

Yangtze River Basin Biodiversity Conservation Programme

Part I: Program Information

GEF ID
10710

Program Type
PFD

Type of Trust Fund
GET

CBIT/NGI
☐ CBIT
☐ NGI

Program Title
Yangtze River Basin Biodiversity Conservation Programme

Countries
China

Agency(ies)
IUCN

Other Executing Partner(s)
Ministry of Ecology and Environment of PRC (MEE)
National Forestry and Grassland Administration of PRC

Executing Partner Type
Government
Government

GEF Focal Area

Biodiversity

Taxonomy

International Waters, Focal Areas, Biomes, Protected Areas and Landscapes, Biodiversity, Terrestrial Protected Areas, Productive Landscapes, Mainstreaming, Tourism, Fisheries, Infrastructure, Extractive Industries, Lakes, Wetlands, Rivers, Demonstrate innovative approach, Influencing models, Deploy innovative financial instruments, Strengthen institutional capacity and decision-making, Large corporations, Private Sector, Individuals/Entrepreneurs, SMEs, Stakeholders, Beneficiaries, Trade Unions and Workers Unions, Civil Society, Non-Governmental Organization, Access to benefits and services, Gender results areas, Capacity Development, Gender Equality, Knowledge Generation and Exchange, Awareness Raising, Participation and leadership, Access and control over natural resources, Women groups, Gender Mainstreaming, Gender-sensitive indicators, Sex-disaggregated indicators, Targeted Research, Innovation, Capacity, Knowledge and Research, Learning, Adaptive management, Theory of change, Enabling Activities, Financial and Accounting, Payment for Ecosystem Services, Natural Capital Assessment and Accounting, Grasslands, Temperate Forests, Type of Engagement, Participation, Information Dissemination, Partnership, Consultation, Communications, Behavior change, Education, Knowledge Generation, Knowledge Exchange, Indicators to measure change, Transform policy and regulatory environments, Local Communities

Rio Markers**Climate Change Mitigation**

Climate Change Mitigation 1

Climate Change Adaptation

Climate Change Adaptation 1

Duration

60 In Months

Agency Fee(\$)

577,982.00

Program Commitment DeadlineSubmission Date

6/11/2022

9/28/2020

Impact Program

IP-Food-Land-Restoration **No**

IP-Sustainable Cities **No**

IP-Sustainable Forest Management Amazon **No**

IP-Sustainable Forest Management Congo **No**

IP-Sustainable Forest Management Drylands **No**

Other Program **Yes**

A. Indicative Focal/Non-Focal Area Elements

Programming Directions	Expected Outcomes	Trust Fund	GEF Amount(\$)	Co-Fin Amount(\$)
BD-1-1	Expected Outcome 1: Financial, fiscal, and development policies, as well as planning and decision-making take into account biodiversity and ecosystem values, in the context of the different tools and approaches used by Parties to achieve the Aichi Biodiversity Targets. Expected Outcome 3: Economic sectors affecting significant biodiversity adopt sustainable supply chains and/or clean production processes, thus minimizing their impacts on biodiversity	GET	3,119,266.00	24,765,000.00
BD-2-7	Expected Outcome 8: Area of protected areas under effective and equitable management is significantly increased, including development of sustainable financing. Expected Outcome 9: Ecological representativeness of protected area systems, and their coverage of protected areas, and other effective area-based conservation measures, of particular importance for biodiversity is increased, especially habitats for threatened species.	GET	3,302,752.00	26,540,000.00
Total Program Cost (\$)			6,422,018.00	51,305,000.00

B. Indicative Project description summary

Program Objective

Enhanced and mainstreamed biodiversity conservation in the development of the Yangtze River Economic Belt of China.

Program Component	Financing Type	Program Outcomes	Trust Fund	GEF Amount(\$)	Co-Fin Amount(\$)
Component 1: Protecting globally important habitats in the Yangtze River Basin	Technical Assistance	1: In-situ conservation of important biodiversity in the Yangtze River Basin improved through strengthened protected area networks, financing and policies - 1.2 million ha habitats of globally important biodiversity are better protected by PA networks - National protected area legislation in place	GET	2,700,000.00	22,875,000.00
Component 2: Mainstreaming biodiversity in the Yangtze River Economic Belt	Technical Assistance	2: Impacts on biodiversity in the Yangtze River Economic Belt from industry and unsustainable development Mitigated through biodiversity mainstreaming: - biodiversity considerations integrated in the municipal development planning and production practices of 1.25 million ha landscapes - Yangtze River protection legislation in place	GET	2,550,000.00	20,950,000.00
Component 3: Knowledge and information management	Technical Assistance	3: Knowledge and capacity base improved to support biodiversity conservation in the Yangtze River Basin - knowledge products and events developed and delivered - programme and project coordination and M&E conducted	GET	866,230.00	4,920,000.00

	Sub Total (\$)	6,116,230.00	48,745,000.00
Program Management Cost (PMC)			
	GET	305,788.00	2,560,000.00
	Sub Total(\$)	305,788.00	2,560,000.00
	Total Program Cost(\$)	6,422,018.00	51,305,000.00

