the most critical tool for achieving the project objectives and outcomes; and (3) low budget utilization- only about a fifth of the GEF project funds have been utilized. These would suggest that the overall project rating be 'Unsatisfactory (U)'. However, due to the administrative challenges in establishing funds flow mechanisms (such as some budget line items do not correspond with operational modalities and thus resulting in underutilization) and the restrictions and delays caused by the COVID-19 pandemic, which are outside the control, of FAO and OPs; and the institutional structure established right from national down till the village level, thus, being on a platform to the manage project implementation; the project has been accorded overall rating of 'Moderately Unsatisfactory (MU)'.**

Annexure 9. Staffing at NPMU, SPMU and GLIU as per ProDoc and actual

Staffing of NPMU

#	Designation	ProDoc/ Additional	Status (filled/ not filled)
1	National Technical Coordinator/ Project Director	ProDoc/ Additional	✓
2	National Communication Officer/ Communication and Research Specialist	ProDoc/Additional	X
3	Project Associate Communications	Additional	X
4	FFS Expert	ProDoc	X
5	Agriculture Expert	Additional	✓
6	Participatory Natural Resource Management Expert/ NRM Specialist	ProDoc	X
7	Junior NRM & BD Specialist	Additional	✓
8	Project Assistant (NRM & Biodiversity)	Additional	✓
9	Gender and Free, Prior Informed Consent (FPIC) Expert/ Gender and Social Inclusion Specialist	ProDoc/Additional	✓
10	Project Associate Gender	Additional	X
11	National Consultant; MTR and M& E Specialist	Additional	✓
12	Animal Husbandry Expert/Specialist	ProDoc	✓
13	Project Associate Animal husbandry	Additional	X
14	Community Institutions/Rural Livelihoods Expert	ProDoc	X
15	Green Value Chain Expert	ProDoc	X
16	Ecotourism Expert	ProDoc	X
17	National Dialogue Facilitator/ National consultant - National dialogue facilitator	ProDoc/Additional	X
18	M&E Specialist	Additional	X
19	National consultant - SDSS	Additional	✓
20	National Consultant - Grassland Management Index	Additional	✓
21	National consultant - Economist	Additional	✓
22	National consultant - National dialogue facilitator	Additional	X
23	National consultant - to finalize the study (monitoring lessons learnt)	Additional	X
24	National Consultant - Investment Plans	Additional	X
25	IT Specialist	Additional	✓
26	Budget and Finance Officer/ Budget and Finance Specialist	ProDoc/Additional	✓
27	Administration and Operations officer	ProDoc	✓
28	Project Assistant (Budget & Finance)	Additional	✓
29	Administrative Assistant/ Admin & Operations Assistant	ProDoc/Additional	✓
30	Project Assistant (for PD)	Additional	✓
31	Project Assistant	Additional	X
32	Project Associate (Country Office)	Additional	X
33	Driver	Additional	✓
34	Other consultants on need basis	Additional	X

Staffing of SPMU

SPMU Staffing				
As per pro doc	**Odisha**	**Madhya Pradesh**	**Mizoram**	**Uttarakhand**
State Technical Coordinator	✓	✓	✓	✓
Communication Officer	✓	✓	✓	X
Finance Officer	✓	✓	✓	✓
Accountant				
Administrative Assistant	✓	✓	✓	✓
	X	X	X	Deputy Director (Planning)
	Office Assistant	Office Assistant	Office Assistant	Assistant Statistical Officer
	Office Attendant	Computer Operator	X	X

Staffing of GLIU

GLIU Staffing				
As per pro doc	**Odisha**	**Madhya Pradesh**	**Mizoram**	**Uttarakhand**
Team Leader project	✓	✓	✓	✓
Administrate Assistant	✓	✓	✓	✓
Accountant	X	X	X	✓
FFS Expert	✓	✓	✓	X
Participatory Natural Resource Management Expert	✓	✓	X	X
Animal Husbandry Expert	✓	✓	✓	X
Community Institutions/ Rural Livelihoods Expert	✓	✓	✓	✓
Gender Expert	✓	✓	✓	✓
CRP (1 per VIC, depending on size of GP)	✓(46/50)	✓ (29/29)	✓(18/20)	✓(15/20)
District Support Officer (1 per district)	X	✓	✓	X
Green Value Chain Expert	X	X	X	X
Finance Officer (1 per landscape)	✓	✓	✓	X
	MIS Expert	MIS Expert	MIS Expert	MIS Expert
	Office Assistant	Computer operator	Office Assistant	Office Assistant
	X	X	X	Executive Assistant/ DTP

Annexure 10. State-wise key MTR observations and recommendations

Madhya Pradesh

Key findings

The MTR team visited the landscape in September 2023. The observations and recommendations emerging from the MTR for the State/landscape are presented below.

Relevance

During the interactions at the state, district, and landscape levels, the MTR team observed that there is biotic pressure on the Chambal landscape from a variety of stress factors like ravine flattening for agriculture, run-off from farms to river downstream, foraging free-range livestock, illegal cultivation, unsustainable harvesting and sand mining. The selection of the project areas is highly relevant – most of the project villages are on the forest fringes, dominated by Scheduled Tribes and are socio-economically backward. Hence they warrant the attention of development funding. The project is aligned with the State-level schemes and programme related to sustainable agricultural practices. The MTR did not find any evidence of the project adopting practices that are not in line with, or contrary to, the customary socio-cultural practices of the local population. However, the lack of clarity on project concepts/design/threats among current officials and stakeholders has been observed.

Effectiveness - progress towards results

Due to the delays in the approval and roll out of the project, it is, in effect, still in its first year of implementation. Therefore, the effectiveness of results is assessed from this perspective. The project has been successful in placing project staff, setting up the institutional structures and establishing a good relationship with district-level officials. The process of establishing and engaging with community-level institutions is, however, in its nascent stage in the State.

The project currently engages with 25 priority villages and is still experimenting with approaches that can later be scaled up and replicated across the landscape. The project, however, is being seen as a 'convergence project', and the understanding of the project objectives and outcomes on the part of all the project staff needs to be developed.

While there was active engagement of the different line departments of agriculture and allied sectors as well as of soil and water conservation in the project landscape, the project needs to invest further in establishing active engagement with the forest, environment and climate change departments.

Achievement of outputs and progress towards outcomes

Based on the information available and the interactions conducted, the following has been observed:

- The institutional structure – from the state to the village level – has been established and is functional. However, project activities are yet to start in most cases.
- The geospatial analysis of the landscape is currently under way.
- While the FPIC processes have concluded, they were conducted only in the tribal villages and hamlets.
- GLMP has been prepared, but is awaiting approval.
- Workshops for livestock management have been successfully conducted.
- Proposal for two value chains – pearl millet and finger millet – have been developed.

Likelihood of impact

Despite the disruptions caused by COVID-19, the project has implemented measures to aid in mobilizing the community to engage in project interventions. There is high likelihood of the project achieving the intended impact if it is accorded an extension of 24 months. However, the project needs to work on improving the understanding of stakeholders at different levels on the project outcomes, objectives and goals. Currently, the project initiatives are being tested on a limited scale in the priority villages and it will take time to see the impacts.

Efficiency

All the sanctioned positions at the SPMU and GLIU levels (6 in the SPMU and 11 in GLIU) are filled and 29 CRPs were found to be placed for 25 HPVs at the time of the MTR. Although the project prioritizes environment and climate change as a focal area, there is currently no designated position for an environment and climate change expert at the SPMU and GLIU levels. Though the landscape is spread over two districts, there is only one GLIU. This poses operational challenges since the districts are spread out geographically, making administrative/management coordination with line departments difficult, thereby affecting implementation. It was also observed that the field staff are not provided medical insurance/travel insurance despite their having to frequently travel to remote locations with challenging road conditions and transport infrastructure.

Financial resource and co-financing: During the MTR it was reported that total expenditure of approximately INR 4.95 million (USD 59 656) was incurred till March 2023. The project is working in technical convergence and coordination with line departments in the State. However, due to different approval process and timelines for the annual financial planning of GLMP and that of the line department; there are challenges in financial convergence with the line departments.

Sustainability of project results

As the project is in its initial stages, it is too early to measure the sustainability of project initiatives.

Factors affecting performance

The MTR found that the project's performance was affected by the following factors:

- **Delayed placement of project staff:** The project started picking up pace only after the placement of the project staff, including the CRPs; that was under way till three to six months prior to the MTR exercise. This slowed down the pace of implementation.
- **GLIU staff are unable to manage two districts:** The GLIU staff are finding it difficult to manage the project area spread across two districts. The physical distance makes administrative/management coordination difficult, affecting the alignment with line departments.
- **Understanding of the project among the project staff and district-level officials:** The project was pitched as a 'convergence project' in the State, which undermines its core focus on conservation and aligning the agriculture and environment sectors.
- **Difference in approval processes:** A mismatch in the approval process for the annual financial planning of GLMP and that of the line departments creates hurdles in achieving financial convergence.

Cross-cutting issues

Project officials as well as villagers were found to be well informed about, and actively engaged in, project activities. Despite the remote location of the selected landscape, the participation of female CRPs is noteworthy and the representation of women in the VICs is in line with the recommended levels of 30–40 percent.

Some of the other cross-cutting issues observed during the MTR are:

- The participation of women in FFS sessions was limited.
- A significant number of villagers, including women, lacked a comprehensive understanding of the VIC and its institutional importance within the project.
- Female CRPs display significant levels of motivation in performing their roles, but are constrained by mobility-related challenges as most of them have to depend upon their male family members to take them to project villages.
- Awareness and knowledge regarding the environmental and ecological benefits from the Green-Ag project were generally low among women beneficiaries.

Key observations and recommendations

- **Observation:** The institutional structure – SSC, SPMU, TSG and GLIU – has been established. However, there is a need to develop a common understanding about the project, its objectives and expected outcomes among the project stakeholders/staff.
  Recommendation: The project may consider capacity building of district-level officials. The present material prepared for training may be complemented by adding concepts like triple gender responsibility, practical and strategic gender needs and interests, concept of intersectionality in social exclusion with reference to women-headed households and single women, among others.

  The district-level officials, especially the two DCs, offered inputs on the project during the MTR interactions which the team feels are important to include as part of the recommendations.
  - The DC of Sheopur district said that the project could consider leaving a lasting footprint in the area beyond the project period. He suggested creating plantation blocks along the Chambal River on forest land that is prone to sand mining. This will not only prevent sand mining but also create a lasting legacy. He also emphasized the need to avoid promoting activities that had not been found feasible in the past, like setting up biogas plants.
  - The DC of Morena district said that the project activities should be more context-specific, as similar activities were proposed in the plans for villages with very diverse milieus.
  - Both DCs stressed the need to undertake awareness campaigns and repeated capacity building efforts at the community level as the area is challenging geographically, agro-economically and socially, and changing mindsets will require inputs as well as patience.

- **Observation:** The sanctioned number of 29 CRPs have all been recruited and are working in the HPVs. However, the number of female CRPs is low, though those who have been recruited appeared well motivated. One of the reasons for such low representation is the considerable distances that they have to travel between *puras* (village hamlets) for conducting meetings and other field activities, mostly on foot. Local public conveyance between the *puras* is not available and sometimes women CRPs are driven to meetings and field trips by a male member of their household.
  Recommendation: The project may consider giving some incentive like a safe transport facility or a small travel stipend for encouraging and incentivizing women CRPs.

- **Observation:** The project team has been formed only over the last one year, with district-level staff being appointed in the last six months. Thus, most of the staff have limited grasp of the project's core concepts.
  Recommendation: The project staff requires extensive capacity building on the project's concepts and on how best to capitalize on the existing goodwill from the district

administration. Given the willingness of the departments to work with the project, there is a strong likelihood of the project demonstrating field level outcomes of the agriculture and forest, environment and climate change departments working together to achieve a common goal.

- **Observation:** There is no designated position for an environment and climate change expert and decentralized planning expert at the SPMU and GLIU levels.
  Recommendation: The project may consider deploying these experts in the SPMU and GLIU.

- **Observation:** The VICs have been established. The village residents could recall the subjects discussed in the meetings – the significance of transitioning to organic farming, adopting improved agricultural techniques and cattle vaccination, among others. Nevertheless, during discussions it emerged that a significant number of villagers, including women, do not have a comprehensive understanding of the VIC and its institutional importance within the project.
  Recommendation:
  - This information gap can be addressed by disseminating regular information and building awareness on the VIC through village meetings and appropriate information, education and communication (IEC) material.
  - The FPIC needs to be completed in all project villages and not just in those dominated by the Scheduled Tribes. This can help in strengthening the understanding of the project among the communities, thus, easing the process of establishing VICs and seeking their support in project

- **Observation:** The villages are divided into various *puras,* some of which are located in high lands and others in low-lying lands. Thus, even within a village, the requirements vary from *pura* to *pura*. However, information about the project and project activities has primarily been disseminated at the project cluster level, including FFS.
  Recommendation:
  - Although cluster-level practices can turn out to be immersive and well established locally, village-level holistic learning will still be crucial within the prescribed institutional structure of the VIC and the needs of the project. Henceforth, the GLIU may consider working at the village level, rather than the cluster level.
  - The VICs are currently established at the Gram Panchayat level and will need to be reinstituted at the village level.

- **Observation:** Awareness about the project and participation of women in project activities varies from *pura* to *pura* in project villages. Women's participation in FFS is also limited.
  Recommendation: Efforts are needed to sensitize and involve women at the village level in project activities. The project may consider preparing a separate strategy for Madhya Pradesh for engaging women in the project.

- **Observation:** Some tribal communities depend on forest resources for various activities. They gather fallen dry wood to build shelters and for their domestic fuel requirements. For women, collecting non-timber forest produce, which include wild grass, *gond, shatawari* root, *tendu* leaves and seasonal fruits like gooseberry and *tenti,* is a means of livelihood. However, they feel that their reliance on forests has been restricted because of forest regulations, increasing population and the presence of wild animals near the forest fringes. These communities do not have alternative means of livelihood and are often compelled to work as landless labourers.

Recommendation: The Green-Ag project may focus on developing agro-processing enterprises and encouraging women-led agri-businesses like solar-operated mills, marketing of agro-based local products and processed items like pickles and plant-based medicines, *bajra* (pearl millet) and soyabean products. The GoI's One District One Product scheme can be leveraged for this.

- **Observation:** The human-wildlife conflict was apparent in many clusters. Villagers spoke about how wild animals and stray cattle get into their fields and destroy their crops. Very few households have toilets and villagers often relieve themselves on the forest fringes. Women often have to do so early in the morning when it is still dark due to prevailing cultural and social norms. They often encounter wild animals during such situations. However, villagers were not aware that they can raise such issues in the VIC for resolution. This may be because the communities view VICs as focussing on farmer's welfare and not as a forum to take up such 'forest-farm' issues.
  There is limited membership of women-headed households in the VICs, and no data on this is available. The VICs also lack capacities to take up forest-farm issues in their meetings, and suggest relevant interventions to be included in the GLMPs.
  Recommendations:
  - The capacities of the VICs need to be strengthened and they need to be oriented on the project concepts.
  - Consultations suggest that there are at least 10–20 women-headed households in each *pura* who would need to be engaged as project beneficiaries and as VIC members on priority basis.
  - The GLIU nodal agency staff, the gender focal point and the CRPs may benefit from refresher training programmes, including an understanding of the definition of and focus on women-headed households (including single women). The CRPs and the GLIU nodal office staff can then work on enlisting all such households and ensuring their participation.

- **Observation:** Many women respondents reported about defunct WSHGs in the villages.
  Recommendation: Linking and converging the project area WSHGs with government-run initiatives (especially the Deendayal Antyodaya Yojana-National Rural Livelihoods Mission, Swachh Bharat Mission-Urban and Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme (MNREGS) as well as appropriate schemes initiated by the forest department may be considered.

- **Observation:** During the interactions, the community members shared their experiences on changes in climate, agriculture, and forests.
  - Episodes of erratic rainfall and overall change in rainfall pattern is gradually changing the cropping pattern, with paddy being cultivated in places where only millet was grown earlier. The agricultural productivity has improved following the use of urea and other fertilizers.
  - The ravines are being levelled and turned to cultivable land. There are cases of illegal farming by encroaching on forest land.
  - The number of abandoned cows increased since 2015 after the ban on cattle fairs.
  - Grazing of domestic animals in the forests has reduced because of episodes of wild animals attacking them.
  - The activities of the sand mafia are affecting the turtle breeding grounds and hatcheries.