C. Co-Financing for the Program by Source, by Name and by Type

Sources of Co-financing	Name of Co-financier	Type of Co-financing	Investment Mobilized	Amount(\$)
Recipient Country Government	Ministry of Ecology and Environment	In-kind	Recurrent expenditures	8,000,000.00
Recipient Country Government	National Forestry and Grassland Administration	In-kind	Recurrent expenditures	10,000,000.00
Recipient Country Government	Ministry of Ecology and Environment	Public Investment	Investment mobilized	16,665,000.00
Recipient Country Government	National Forestry and Grassland Administration	Public Investment	Investment mobilized	16,390,000.00
GEF Agency	IUCN	In-kind	Recurrent expenditures	250,000.00
Total Program Cost(\$)				51,305,000.00

Describe how any "Investment Mobilized" was identified

Investments have been mobilized through the National Forest and Grassland Administration's conservation and protected areas development programmes, including but not limited to, the Compensation of Public Welfare Forest initiative and the Wildlife Conservation and Nature Reserve program, and through the Ministry of Ecology and Environment's programs including "Critical Battle for the Conservation and Restoration of the Yangtze River"

D. Indicative Trust Fund Resources Requested by Agency(ies), Country(ies), Focal Area and the Programming of Funds

Agency	Trust Fund	Country	Focal Area	Programming of Funds	Amount(\$)	Fee(\$)	Total(\$)
IUCN	GET	China	Biodiversity	BD STAR Allocation	6,422,018	577,982	7,000,000.00
Total GEF Resources(\$)					6,422,018.00	577,982.00	7,000,000.00

Core Indicators

Indicator 1 Terrestrial protected areas created or under improved management for conservation and sustainable use

Ha (Expected at PIF)	Ha (Expected at CEO Endorsement)	Ha (Achieved at MTR)	Ha (Achieved at TE)
1,159,801.00	0.00	0.00	0.00

Indicator 1.1 Terrestrial Protected Areas Newly created




Ha (Expected at PIF)	Ha (Expected at CEO Endorsement)	Total Ha (Achieved at MTR)	Total Ha (Achieved at TE)
0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00

Name of the Protected Area	WDPA ID	IUCN Category	Total Ha (Expected at PIF)	Total Ha (Expected at CEO Endorsement)	Total Ha (Achieved at MTR)	Total Ha (Achieved at TE)
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Indicator 1.2 Terrestrial Protected Areas Under improved Management effectiveness

Ha (Expected at PIF)	Ha (Expected at CEO Endorsement)	Total Ha (Achieved at MTR)	Total Ha (Achieved at TE)
1,159,801.00	0.00	0.00	0.00

Name of the Protected Area	WDPA ID	IUCN Category	Ha (Expected at PIF)	Ha (Expected at CEO Endorsement)	Total Ha (Achieved at MTR)	Total Ha (Achieved at TE)	METT score (Baseline at CEO Endorsement)	METT score (Achieved at MTR)	METT score (Achieved at TE)
Mount Huangshan	26654	National Park	15,400.00						
Mount Sanqingshan Scenic Area	903136	Others	22,400.00						
Poyang Nanji Wetlands	NA	Others	82,151.00						
Poyangshu National Nature Reserve	555542692	Others	22,400.00						

Shengjin Lake National Nature Reserve	555624181	Others	22,950.00	
Sichuan Giant Panda Sanctuaries - (Wolong, Mt Siguniang and Jiajin Mountains), possible to extend to Giant Panda National Park	902902	National Park	924,500.00	
Yading	901246	Others	70,000.00	

Indicator 4 Area of landscapes under improved practices (hectares; excluding protected areas)

Ha (Expected at PIF)	Ha (Expected at CEO Endorsement)	Ha (Achieved at MTR)	Ha (Achieved at TE)

1250000.00

0.00

0.00

0.00

Indicator 4.1 Area of landscapes under improved management to benefit biodiversity (hectares, qualitative assessment, non-certified)

Ha (Expected at PIF)	Ha (Expected at CEO Endorsement)	Ha (Achieved at MTR)	Ha (Achieved at TE)
1,250,000.00			

Indicator 4.2 Area of landscapes that meets national or international third party certification that incorporates biodiversity considerations (hectares)

Ha (Expected at PIF)	Ha (Expected at CEO Endorsement)	Ha (Achieved at MTR)	Ha (Achieved at TE)

Type/Name of Third Party Certification

Indicator 4.3 Area of landscapes under sustainable land management in production systems

Ha (Expected at PIF)	Ha (Expected at CEO Endorsement)	Ha (Achieved at MTR)	Ha (Achieved at TE)

Indicator 4.4 Area of High Conservation Value Forest (HCVF) loss avoided

Ha (Expected at PIF)	Ha (Expected at CEO Endorsement)	Ha (Achieved at MTR)	Ha (Achieved at TE)

Documents (Please upload document(s) that justifies the HCVF)

Title	Submitted

Indicator 11 Number of direct beneficiaries disaggregated by gender as co-benefit of GEF investment

	Number (Expected at PIF)	Number (Expected at CEO Endorsement)	Number (Achieved at MTR)	Number (Achieved at TE)
Female	5,500			
Male	3,500			

Total	9000	0	0	0
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Provide additional explanation on targets, other methodologies used, and other focal area specifics (i.e., Aichi targets in BD) including justification where core indicator targets are not provided

The area targets for indicator 1 and 4 are developed based on Core Indicator Worksheets, which consider improved protected areas management that results from the programme, as well as the lands and waters outside protected areas but with improved practices implemented by municipalities and sectors supported by the programme. The gender-disaggregated target for beneficiaries is developed based on estimate of likely coverage and scope of beneficiaries of the programme, through its field, capacity building, awareness raising as well as participation-related activities and approaches.