  Recommendations:
  - The GLIU, supported by the TSGs and the SPMU, needs to integrate activities that address these issues in the GLMP by seeking inputs from community.

- **Observation:** Most of the SPMU and GLIU staff has been inducted recently and there is limited understanding on the project concepts.

  Recommendations:

  - The project staff needs intensive training on project concepts. While class room sessions may be useful, an exposure visit to either Mizoram or Odisha will be helpful in inculcating a better understanding of the project concepts and principles.

Mizoram

The MTR team visited the landscape in November 2023. The observations and recommendations emerging from the MTR for the State/landscape are presented below.

Relevance

During the interactions at the state, district, and landscape levels, the MTR team observed that there is biotic pressure on the Dampa Tiger Reserve and Thorangtlang Wildlife Sanctuary from a variety of stress factors like *jhum* cultivation, unsustainable harvesting, stone quarrying, forest fire, water scarcity, monoculture plantations, traditional hunting and cross-border illegal poaching of wildlife and wild plants, among others. The selection of the project areas is highly relevant – most of the project villages are on the forest fringes, and are dominated by Scheduled Tribes and are socio-economically backward. Hence, they warrant the attention of development funding. The MTR did not find any evidence of the project adopting practices that are not in line with or contrary to the customary socio-cultural practices of the local population. However, the lack of clarity on project concepts/ design/ threats among current officials and stakeholders has been observed.

Effectiveness - progress towards results

Due to the delays in the approval and roll out of the project, it is in effect, still in its first year of implementation. Therefore, the effectiveness of results is assessed from this perspective. Mizoram is in comparatively more advanced stages of plan preparation and implementation than the other States. The project has been successful in placing project staff, setting up the institutional structures and establishing a good relationship with the district-level officials. The process of establishing and engaging with community-level institutions is in an advanced stage. The project currently engages with 28 priority villages and is still experimenting with approaches that can later be scaled up and replicated across the landscape.

While there was active engagement of the different line departments of agriculture and allied sectors as well as of soil and water conservation in the project landscape, the project needs to invest further in establishing active engagement with the forest, environment and climate change department.

Achievement of outputs and progress towards outcomes

Based on the information available and the interactions conducted, the following has been observed:

- The institutional structure – from the state to the village level – has been established and is functional. However, the project activities are yet to start in most cases.
- Baseline reports have been finalized.
- The FPIC processes have concluded and the GLMP has been prepared and approved.
- The implementation of the FFS will be done in the agriculture cycle of 2024, as it could not be organized in 2023 due to the late receipt of FFS modules from the NPMU (after the cropping season was over)
- Curriculum development and workshops on livestock management for FFS have been successfully conducted.
- Among the three planned studies, one has been completed, the report for the second study is currently under review, while the third study is awaiting finalization by the State team.
- Proposals for the development of two value chains (turmeric and Mizo chilli) have been developed.

Likelihood of impact

Despite the disruptions caused by COVID-19, the project has implemented measures to aid in mobilizing the community to engage in project interventions. There is high likelihood of the project achieving the intended impact if it is accorded an extension of 24 months. However, the project needs to work on improving the understanding of stakeholders at different levels on the project outcomes, objectives and goals. Currently, the initiatives are being tested on a limited scale in the priority villages and it will take time to see the impacts.

Efficiency

All the sanctioned positions at the SPMU and GLIU level (5 in SPMU and 11 in GLIU) are filled. However, for 28 priority villages, only 18 CRPs are approved and were found to be placed. Although the project prioritizes environment and climate change as a focal area and builds upon decentralized planning, there is currently no designated position for an environment and climate change expert and decentralized planning expert at the SPMU and GLIU levels. Though the landscape is spread over two districts, there is only one GLIU. This poses operational challenges since the districts are spread out geographically and makes administrative/management coordination with line departments difficult, thereby affecting implementation. It was also observed that the field staff are not provided medical insurance/travel insurance despite their having to frequently travel to remote locations with challenging road conditions and transport infrastructure.

Financial resource: During the MTR it was reported that total expenditure of approximately INR 53.5 million (USD 644 755) was incurred till March 2023. The project is working with several departments in the State like agriculture, rural development, animal husbandry and veterinary forest and environment, as well as the district horticulture department, PRIs and a NGO, Samagra Shiksha). It is also converging with existing schemes such as the Mizoram State Rural Livelihood Mission, MGNREGS and National Livestock Mission. However, despite some technical convergence, the State reported challenges in financial convergence due to the different approval processes and timelines for the annual financial planning of GLMP and that of the line departments.

Sustainability of project results

As the project is in its initial stages, it is too early to measure the sustainability of project initiatives.

Factors affecting performance

The MTR found that the project's performance was affected by the following factors:

- **GLIU staff are unable to manage two districts:** GLIU staff are finding it difficult to manage the project area spread across two districts. The physical distance makes administrative/management coordination difficult, affecting the alignment with line departments.
- **Understanding of the project among the project staff and district-level officials**: The MTR found that the project is perceived as a tool for advancing agriculture in Mizoram. This undermines the focus on the project's objectives and outcomes and the core focus on conservation and aligning agriculture with the environment sector.
- **Difference in approval processes:** A mismatch in the approval process for the annual financial planning of GLMP and that of the line departments creates hurdles in achieving financial convergence.
- **Communication, knowledge management, and knowledge products**: FFS session could not be organized in the State due to delayed communication and approvals for FFS; the FSS module was received after the cropping season was over.

Cross-cutting issues

Project officials and villagers were found to be well informed about and actively engaged in project activities. Particularly noteworthy is the dedicated time commitment from the DCs and the genuine interest displayed by them in timely review and implementation of the project. The main cross-cutting issue observed during the MTR is that gender balance is absent within the CRP team, with all 18 CRPs being male.

Key observations and recommendations

- **Observation:** The SSC, SPMU, TSG and GLIU have all been established in the State. However, the SSC meetings were not taking place on a regular basis.
  The leadership displayed by women, the time dedicated by the female DC, the high level of commitment demonstrated by different stakeholders at the district level were noteworthy. There was a well-balanced representation of staff during the interactions. The project team is well-versed with the project, and understands its limitations and challenges, and actively works towards addressing them.
  Recommendation: The project may consider capacity building of the GLIU staff and appointing decentralized planning experts at the State and GLIU levels. Considering the project's nature, changing field conditions and remote locations, it is recommended that the scope of TSG meetings be broadened to include sharing of findings from the field and insights to aid in planning interventions to be included in GLMP, and that these meetings include representatives from the GLIU staff and villagers as special invitees on a rotational basis. This arrangement would facilitate the sharing of field experiences and contribute to a participative approach at every level.

- **Observation:** While the selection of priority villages has been undertaken in collaboration with the Forest Department, the difficulty in securing the Department's presence at meetings is attributed to jurisdictional constraints. In TSG meetings, its representation is restricted to Mamit district alone. Additionally, the financial authority for both districts rests with DC, Lunglei, as there is only one GLIU for both. The challenge emerges from insufficient coordination in the other district, resulting in complications in aligning with line departments.
  Recommendation: The project could consider the formation of two GLIUs, or the consolidation of villages under a single district. The establishment of two distinct GLIUs would involve structuring separate units to cater to the unique needs and requirements of each district, facilitating more focused and tailored project management. On the other hand, the consolidation of villages under a single district would involve streamlining administrative processes and project coordination by centralizing efforts within a unified district structure. Exploring these alternatives could contribute to enhanced efficiency, streamlined communication and improved coordination, ultimately bolstering the project's overall effectiveness in achieving its objectives.

- **Observation:** Presently, all the 18 CRPs are working in 28 priority villages. However, all of them are male, reflecting a lack of gender balance. It was also observed that the selected areas are situated in remote locations, and the staff is required to cover large distances, and be exposed to dangers such as landslides caused by weather and accidents resulting from poor road conditions.
  The qualification criteria for selecting the CRPs, specifically stipulate a Bachelor's degree in agricultural technology. This has led to the selection of CRPs from other villages and not of persons local to the village, posing a potential challenge as it may not ensure a local resource

for the same village in the future. Due to this requirement, a number of CRPs have to re-locate from their native villages and stay in rented properties in other villages, which imposes a financial burden on them. It was also felt that the villagers relate more to CRPs who are local residents than to those from other villages who engage with them on a rotational basis. This is especially true for the Bru and Chakma speaking communities, who speak a different language than the majority Mizo speaking people.