Part II. Programmatic Justification

1a. Program Description

1) the global environmental and/or adaptation problems, root causes, and barriers

The Yangtze River, the longest river in China, has a total length of 6,397 kilometers, originates from the Qinghai-Tibet Plateau, and flows through 11 provinces (autonomous regions/municipalities) including Qinghai, Sichuan, Tibet, Yunnan, Chongqing, Hubei, Hunan, Jiangxi, Anhui, Jiangsu, and Shanghai, then into the East China Sea. Its catchment spans over 8 other provinces (autonomous regions) including Gansu, Shaanxi, Henan, Guizhou, Guangxi, Guangdong, Fujian, and Zhejiang, making the Yangtze River Basin (YRB) China's largest river basin covering a total area of 1.8 million km², accounting for 18.8% of the country's land area. The population in YRB is around 460 million, about one-third of the country. With a total annual runoff of about 1 trillion cubic meters, 77% of China's natural lakes that are above 1,000 km² area of China are scattered along the river basin, such as Poyang Lake and Dongting Lake.

The YRB is one of the most biodiversity abundant river basins in the world, the home of some vital ecosystems for the country and the globe. Lots of global biodiversity conservation hotspots identified by international organizations such as WWF, CI, and TNC are concentrated in the Yangtze River basin. The river ecosystem is one of the most sensitive ecosystems that is affected by forests, wetlands, farmland, grassland management and utilization, aquatic fisheries, and aquaculture, as well as urban and rural residents' living, infrastructure development, and industrial activities.