The salary of CRPs is fixed at INR 10 000 a month, including transport allowance and daily allowance. There is no provision, at present, for the revision of salaries. The CRPs make use of their personal means of conveyance to cover considerable distances and challenging terrains for all their activities, including project meetings.

Recommendation: The project may consider sanctioning 38 CRPs to address the existing human resource shortfall. Women from local SHGs could be recruited to serve as CRPs. The project may also consider offering medical or travel insurance to both GLIU staff and CRPs. Additionally, a performance-based incentive structure could be considered to maintain high levels of motivation among the CRPs, and to attract female candidates. To overcome the limitation of CRPs coming from other villages, the project may explore innovative approaches to ensure that the resources remain deployed within the specific village.

- **Observation:** There is no designated position for an environment and climate change expert and decentralized planning expert at the SPMU and GLIU levels.
  Recommendation: The project may consider deploying these experts in the SPMU and GLIU.

- **Observation:** There is significant participation of villagers in VIC meetings, which are held every month. However the participation of women during these meetings is limited. The people were aware of sustainable practices, biodiversity conservation, land degradation due to unplanned *jhum* practices and climate change. They also appreciated the coverage of their village by the project, since no schemes had been implemented here previously by any department. A proceedings register is maintained with details of VIC meetings (with details of attendance, participants, issues discussed, and the like). The interaction with the VIC members revealed a transparent communication between GLIU team and villagers.
  Recommendation: The project may continue its efforts in raising awareness and disseminating social messages using appropriate IEC materials regarding the significance of VICs, PRIs and CRPs. A gender action plan may be developed for the continuous engagement and participation of women. The capacity building of VICs on technical inputs such as the cultivation of turmeric, value addition and marketing could also be considered.

- **Observation:** The GLMP has been prepared and is approved. However, it does not specifically present the linkage of priority activities of GLMP with the four GEF focal areas (BD, CCM, LD and SFM).
  Recommendation: The GLMP plan may be revised to outline activities that demonstrate a linkage with the four core areas of Green-Ag, aligning it more closely with the core principles and objectives of Green-Ag and ensuring a more effective and targeted approach to address key agricultural and environmental concerns.

- **Observation:** While the project has effectively showcased successful technical convergence across various departments, including agriculture, animal husbandry and horticulture, building upon initial collaborative efforts, financial convergence is lacking. While entities such as the National Bank for Agriculture and Rural Development (NABARD) and the Department Of Sericulture have been actively participating in TSG meetings and working with similar

communities, they have not fully aligned their activities with the project. During the discussions with the MTR team, the TSG-DC emphasized the need for NABARD to engage with FPOs, WSHGs and NGOs involved in the project.

Recommendation: The project may pursue exploring convergence opportunities with NABARD and the Department of Sericulture. Convergence with government agencies such as the Tribal Cooperative Marketing Development Federation of India Limited (TRIFED) and the Handicrafts Directorate (or its equivalent) may be explored for initiating broom grass plantation that can give farmers an additional source of livelihood, including from developing related products like basketry and handicrafts. Skill training for this can be taken up by FPOs and WSHGs. A similar approach may be used for bringing the SLRM on the same platform. Strengthening this synergy could streamline on-ground processes as well.

- **Observation:** While line departments technically converge with the project, there are challenges regarding financial convergence. The impediments stem from variations in the financial planning processes adopted by these departments. These differences in financial strategies and methodologies pose hurdles in aligning budgetary frameworks and achieving a harmonized financial convergence.

  Recommendation: To foster collaboration and coordination for effective financial convergence, it is essential to comprehend the varied financial planning practices among line departments. The project may consider aligning with the annual planning processes of line departments when strategizing and planning activities.

- **Observation:** During the engagement, it was noted that disparities exist among perceived needs, felt needs and actual needs. For instance, there is an opportunity to develop a value chain around jaggery in Tleu village, where people traditionally practise sugarcane cultivation in slope areas under rainfed conditions. The villagers also expressed interest in this. However, the project has not specifically focused on this aspect. Additionally, though there is a lot of stone quarrying in the village, no sustainable strategy has been developed for addressing the pollution caused by this. These instances indicate mismatch between proposed activities and the actual needs and opportunities at the grassroots level.

  Recommendation: To enhance community engagement and effectiveness, the project may consider actively engaging community members in discussions, surveys and workshops to gain a comprehensive understanding of their perceived needs, aspirations and challenges. By fostering open communication and collaboration, the project may better identify the felt needs of the communities. This approach will help ensure that the project aligns with the priorities and concerns of the local population and also promote a sense of ownership and participation among community members. Ultimately, the project's interventions are more likely to be successful and sustainable when rooted in a deep understanding of the specific needs and dynamics of the communities it serves. Furthermore, the villagers have solutions and sustainability plans for their activities, and this knowledge can be utilized for the project.

- **Observation:** The FFS training for turmeric and Mizo chilli is still pending due to a delay in the approval of the curriculum modules. The approval came when the cropping season had already passed. Likewise, some Mizoram Sloping Agriculture Land Technology (MiSALT) farmers also raised doubts about the success of this initiative without the support of rain water harvesting structures and ponds in their fields. The lack of proper communication and timely approvals has also been highlighted by the project staff. Given these delays, villagers are unable to see any ground-level implementation and hence do not perceive the potential benefits from the project. This affects their social buy-in for the project, which is critical. Likewise, in absence of any

tangible progress of project activities, VIC members are losing the motivation to hold regular meetings because of the lack of an agenda to discuss and take forward.

Recommendation: Given the diverse agro-climatic zones and cropping cycles in the landscapes, expediting the approval processes is essential. It is important to proactively communicate the overarching vision, strategy papers, community guidelines, etc, in advance to avoid delayed efforts, save time and effectively convey the intended message to the communities.

In addition, the GLIU must strive to keep the VICs informed on the progress of the project. Exposure visits of concerned villagers to initiatives like poly farming and other activities will generate positive imageries, confidence and ongoing consent for the project.

Moreover, the awareness campaign may also educate the communities on other upcoming opportunities in their region, including the Forest Department's vision of converting the Dampa-Thorangtlang sanctuary into an eco-tourism zone in order to increase footfalls in the sanctuary by working in partnership with local communities, WSHGs, FPOs and others. The project may also consider roping in local women leaders like frontline workers (anganwadi workers), WSHG members and the State-level women members-based organization – Mizo Hmeichhe Insuihkhawm Pawl (MHIP) – in spreading the message about the project.

- **Observation:** The household survey conducted in the State did not collect gender-based disaggregation data, relying instead on the economic condition of households for the final selection of beneficiaries. Further, the SRLM's list of WSHGs has not been sourced from the Block Development Officer (BDO), indicating a lack of a systematic approach in engaging with the targeted group.

  Recommendation: A more systematic and collaborative approach needs to be adopted by actively involving the BDO in the project activities, including the sourcing of the list of WSHGs from the SRLM. This collaborative effort will contribute to a more thorough and precise identification of beneficiaries, ultimately strengthening the impact and effectiveness of the project's interventions.

- **Observation:** Most WSHGs in the project districts are engaged in activities like piggery, raising poultry, selling thrift clothes, running small shops, cattle feed meal, operating small machineries for rice grinding, making candles and soaps. Some WSHG members plant seasonal crops like Mizo chillies and turmeric while others work as landless labourers. The MTR team noted the inclusion of WSHG members in the poly farming initiative at Lunglei-West Bunghmun. In Mamit district, similar activities are yet to be taken up. The team also noted healthy representation of women (30–40 percent) in the VICs, some of whom are WSHG members.

  SLRM teams were not part of the project meetings either at TSG Lunglei or the SPMU meeting at the Directorate of Agriculture, Aizawl. At West Phaileng, Mamit, VIC members and the villagers needed some prompting to discuss the WSHGs and the benefits of SRLM's initiatives.