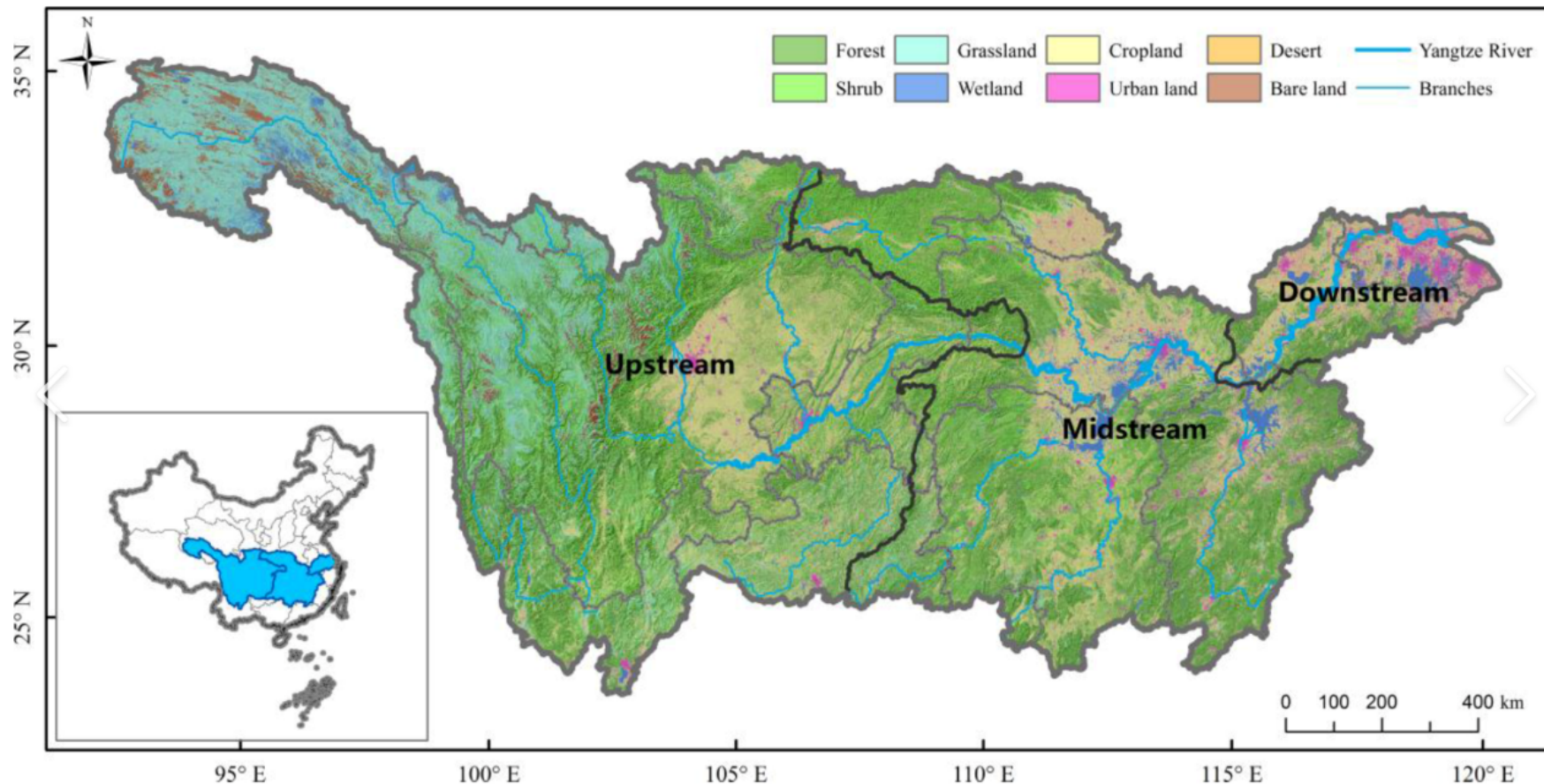


Figure 1 Morphology of the Yangtze River Basin

The Yangtze River plays a major role in the historical, cultural, and political identity of China. YRB is the country's social and economic powerhouse and one of the world's most important economic arteries. China has embraced rapid and sustained economic growth and social development over the last four decades, however, the rapid economic ascendance has had severe consequences for environmental sustainability. China was ranked 120th out of 180 countries for environmental performance across 24 environmental indicators in ten categories, including air quality, water and sanitation, heavy metals, biodiversity and habitat, forests, fisheries, climate and energy, air pollution, water resources, and agriculture. This is below that of other upper-middle income countries such as Turkey, Brazil, Mexico, and Russia, among others. Furthermore, expectations of improved environmental quality have also increased alongside people's improved living standards.

In the past decades, water pollution, shrinking of wetland area, threats of flood disaster, and eutrophication of lakes had huge negative impacts on the water ecosystem and biodiversity. Also, in the Yangtze Basin hydropower projects play an important role in flood control, irrigation, navigation, and power generation, etc. The region is important for national food and energy security, producing almost two-thirds of China's rice, around 50 percent of grain production, more than 70 percent of fishery production, and over three-quarters of the nation's hydropower generation. It has affected the growth and reproduction of fishes and the number of plankton and zoo benthos and resulted in the destruction and loss of fish habitats. Moreover, these hydropower projects also blocked some migration routes, causing habitat fragmentation of rare and endangered aquatic species in the reservoir areas, and significantly reducing many species' population. Besides, the illegal fishing had aggravated the impact, resulting in the endangerment and even extinction of many fish species.



Figure 2 Priority Areas for Biodiversity Conservation in the Yangtze River Basin

(18- Southern Hengduan Mountains, 19- Minshan – Northern Hengduan Mountains, 22 – Wuling Mountains, 23- Daba Mountains, 24- Dabie Mountains, 25- Huangshan – Huaiyu Mountains, 26- Wuyi Mountains, 28- Dongting Lake area, 29- Poyang Lake area)

Even more, there are some other challenges, including the lack of a holistic and coordinated plan; lack of cross-functional coordination mechanism and relative laws and regulations on basin protection; the impact of multi-channel management; inadequate investment in ecological protection; and weak awareness of stakeholders. In general, the water ecological environment of the basin is deteriorating, the endangerments of rare aquatic wildlife are intensifying, and the resources of aquatic species are seriously declining. For example, the Chinese river dolphin (*Lipotes vexillifer*, Baiji) has been functionally extinct, the population of Yangtze finless porpoises has decreased significantly, and the number of Chinese pangolins has declined sharply and rapidly facing extinction. At the end of 2019, Chinese paddlefish (*Psephurus gladius*), the largest freshwater fish in China has been announced as being extinct by experts. Also, the water quality of the Yangtze River has deteriorated, and the amount of water in the middle and lower reaches of the dry season is insufficient. It has become a prominent problem affecting China's ecological security. The Yangtze River is one of the world's most biologically rich and threatened rivers, however, its biodiversity conservation, especially aquatic biodiversity conservation, faces enormous difficulties and challenges.

The main challenges to Yangtze River's biodiversity are habitat loss, degradation and fragmentation, resulted from a number of threats including infrastructure and urban development, pollution, invasive species, climate change, and over-utilization of resources such as overfishing. The root causes for these problems are insufficient understanding and lack of information on biodiversity conservation; less importance accorded in policy to biodiversity conservation, especially of the river ecosystem, aquatic biological protection, and habitat protection; and lack of monitoring and research of the species and ecosystems, and management effectiveness of biodiversity conservation. Secondly, legislation for river basin management or protected areas (PA) is not yet in place and related law enforcement is inadequate. Finally, related to governance, there is a lack of unified and adequate policy framework and financing system in place for comprehensive conservation and thus affecting the effectiveness of conservation.

Three main drivers underline these multiple threats:

1: High pressure from economic and urban development:

Yangtze River Basin is the largest and most populated river basin in China and is also the economic engine of China's GDP growth, as the YRB generates about 40 percent of the country's GDP. The urbanization ratio has been increasing at more than 1% each year in the 21st century, and surpassing 60% in 2020. On the other hand, as a biodiversity-rich basin, Yangtze has several globally important biodiversity hotspots and ecoregions. As a result, economic development and urbanization is exerting significant pressure on the river system, as the economy grows and urbanization and industrialization expands, human settlements, mining, infrastructure, commercial agriculture including fisheries and aquaculture, as well as tourism widely in the Yangtze River Basin have resulted in drastic land-use change, e.g. the artificialized areas in the Yangtze River Basin has increased by over 50% from 2000 to 2017, and led to immense pressure in natural habitat loss and fragmentation, which then drastically affects the species and ecosystems.

In general, pollution pressure is very high in the YRB. The water body reflects this since as a matter of fact, if the pollution on land including domestic waste and hazardous waste are not handled properly, it will ultimately impact the water body in the YRB. The near bank of the mainstream of the Yangtze River, especially the middle and lower reaches of the Yangtze such as Sichuan, Guizhou, Hubei, Anhui, and Shanghai have become the most severe areas of water pollution, causing significant negative on aquatic organisms. Among the main tributaries, water pollution is more severe in the downstream of the Minjiang River in Sichuan. Reported by the Supreme People's Procuratorate (SPP), a large number of cases involving pollution along the Yangtze River Basin had been

handled in 2019, including 42,230 criminal cases, 112,265 civil cases, 75,591 administrative cases, and 2,945 public interest cases. In 2019, the Ministry of Water Resources (MWR) has cleared almost 1,400 sites where garbage had been dumped along the watercourse of the Yangtze River and demolished 710 construction projects that intruded into the country's longest water body. The Yangtze River is also considered one of the largest carriers of plastic wastes that ultimately contribute to marine plastics.

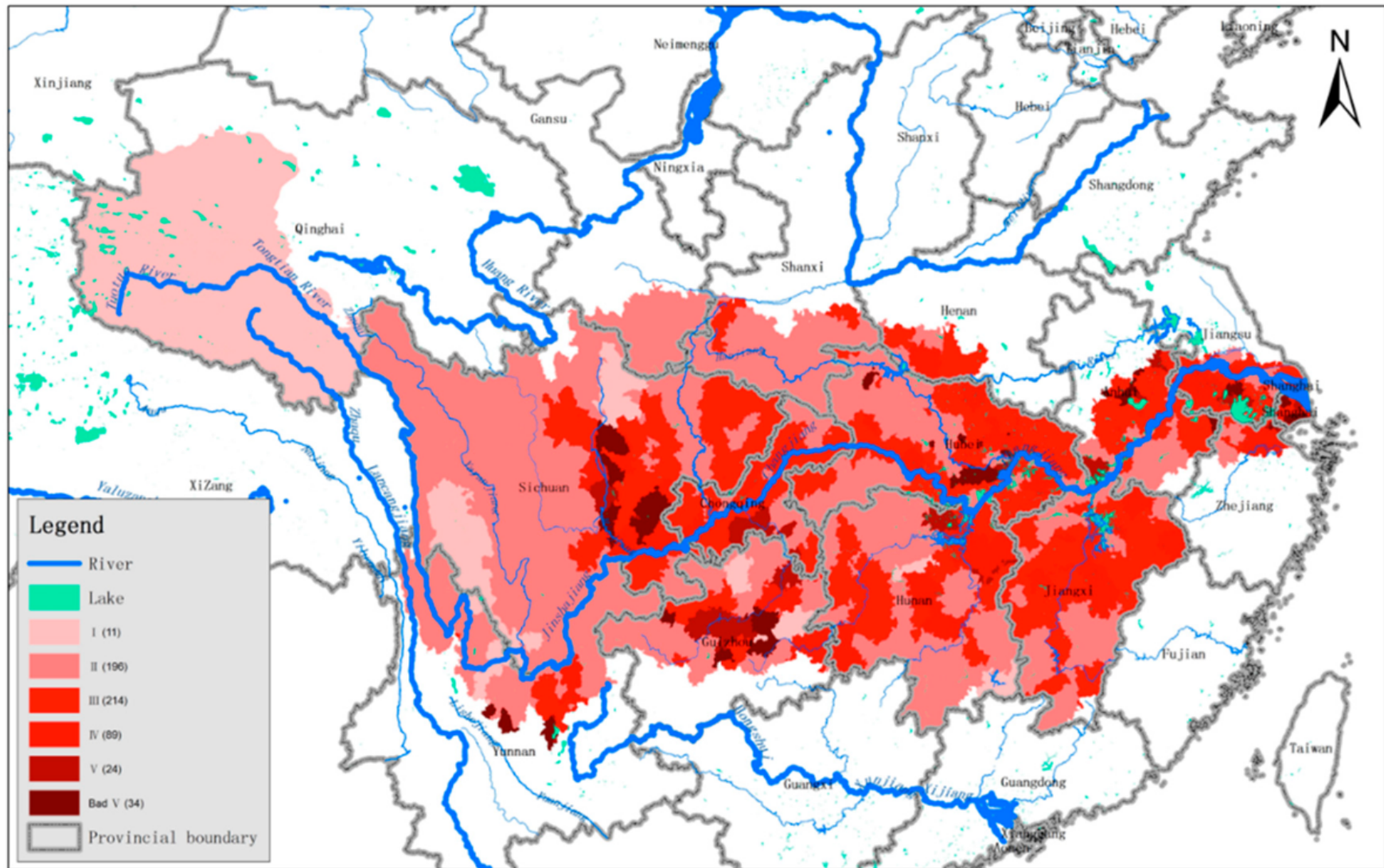


Figure 3 Distribution of water quality in the Yangtze River Basin during the “12th Five-Year Plan”