  Recommendation: While WSHGs are getting steadily involved in on-ground project activities, a more high-level coordination between the agricultural department, TSG and GLIU with the SRLM city/district mission offices will benefit the project in a long term. The project may strengthen its state and TSG level convergence with the SRLM initiative through their active representation in all important project meetings.

- **Observation:** There is a need to sensitize the project staff, CRPs and the VIC on prioritizing and including women-headed households in all project activities, including the selection of VIC members and while undertaking the FPIC. It was revealed during VIC discussions that certain villages have significant number of women-headed households, in some cases as high as 30–

40 percent (as in Dhamparengpui, Mamit). It is well established that women-headed households face multiple layers of discrimination, including accentuated poverty, social disadvantage and lack of agency.
Recommendation: The staff and VIC members must be sensitized to include women-headed households as a part of the project interventions. Likewise, women cultivators, women joint land owners and women-headed households owning farm lands[27] must be prioritized as a part of the MiSALT initiatives. This, however, will require coordination with the land and revenue department, consultations with the VIC and the maintenance of a gender disaggregated database of households in the project villages.

- **Observation:** During the MTR visit, it was observed that the signboards for Green-Ag were not installed at many of the project sites. It is crucial for such signboards to be prominently displayed, not only to signify the presence of the Green-Ag project but also to provide information and acknowledgment of its activities for the benefit of visitors, community members and stakeholders.
  Recommendation: The project may consider installing signboards, as has been done in other States. This measure will help generate awareness and understanding of the Green-Ag project in the local context. It will also facilitate future reference and offer recognition to the project and its activities.

- **Observation:** In the meeting with the MTR team, the GLIU team pointed out during that the incremental salary of GLIU staff is still pending from the FAO end, even though it has been approved by the State. It was further shared that financial calculations had been based on the savings that had accrued and the project getting a two-year extension.
  Recommendation: The NPMU may consider expediting the process of releasing the incremental salary for the project staff, considering the fact that this is the first increment in their three-year project employment.

- **Observation:** The emergence of the greenhouse cultivation of tomatoes and MiSALT demonstration plot in West Bunghmun village serves as a notable example of convergence among various line departments (the horticulture department, rural development department, agriculture department).
  Recommendation: This case study must be considered for documentation in a compendium of good practices by the SPMU, highlighting women's engagement and convergence. Further, a scientific study may be conducted to explore the impact of MiSALT plots on biodiversity.

- **Observation:** The project document targeted 13 725 ha *jhum* cultivation to be brought under sustainable land and water management, considering that the landscape consists of 50 villages. However, currently the project is operating in 38 villages. Thus, achieving the target to bring at least a 10 percent reduction in the threat index of the landscape appears difficult.
  Recommendation: The project may consider revisiting the target based on the actual number of villages where project activities have been planned.

[27] Land tenancy is fluid in the State and widows can get land ownership with the help of the village council without any barriers.

Odisha

Key findings

The MTR team visited the landscape in September 2023. The observations and recommendations emerging from the MTR for the State/landscape are presented below.

Relevance

During the interactions at the state, district, and landscape levels, the MTR team observed that there is biotic pressure on the Similipal Tiger Reserve landscape from a variety of stress factors like foraging free-range livestock, migration, unsustainable harvesting, poaching, ritual/traditional hunting and illegal timber cutting. The selection of the project areas is highly relevant – most of the project villages are on the forest fringes, dominated by Scheduled Tribes and are socio-economically backward. Hence they warrant the attention of development funding. The project is aligned with the State-level policies and addresses the State's priorities. It maintains a strong state-driven approach and persists in confronting the identified barriers to change, as outlined in the project document. The MTR did not find any evidence of the project adopting practices that are not in line with or contrary to the customary socio-cultural practices of the local population. However, the lack of clarity on project concepts/ design/ threats among current officials and stakeholders has been observed.

Effectiveness-progress towards results

Due to the delays in the approval and roll out of the project, it is, in effect, still in its first year of implementation. Therefore, the effectiveness of results is assessed from this perspective. The State, along with Mizoram, is in more advanced stages of plan preparation and implementation. The project has been successful in placing project staff, setting up the institutional structures and establishing a good relationship with the state and district level officials. The project was able to demonstrate convergence of funding from government schemes to address challenges of agricultural biodiversity at the community level. The project currently engages with 66 priority villages and is still experimenting with approaches that can later be scaled up and replicated across the landscape. The project, however, is being seen as a 'livelihood and convergence project'. The current understanding of the project staff must be broadened such that they realize the importance of informed and coordinated decision-making between line departments for improving agricultural biodiversity and reducing pressure on forests.

While there was active engagement of the different line departments of the agriculture and allied sectors as well as of soil and water conservation in the project landscape, the project needs to invest further in establishing active engagement with the forest, environment and climate change department.

While the project has successfully introduced some sustainable agricultural practices for improving agricultural biodiversity, it needs to work on reducing biotic pressure from small ruminants, a key challenge in most landscapes, for the conservation of forest biodiversity.

Achievement of outputs and progress towards outcomes

Based on the information available and the interactions conducted, the following has been observed:

- The institutional structure – from the state to the village level – has been established and is functional. However, project activities are yet to start.
- Baseline reports have been finalized.
- The FPIC processes have concluded, and the corresponding reports are in the finalization stage.

- GLMP has been prepared and approved.
- The implementation of the FFS is currently under way.

Likelihood of impact

Despite the disruptions caused by COVID-19, the project has implemented measures to aid in community mobilization and engagement for project interventions. There is high likelihood of the project achieving the intended impact if it is accorded an extension of 24 months. However, the project needs to work on improving the understanding of stakeholders at different levels on the project outcomes, objectives and goals. Currently, the project initiatives are being tested on a limited scale in the priority villages and it will take time to see the impacts.

Efficiency

Only 13 (5 in SPMU and 8 in GLIU) out of the sanctioned 16 positions are currently filled. Moreover, only 50 CRPs have been authorized for 66 priority villages and only 43 of these were found placed at the time of the MTR. Although the project prioritizes environment and climate change as a focal area, there is currently no designated position for an environmental and climate change expert at the SPMU and GLIU levels. It was also observed that the field staff are not provided medical insurance/travel insurance despite their having to frequently travel to remote locations with limited public transport.

Financial resource and co-financing: During the MTR it was reported that the total budget targeted for the GLMP is INR 226.9 million (USD 2 734 535) of which INR 23.4 million (USD 282 010)has been achieved so far. The project is working in coordination with line departments and government schemes. However, despite the project being successful in gaining some financial convergence, there still are challenges in co-financing due to different approval process and timelines for the annual financial planning of GLMP and that of the line department.

Sustainability of project results

As the project is in its initial stages, it is too early to measure the sustainability of project initiatives.

Factors affecting performance

The MTR found that the project's performance was affected by the following factors:

- **Understanding of the project among the project staff and district level officials:** The MTR found that the project was pitched as a 'livelihood and convergence project' in the State. This undermines the project's core focus on conservation and aligning agriculture with the environment sector.
- **Difference in approval processes:** A mismatch in the approval process for the annual financial planning of GLMP and that of the line departments creates hurdles for financial convergence.
- **Communication, knowledge management and knowledge products:** Delayed communication and approvals led to duplicated/late efforts and affected implementation. For instance, there is no standardized template for the preparation of the GLMP.

Cross-cutting issues

Project officials and villagers were found to be well informed about, and actively engaged in, project activities. Despite the remote location of the selected landscape, the participation of female CRPs is notable. The recommended practice of ensuring 30–40 percent representation of women members in VICs has been followed and there is active participation of WSHG members in the project activities. However, there was limited female participation in FFS, as the timing of the FFS sessions overlapped with women's household duties.

The FPIC has been completed in Odisha and has contributed to building trust, fostering community ownership and promoting environmentally sustainable and socially responsible agricultural practices.

The planning of project interventions takes into account both environmental and social aspects. Some of the challenges, such as water scarcity, the absence of certain fodder species and concerns related to land degradation, have been mitigated through planning the construction of rainwater harvesting structures, the introduction of fodder species like Moringa, planting of fruit-bearing species, and the use of grasses to reduce soil erosion.

Although awareness and knowledge about environmental and ecological benefits from the Green-Ag project was generally low among women beneficiaries, some of them, including women CRPs, were able to discuss improvements in soil quality through interventions and the transition from water-intensive crops like rice to less water-intensive crops such as millets.