2: High pressure from unsustainable use and management of natural and biological resources:

Unsustainable use of natural and biological use such as harvest of non-timber forest products and Traditional Chinese Medicines (TCM) in source and upper streams of the YRB, over-fishing and tourism across YRB have led to degradation of both terrestrial and freshwater ecosystems. Poorly planned hydrological engineering and other construction projects that interrupt the natural water flow regime have degraded and destroyed ecosystems and driven species out of their natural homes. Invasive species have also become serious problems in the YRB that impact local and endemic species which needs to be addressed particularly.

Increased evidence showed that species and ecosystems are suffering from unsustainable livelihood and modes of production. Taking the Chinese pangolin (*Manis pentadactyla*), a Critically Endangered species as per IUCN Red List of Threatened Species as an example, it was a widely spread species in the YRB, however, mainly due to unsustainable use and management of this “biological resource” in the form of Traditional Chinese Medicine, it is now rarely found in the region. The recent evaluation of its population trend is “decreasing”, which emphasizes the critically urgent nature of conservation of this species.

Another example is the finless porpoise (*Neophocaena asiaeorientalis*), an Endangered species as per IUCN Red List of Threatened Species, in the Yangtze. Overfishing, illegal fishing, ship transportation, and water pollution have led to increased mortality to this last aquatic mammal species in the Yangtze. In addition, deaths or injury have been caused by entanglement in nets or increased vulnerability to human activities due to decreased habitats and prey base owing to degradation of freshwater habitats.

3: Inadequate policy, legislation, coordination, and financing mechanism for the Yangtze River Basin

The biodiversity conservation policy for the Yangtze River is still inadequate. Taking the protected areas system as an example, there is no law for all protected areas, the Regulations of the People's Republic of China on Nature Reserves was published in 1994 with a revision only in 2017. China is building up its national Protected Areas System that takes National Parks as the focus, however, the pilots to establish national parks are still at the early stage, there are still many unclear aspects of different pilots regarding governance mechanism, financing, and development modes, etc. There will be different challenges from different provinces in the programme. That is to say, the Giant Panda National Park may not have the same governance and financing mechanism as the new national park pilot in Anhui, for example, financing tools such as PES and biodiversity offset may be adopted in different provinces. These will bring complexity to the programme. Other PAs under reform may be in similar cases of this kind, requiring adaptive management of the programme during its implementation, and focusing on studies of policy and financing mechanism.

Thus, it is necessary to systematically solve problems in the middle and lower reaches, mainstreams and tributaries, rivers and lakes, wetlands and landscapes, and urban and rural areas for the Yangtze River Basin. It is necessary to address the natural property rights registration, clear property rights, and ownership, management, utilization, protection, recovery, and restoration, monitoring and evaluation, legislation, law, and supervision enforcements to systematically solve the problems. The conservation and sustainable use of natural resources, control of human impact, and legislation is the most effective indicator to show governance capacity and management effectiveness.

2) the baseline scenario and any associated baseline program/ projects

Recognizing the emergent challenges, China is embarking upon a transition to a more balanced and sustainable economic growth model. China's national 12th Five Year Plan (FYP, 2011-2015) highlighted the need for 'green development' and committed to establishing a resource-saving and environmental-friendly society. The term "ecological civilization" was first officially proposed by the Communist Party of China (CPC) at the 17th Congress of the CPC in 2007, to form an "energy and resource-efficient, and environment-friendly structure of industries, a pattern of growth, and mode of consumption". The 2015 Resolution of the State Council for Acceleration of Ecological Civilization Progress set goals for water quality and resource management improvements. The 13th FYP (2016-2020) and the 19th CPC Congress Report (October 2017) called for a "beautiful China" founded in a new era of "ecological civilization" by pursuing productivity and innovation-driven development; improving equitable access to basic public services; and reversing environmental degradation. The 13th Ecological and Environmental Protection FYP (2016-2020) reiterated these goals, setting additional goals for soil pollution control, main water pollutants reduction, water management, and the safety of water for human consumption.

Under the umbrella of President Xi Jinping's paradigm of Ecological Civilization, China is building a protected area system that takes the National Parks as of main focus. This initiative can be traced back to the decision of the CPC central committee on several major issues concerning comprehensively deepening reform adopted at the third plenary session of the 18th CPC central committee. Since then, the guidelines for accelerating the establishment of the ecological civilization system and the plan for the reform of the ecological civilization system, as well as the fifth plenary session of the fifteenth central committee further clarified the requirements on national park systems establishment. In 2017, the general office of the CPC central committee and the general office of the state council issued the general plan for the establishment of the national park system, marking that the work has stepped into the formal pilot implementation period. From December 2015, the CPC central committee overhauled and approved the pilot program of Sanjiangyuan national park in China in December 2015, and through June 2017, the system pilot program of Qilian mountain national park was reviewed and approved. Ten national park pilots were successively approved, such as Tiger Leopard National Park and the Giant Panda National Park in Sichuan, Shaanxi and Gansu. Based on China's nature preservation practice and the successful experiences in other countries, the national parks and PA system development will prioritize protection and supervision while pursuing institutional innovations.