Key observations and recommendations

- **Observation:** The institutional structure – the SSC, SPMU, TSG, GLIU – has been established in the State. However, the GESI focal point has been appointed only three to four months earlier and has yet to receive orientation and training. As a result the person is still not entirely familiar with gender and social inclusion themes. Likewise, some SPMU officers expressed interest in learning about GESI themes, but were not aware about how to do so.
  Recommendation: The project may consider capacity building of the district officials and GLIU members, including the GESI focal point person, through gender sensitisation refresher training courses. The present material prepared for training may consider adding concepts like triple gender responsibility, practical and strategic gender needs and interests, concept of intersectionality in social exclusion with reference to women-headed households and single women.

- **Observation:** There is no designated position for an environment and climate change expert and a decentralized planning expert at the SPMU and GLIU levels.
  Recommendation: The project may consider deploying said these experts in the SPMU and GLIU.

- **Observation:** Out of the sanctioned provision of 50 CRPs, 46 CRPs have been recruited in 66 project villages. It will be worthwhile to engage more such resources for the success of outreach and day-to-day field coordination. Moreover, there are no performance-based incentives for CRPs as of now.
  Recommendation: The project may consider deploying the full strength of 66 CRPs to fill the human resource deficit. The project may also consider a performance-based incentive to motivate the CRPs. Additionally, the CRPs can benefit from ongoing leadership trainings, especially male CRPs who were observed to be less expressive than women CRPs.

- **Observation:** Subsequent to the FPIC process, the VICs have been established and the village communities are aware about them. The village community, in fact, rates the quality and extent of discussions in the VICs being more pertinent to their requirements than the existing Palli Sabhas (Odisha equivalent of Gram Sabhas). The participation of women in VIC meetings is significant. The VIC members and the village communities said that they find it easier to raise

their concerns in VIC meetings than in Palli Sabha meetings. A proceedings register of VIC meetings is maintained, with details of attendance, participants, issues discussed and the like.
Recommendation: Ongoing awareness building and social messaging through relevant IEC material on the importance of VIC among communities, PRIs and CRPs should continue. It needs to be noted that the selection of VIC members may vary according to local conditions and circumstances, with instances of one person representing two interest groups at the same time.[28] CRPs and VIC members need to be educated on the importance of inclusion of vulnerable groups. They should identify and enlist all women-headed households and single women in the villages prior to the selection of VIC members. VICs that have already been established may consider ways in which such women members can be inducted, at least on a rotational basis. A similar effort can be made to include transgender persons in the village.

- **Observation:** The GLMP has been prepared and approved. However, it covers activities for a limited period and does not specifically articulate the linkage of priority activities with the four core areas of Green-Ag – BD, CCM, LD and SFM and their targets.
  Recommendation: The GLMP plan may be revised and updated to outline activities that demonstrate a linkage with the four core areas of Green-Ag, aligning it more closely with the core principles and objectives of Green-Ag and ensuring a more effective and targeted approach in addressing key agricultural and environmental concerns.

- **Observation:** The overall understanding of the project among the VIC members and village communities was found to be centred around livelihoods and convergence (agriculture, nutri-garden, poultry, cattle), nutrition and health benefits. Hence, a clear understanding of GLMP activities for long-term environmental benefits, implications on climate change and the like is not very apparent. Similarly, the GLIU seems to be more focussed on promoting alternative livelihoods, in convergence with line departments, for socio-economic benefits. During the interactions, the CRPs also emphasized on the livelihoods aspects while sharing their understanding of the project.
  Recommendation: It is important to re-emphasize the conservation aspects and landscape level approaches in the project through repeated capacity building. The understanding on landscape-level conservation through complementing and symbiotic agriculture-livestock-forestry initiatives should be the dominant narrative for the VICs and the CRPs. While livelihood promotion is one of the many strategies to address conservation, the larger goal of the activities being implemented should be understood by the CRPs.

- **Observation:** In all villages that the MTR team visited, the community mentioned water shortage as a major challenge. The project team has tried to address this by planning/implementing the construction of water conservation structures in the villages through convergence. At the same time, an increase in the number of active borewells was also reported in all villages.
  Recommendation: The agriculture sector is the largest user of water. While working on a landscape-based project, it is important to plan activities around water conservation, water budgeting and water security. The project may consider mainstreaming water as one of the pillars of the GLMPs, covering not only creation of storage and conservation infrastructure in the villages but also focussing on improving awareness and understanding on water conservation. The Union Ministry of Jal Shakti has some schemes with which the project may consider converging. The project may also introduce concepts of water stewardship on a pilot basis in a few villages.

[28] Source: information pack on Green-Ag provided by the SPMU

- **Observation:** The village of Nuagaon in the Kaptipada block is an emerging example of showcasing good practices in the conservation of agricultural biodiversity. A female land owner, Sukanti Parida, has, along with her male relative Chandra Shekhar Parida, preserved 106 varieties of indigenous rice.
  Recommendation: This case study must be considered for documentation in a compendium of good practices by the SPMU, highlighting women's engagement and leadership in the biodiversity component of the project. Sukanti Parida is not only preserving the indigenous variety of rice in her block but also generating employment for 12 persons.
  - The SPMU, through the different line departments, may consider nominating Sukanti Parida for awards constituted by the Government of India, Government of Odisha or even international awards.
  - The Green-Ag project may consider investing energies in scaling up the initiative in other landscapes by supporting farmers wanting to protect their seed heritage.
  - **Recommendation:** The project may consider creating learning platforms for VIC members in which they share emerging best practices and learn from each other. Events to facilitate this can be organized on a quarterly basis at one of the villages. Each event can revolve around a particular theme and there can be a sharing session as well as a field demonstration/visit.

- **Observation:** The Green-Ag project has some good strategic provisions for mainstreaming GESI and for strategy-level commitment to GESI, like minimum mandatory commitment of 30 percent women beneficiaries in major activities, inclusion of landless beneficiaries and safeguarding of indigenous people as well as the inclusion of women-headed households and single women.
  Recommendation: The project can leverage and actualize this strategic GESI commitment through systematic implementation of the project, and monitoring of progress along GESI principles in tandem with the GLMP document, or as an additional GESI implementation action plan with monthly, quarterly, or half-yearly monitoring, as appropriate. This GESI plan can stay dynamic in order to capture information on key GESI commitments or indicators, documentation source for each commitment, timeline as well as responsible agencies (including NGOs and other local governance structures).

- **Observation:** The village communities were observed to be aware about the grievance redressal mechanisms under the Green-Ag project. They initially reach out to the CRP, and if the matter remains unresolved, they contact the GLIU/Block Office of the concerned department. However, during the discussions with the MTR team, it emerged that many VIC members and villagers, especially women, were not fully familiar with the grievance redressal mechanism, indicating that there is still lack of awareness about this in the community.
  Recommendation: Awareness about the grievance redressal mechanism and its processes can be built up among the communities through role plays and scenario building with the help of CRPs. The CRPs can be trained in using such tools. IEC material with infographics detailing the processes step-wise, can be designed.

- **Observation:** One of the villages visited as part of the field visit was a Particularly Vulnerable Tribal Groups (PVTG) village located within the Similipal Forest Reserve. The village community had little information on the project. A honey bee cluster was planned in the area, but the community members did not have any idea of this intervention. They could not articulate their challenges or their felt needs.

Recommendation: Due to socio-cultural reasons, the implementation of project activities in the PVTG dominated villages will take more time than it takes in other villages of the area. The project may consider preparing a PVTG engagement strategy for working in these villages. Government departments have experience of working with PVTGs and they can provide inputs for this strategy. The project may also consider consulting the anthropology department in the local university for guidance on the subject.

- **Observation:** There are numerous free-ranging small ruminants in the project areas/villages, which exert biotic pressure on the forests. Community members also use forests for their fuelwood and timber requirements, along with collection of non-timber forest produce.
  Recommendation: The project may consider community-level sensitization on agro-ecological threats through mapping of biotic pressures on the forests periodically over the project time frame. The initial exercise can be used a baseline and can be compared with the findings in the last quarter of the project to gauge the impact. The project may consider planning activities for reducing the biotic pressure on the forests through the VICs. Rotational grazing can be resorted to for addressing challenges of overgrazing in a particular area. With the help of the forest department, the project may consider focussing on sustainable harvesting practices for non-timber forest produce at the community level.