Legislation for protected areas has also been put on the agenda. Currently, China's most effective laws or regulations regarding protected areas are the Regulations of the People's Republic of China on Nature Reserves, which was published in 1994 with a revision only in 2017. For the new system of protected areas being established, the Ministry of Ecology and Environment (MEE) has been authorized by the central government as the supervisor of law enforcement. MEE's supervision and enforcement on the PAs can only follow the Regulation on Nature Reserves which is outdated regarding the current real situation and thus caused a lot of conflicts and unsolved problems between the regulator or "the referee", MEE, and the implementer, or "the player", the National Forestry and Grassland Administration (NFGA). As an example, a PA in Jiangxi Province in the Yangtze River Basin may still have residential settlements and agricultural activities today in its core area, this is probably due to the unscientific zoning without consultation with the residents when the PA was established in the past decades. MEE must report the violation according to current Regulation on Nature Reserves and charge the PA for correction. However, the PA, and even the forestry department, may have no solution under current situation without a PA law which supports this type of action and also enables enforcement of the regulation. There is a clear need for coordinated and integrated efforts to tackle this issue and to advance the legislation process forward.

The latest institutional reform of the State Council of China was undertaken in 2018, to cope with the "five-sphere integrated plan": a plan to promote coordinated economic, political, cultural, social, and ecological advancement, and the ecological civilization. The main agencies upsized/established are the Ministry of Ecology and Environment (MEE, taking over climate change responsibility) and the Ministry of Natural Resources (MNR, merging spatial planning, land resources, ocean, surveying, geoformation, etc.). The State Forestry Administration was changed to the National Forestry and Grassland Administration (NFGA). NFGA is no longer a State Council institution but supervised by MNR, however has expanded responsibilities of managing forest, grassland, wetlands and deserts, terrestrial wildlife, and all types of Protected Areas. NFGA bears the name of the National Parks Administration (NPA) as it takes lead in establishing the protected areas system with national parks as the main body.

After the reform, MEE takes the leading role in work related to climate change, supervises efforts to prevent environmental pollution, and guide and supervise ecological protection and remediation, and it leads so-called China's Environmental Watchdog. In the Yangtze River Basin, MEE has reorganized the Yangtze River Basin Ecology and Environment Supervision Administration to oversee all the violations in the basin. However, NFGA doesn't have a basin-level branch other than the provincial departments dealing with PAs and biodiversity conservation, no special arrangement is in place for the YRB.

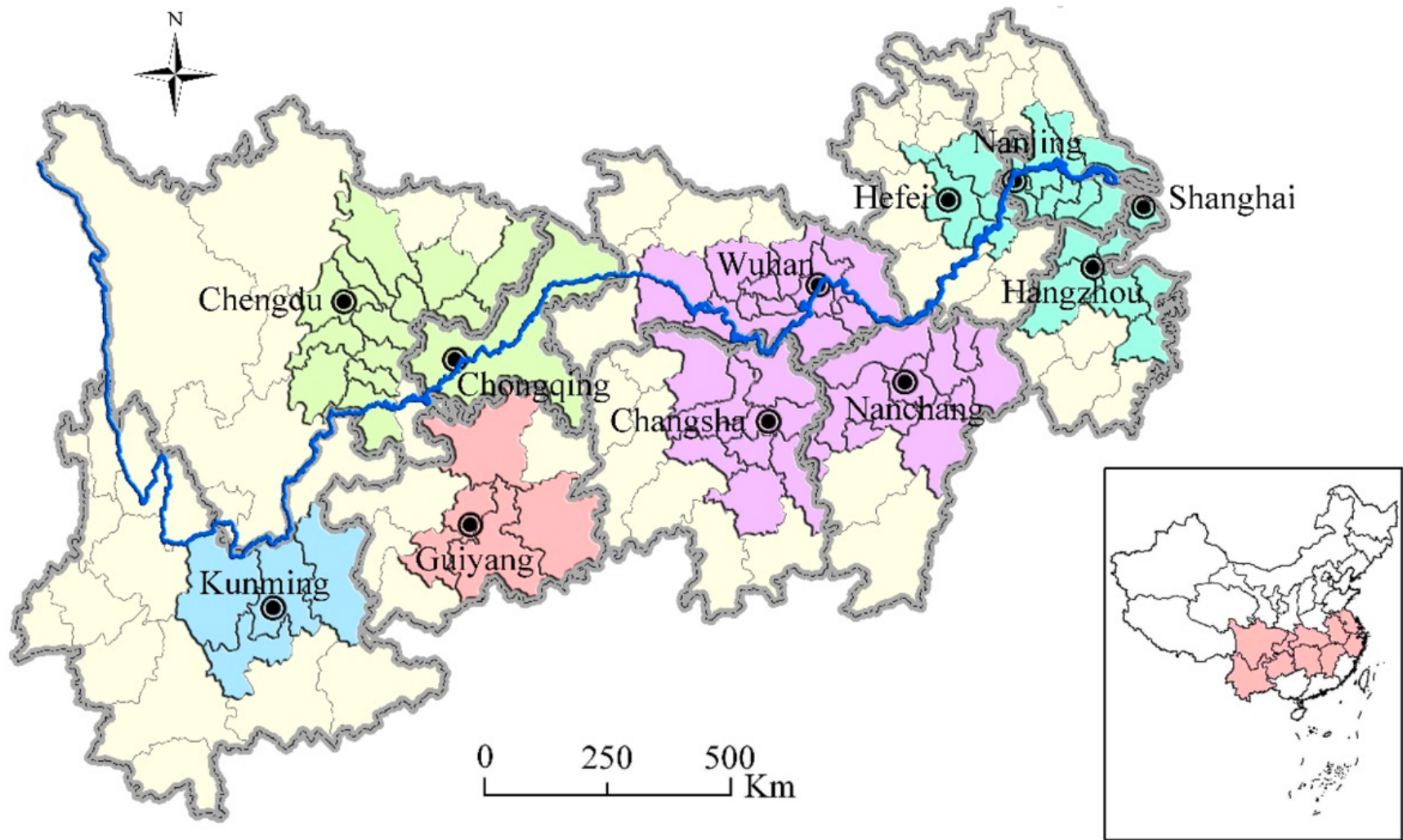
Several other initiatives are also ongoing in China. These include some lead by MNR, including the Ecological Redlining initiative (Eco-Redline)^[1], virtually a mixture of protected areas and Other Effective Area-based Conservation Measures (OECM), aiming to protect the areas of ecological values and significance. The Multi-plan Integration^[2] is also a major new policy initiative, calling for governments at various level to prepare their plans for socioeconomic development, land use, forest, water, environmental protection, natural resources, etc. in an integrated and coherent manner, to achieve greater consistency and avoid contradictions and duplications.