Rajasthan

Key findings

The MTR team visited the landscape in October 2023. The observations and recommendations emerging from the MTR for the state/landscape are presented below.

Relevance

During the interactions at the state, district, and landscape levels, the MTR team observed that there is biotic pressure on the Desert National Park landscape from a variety of stress factors. The two main ones are: foraging free-range small ruminants livestock and unsustainable harvesting of grass resulting in the habitat of the critically endangered Great Indian Bustard being disturbed. The selection of the project areas is highly relevant – most project villages are on the forest fringes, dominated by Scheduled Tribes and are socio-economically backward. Hence, they warrant the attention of development funding.

Effectiveness - progress towards results

Due to the delayed administrative approval, the project in the landscape is, in effect, still in its first year of implementation. The project is still struggling to place project staff at the state and GLIU level, and to set up the institutional structures. However, despite the absence of a project presence, the district level officials, with their limited understanding of the project, were trying their best to implement the project activities by converging with schemes of line departments.

Achievement of outputs and progress towards outcomes

- SPMU and GLIU have not been established. Designated government officials are managing the activities.
- No CRPs are in place.
- Baseline reports have been finalized.

Likelihood of impact

As there is no institutional structure and project staff, and the GLMP has not been framed, the impact cannot be ascertained at the mid-term.

Efficiency

No SPMU and GLIU were found functional. Moreover, all the positions of CRPs are still vacant. The landscape is spread over two districts, with only one proposed GLIU.

Financial resource and co-financing: During the MTR it was reported that till March 2023 a total expenditure of approximately INR. 2.97 million crore (USD 35 794) has been incurred.

Sustainability of project results

As the project is in its initial stages, the institutional structure has not been set up and project staff are yet to be deployed, MTR cannot comment on the sustainability of the project.

Factors affecting performance

- **Delayed placement of project staff:** The SPMU and GLIU are still not established. No CRPs are in position.
- **Understanding of the project among the project staff and district-level officials:** The MTR found that the project is being comprehended as a 'training and demonstration project'. This undermines the project's core focus on conservation and aligning agriculture with the environment sector.

Cross-cutting issues

During the MTR visit to a project village, there was limited representation of women in meetings. Further, awareness about the environmental and ecological benefits of the Green-Ag project among the beneficiaries was low.

Key observations and recommendations

- **Observation:** The situation in Rajasthan is quite different from that of the other four States. The recruitment of experts/personnel for the SPMU and GLIU have not taken place. However, district-level officials, with their limited understanding of the project, were trying their best to implement the project activities, despite the lack of a project presence. The project was viewed as one for 'training and demonstration' activities. The agriculture department, in spite of limited staff and excess work pressure of budgetary spending in an election year, implemented their activities in the project villages. However, they repeatedly highlighted the need for guidelines on how to implement the Green-Ag project.
  Recommendation: The project may consider holding district-level workshops on the project concepts in the two districts and clarifying the roles and responsibilities of different departments. Additionally, FAO may consider the hybrid mode of implementation in the State (as explained in main report).

- **Observation:** Rajasthan is a unique case of the project staff not being in place. Discussions with the district officials revealed that staff had been recruited through a private company, but they left after not being paid for more than six months. The FPIC processes have not been completed, the VICs are not formed and GLMP has not been formulated.
  Recommendation: The NPMU needs to act urgently to address the human resource challenges for the project. If the staff cannot be placed directly, the project may consider hiring services of a reputed NGO or a private agency.

- **Observation:** Despite the challenges, the TSG is meeting regularly and has shared plans twice with the State for approval, the latest being in September 2023. The earlier plan was rejected while the second one is yet to be approved. Due to the delays in plan preparation, the project is not very popular among the district officials. During the meeting with the MTR team, the DC of Jaisalmer district asserted that a review can only be held if there is progress, pointing out that other projects have taken off in two years, but there was no progress in this project. The district is expecting swift response on the plan that it had shared with the NPMU.
  Recommendation: The NPMU may consider resolving the delays in project planning on an urgent basis.

- **Observation:** The process of village identification in Rajasthan was highly systematic and can be adopted by other States. The list of villages identified through the geospatial analysis was shared with the district officials. The forest department and the agriculture department reviewed the list together and suggested changes based on the proximity of the villages to the Desert National Park. In the process, some villages identified through the geospatial analysis but located far from the Desert National Park were dropped. The agreed list was signed by officials of both the forest and the agriculture department and shared with the project.
  Recommendation: The project may consider adopting this best practice in all the other States. The process in inclusive and builds ownership with the departments at the district level.

- **Observation:** Interactions with the village communities revealed that they have understood the limitation of agriculture as a livelihood in the resource-poor landscape, which has sandy soil and lacks water. They cultivate a single crop in a year and even that is not possible if the rainfall is scanty. They supplement their income by offering their services to the tourism industry, and by tapping into government schemes. They disclosed that they needed mobile connectivity (for education), tube wells and electricity connection, all of which they do not currently have, as they are part of the Desert National Park. Most of the households in the area own livestock that graze over a large area, including the Desert National Park.
  Recommendation: Livestock-based livelihoods for the communities can be promoted under the project; this will also help to reduce free range grazing of the livestock in the national park area.

- **Observation:** The communities in the area are traditionally patriarchal, placing restrictions on women's movement, interaction with males and education. Women SHGs in the village were engaged only in savings and not in revolving their funds.
  Recommendation: Engagement of women in project activities will be challenging for the project. However, linkages with the Deendayal Antyodaya Yojana-National Rural Livelihoods Mission may be considered for engaging with women SHGs.

Uttarakhand

Key findings

The MTR team visited the landscape in October and November 2023. The observations and recommendations emerging from the MTR for the state/landscape are presented below.

Relevance

During the interactions at the state, district, and landscape levels, the MTR team observed that there is biotic pressure on the Corbett and the Rajaji Tiger Reserve landscape from a variety of stress factors like human-wildlife conflict, foraging free-range livestock and migration. The selection of the projects is highly relevant – most of the project villages are on the forest fringes and warrant the attention of development funding. The project is aligned with the State's policies and schemes and addresses its priorities. The MTR did not find any evidence of the project adopting practices that are not in line with, or contrary to, the customary socio-cultural practices of the local population. However, there is lack of clarity on project concepts/design/ threats among officials and stakeholders.

Effectiveness - progress towards results

Due to the delays in the approval and roll out of the project, it is, in effect, still in its first year of implementation. Therefore, the effectiveness of results is assessed from this perspective. The project was successful in placing project staff, setting up the institutional structures and establishing a good relationship with the state and district level officials. The project was able to demonstrate some convergence of funding from government schemes to address challenges of agricultural biodiversity at the community level. It currently engages with 98 priority villages and is still experimenting with approaches that can later be scaled up and replicated across the landscape. The project is seen as a 'livelihood project' in the State. The current understanding of the project staff must be broadened such that they realize the importance of informed and coordinated decision-making between line departments for improving agricultural biodiversity and reducing pressure on forests. While there was active engagement of the different line departments of agriculture and allied sectors as well as of soil and water conservation in the project landscape, the project needs to invest further in establishing active engagement with the forest department as well as the environment and climate change department.

Achievement of outputs and progress towards outcomes

- The institutional structure – from the state to the village level – has been established and is functional. However, project activities are is yet to start in most cases.
- Baseline reports have been finalized.
- GLMP has been prepared and approved.
- The implementation of the FFS is currently underway.
- Workshops for livestock management have been successfully conducted.
- Out of the three studies, the report for one study is currently being reviewed by the NPMU.

Likelihood of impact

Despite the disruptions caused by COVID-19, the project has implemented measures to aid in mobilizing the community to engage in project interventions. There is high likelihood of the project achieving the intended impact if it is accorded an extension of 24 months. However, the project needs to work on improving the understanding of stakeholders at different levels on the project outcomes, objectives and goals. Currently, the project initiatives are being tested on a limited scale in the priority villages and it will take time to see the impacts.

Efficiency

All the sanctioned positions (5 in SPMU and 10 in GLIU) have been filled at the SPMU and GLIU level. However, only 20 CRPs have been approved for 98 priority villages, of which only 15 CRPs were found to be working during the MTR field visits. The project prioritizes environment and climate change as a focal area, but there is currently no designated position for an environmental and climate change expert at the SPMU and GLIU levels. It was also observed that the field staff are not provided medical insurance/travel insurance despite their having to frequently travel to remote locations with poor public transport facilities.

Financial resource: During the MTR it was reported that total expenditure of INR 26.08 million (USD 314 309) has been incurred till March 2023. The State is working in coordination with line departments and not-for-profit organizations like the Hans Foundation, and converging with existing schemes/ programmes. However, the State reported issues in co-financing due to different approval process and timelines for the annual financial planning of GLMP and that of the line departments.

Sustainability of project results

As the project is in its initial stages, it is too early to measure the sustainability of project initiatives.

Factors affecting performance

The MTR found that the project's performance was affected by the following factors:

- **Understanding of the project among the project staff and district level officials:** The project was pitched as a 'livelihood project' in the State. This undermines the project's core focus on conservation and aligning agriculture with the environment sector. The current Chief Development Officer of Pauri district was largely unaware of the project's vision, objectives and strategy.
- **Difference in approval processes:** A mismatch in the approval process for the annual financial planning of GLMP and that of the line departments creates hurdles for achieving financial convergence.
- **Communication, knowledge management, and knowledge products:** Delayed communication and approvals led to duplicated/late efforts and affected implementation. For instance, because of no standardized guidelines and instructions from the NPMU on the preparation of GLMP, household surveys were conducted twice in the State.

Cross-cutting issues

Project officials as well as villagers were found to be well informed about, and actively engaged in, project activities. Despite the remote location of the selected landscape, the participation of female CRPs is noteworthy and the representation of women in the VICs is in line with the recommended levels of 30–40 percent, along with the active participation of WSHG members.

Key observations and recommendations

- **Observation:** The institutional structure – SSC, SPMU, TSG and GLIUs – has been established in the State. However, human resources were found to be insufficient.
  Recommendation: The project may consider capacity building of the district officials and appointing different experts at the State level.

- **Observation:** There is no designated position for an environment and climate change expert and decentralized planning expert at the SPMU and GLIU levels.
  Recommendation: The project may consider deploying these experts in the SPMU and GLIU.

- **Observation:** Presently only 15 CRPs have been recruited in 98 priority villages against the sanctioned 20 positions. More CRPs are needed for outreach and day-to-day field coordination.
  Recommendation: The project may consider sanctioning 99 CRPs to plug the human resource deficit. The project may also consider offering a performance-based incentive structure to keep the CRPs motivated.

- **Observation:** The participation of women in monthly VIC meetings is noteworthy. A proceedings register of VIC meetings is maintained with details of attendance, participants, issues discussed, and the like.
  Recommendation: The project may continue efforts in raising awareness and disseminating social messages using appropriate IEC materials regarding the significance of VICs within communities, PRIs and among CRPs.

- **Observation:** The GLMP has been prepared village-wise and has been approved. However, it does not articulate how the proposed activities will help achieve the GEF focal area targets of BD, CCM, LD and SFM.
  Recommendation: In addition to the activities delineated in the GLMP, the project's impact can be enhanced by incorporating the development and digitization of People Biodiversity Registers (PBR), which will document information about local biodiversity. This initiative aligns with the overarching goal of promoting sustainable practices and conservation efforts within the community, fostering a more comprehensive and inclusive approach to biodiversity management.

- **Observation:** VIC members and village communities saw the project as a means for resolving human-wildlife conflict by providing for farm fencing. However, the project's objectives extend beyond protecting crops from wild animals and securing livelihoods, and aim to address broader goals. While the assumption that tackling alternate livelihoods reduces dependence on forests is valid, the GLMP lacks clear connections between socio-economic benefits and achieving GEBs.
  Recommendation: The project may consider making villagers/VICs, CRPs and other stakeholders aware of the conservation aspect of the project, along with the sustainable management of resources. While resolving the human-wildlife conflict is one of the many strategies to address conservation, this larger goal should also be understood by everyone.

- **Observation:** The GLIU has compiled various initiatives and programmes executed by different departments and have developed a convergence plan for the Gram Panchayat Development Plan (GPDP) in high-priority areas for three years. Regrettably, this plan has not been put into action, leading to a decline in the morale of farmers.
  Recommendation: It is recommended that the project may undertake a few entry-point activities. These activities can be instrumental in supporting farmers and boosting the motivation of project staff while the GLIU finds ways to execute the convergence plan for the GPDP in high-priority areas.

- **Observation:** In Uttarakhand, villagers engage in subsistence agriculture with small land holdings, while a significant portion of the younger generation has migrated to urban areas for white-collar jobs. The prevalent practice of organic farming has no negative impact on forests. However, due to the limited number of people involved in agriculture, land is left fallow,

leading to growth of weeds and subsequent human-wildlife conflict, as these attract animals. During the MTR team's interactions many villagers engaged in agriculture requested fencing to safeguard their crops from wild animals like monkeys and wild boars.
Recommendation: Given the small size of land holdings, there is need for the project to explore and strategize group activities rather than focusing on individual endeavours. This approach recognizes the collective potential and collaborative efforts within communities, fostering a more impactful and sustainable implementation of the project's objectives. Group-based planning would not only help optimize resource utilization, but also will help promote shared learning, mutual support and a sense of community engagement, enhancing the overall effectiveness and resilience of the project initiatives.

- **Observation:** In all villages visited as part of the field visits, the community mentioned water shortage as one of the major challenges. The project team has planned to address this by planning/implementing the construction of water conservation structures in the villages through convergence with concerned line departments and schemes.
  Recommendation: The project could explore integrating water conservation as a fundamental component of the GLMPs, encompassing not only the establishment of storage and conservation infrastructure in villages but also enhancing awareness and knowledge of the subject. The project may consider tapping into schemes of the Union Ministry of Jal Shakti.

- **Observation:** The village communities were seen to have a broad awareness of the grievance redressal mechanism under the project. If they face any issue, they first contact the CRP and if the issue is not resolved, they will approach the GLIU/Block Office of the concerned department. However, during the discussions it emerged that many VIC members and villagers, especially women, were not fully familiar with the grievance redressal mechanism, indicating that there is still lack of awareness about this in the community.
  Recommendation: Awareness about the grievance redressal mechanism and its processes can be built up among the communities. IEC material with infographics detailing the processes step-wise can be designed.

- **Observation:** During the engagement, it was observed that the Annual Work Plan and Budget for 2023 had been determined solely on the basis of the activities planned for the year and had not factored in the budget and work done in 2022. Funding for alternative livelihoods, including initiatives such as organizing training for nature guides and homestays as well as conducting motivational activities for youth, is currently unavailable in the budget. Additionally, the budget categories are not synchronized with FAO outcomes, leading to invoices not being approved. This hinders the effective implementation of project activities. Further, converging with other line departments proves challenging due to their distinct priorities.
  Recommendation: The project may consider restructuring/realigning the budget categories to enhance flexibility. Additionally, it is advisable to advocate, through the SSC, that the State directorates of the line departments establish a distinct budget category for converging departments in the GEF project, specifically earmarked for project area villages on a yearly basis.

- **Observation:** Despite concerted efforts by the State project staff, a deficiency in coordination among the various line departments persists, as do challenges in streamlining communication and collaborative efforts. Additionally, it was observed that the TSG meetings, which play a pivotal role in facilitating communication and cooperation, are not being convened on a regular basis. This further compounds the challenges associated with inter-departmental

coordination, impeding the seamless implementation of the project's objectives and activities. Moreover, there is limited dissemination of clear communication from the NPMU regarding several guidelines/ strategies.

Recommendation: The project administration should consider developing a structured retreat schedule – a quarterly retreat at the State level and a biannual retreat at the national level. These retreats would serve as platforms for a comprehensive review of the project's progress, providing an opportunity for stakeholders at various levels to assess achievements, address challenges and strategize for the upcoming phases. The quarterly retreats at the State level would ensure more frequent and localized evaluations, fostering a proactive approach to addressing issues, while the biannual national retreats would allow for a more in-depth, overarching analysis and coordination on a broader scale. This strategic approach aims to enhance communication, collaboration, and the overall effectiveness of implementation of the project.