In addition, China has completed the national Redlist assessments for mammals and higher plants, based on the IUCN Red List of Threatened Species standards and protocols, and the assessments for reptiles and amphibians are currently ongoing. The species Redlist assessment undertaken by China will greatly improve the IUCN Species Redlist database once the needed procedures such as results translation and peer reviews are completed. Besides, China is undertaking pilots to introduce the IUCN Ecosystem Redlist to China through capacity building, data collection, and pilot assessments. All these initiatives will provide cost-effective opportunities and scientific and data basis for improving the foundation biodiversity information base for biodiversity mainstreaming.

To cope with the Ecological Civilization progress, China has prioritized the Yangtze River Economic Belt (YREB) as part of its growth strategy, with a principle announced by President Xi, "to step up conservation of the Yangtze River and stop its overdevelopment". The National Development and Reform Commission (NDRC) issued a 'YREB Development Plan' in 2016 aimed at promoting well-coordinated environmental protection and prioritizing ecological conservation through enhanced green development in the YREB.

Different from the concept of hydrological River Basin, YREB is a strategic development concept consists of nine provinces (Sichuan, Yunnan, Guizhou, Hubei, Hunan, Jiangxi, Anhui, Jiangsu, and Zhejiang) and two municipalities (Chongqing and Shanghai) forming the main body of the Yangtze River Basin that covers 2.05 M km², roughly one-fifth of China's land area. The YREB has 599 million people (43 percent of China's population) and accounts for 45 percent of the

national GDP. In 2018, the GDP generated in the region was estimated to be USD 5.7 trillion (RMB 40.3 trillion) – placing it as the third-largest economy in the world.



Legend

- Capital City
- Yangtze River
- ▭ Provincial and Municipal Boundaries
- ▭ Yangtze River Economic Belt
- ▭ Central Guizhou Urban Agglomeration
- ▭ Chengdu-Chongqing Urban Agglomeration
- ▭ Central Yunnan Urban Agglomeration
- ▭ Middle Reaches of Yangtze River Urban Agglomeration
- ▭ Yangtze River Delta Urban Agglomeration

Figure 4 The Yangtze River Economic Belt (YREB) with its urban agglomeration

The Yangtze River Economic Belt (YREB) Ecological and Environmental Protection Plan was jointly issued by the Ministry of Environmental Protection (MEP), the National Development and Reform Commission (NDRC), and the Ministry of Water Resources (MWR) in 2017. The government program for protection and restoration of the Yangtze River is focused on pollution control and ecological conservation (two handholds), promoting the integrated management of water pollution control, water ecosystem restoration, and water resources conservation (three water concerns), addressing pollution from industrial, agricultural, domestic and inland water transport sectors (four pollution source controls), and aims to develop a harmonious, healthy, clean, safe, and beautiful Yangtze River (five goals). The plan aims that by 2020, the ecological environment will be significantly improved, the stability of the ecosystem will be comprehensively improved, and the ecological functions of rivers, lakes, and wetlands will be recovered, the ecological environmental protection system and mechanism will be further improved.

These measures have been accompanied by a legislative effort for the Yangtze River Protection Law (YRPL) which is currently under consultation by the National People's Congress (NPC) and aims to ensure the protection of Yangtze River from the national level. This new law aims to consolidate various existing legislations on resource management, pollution control, flood management and water and soil conservation etc, to fill the gaps and address contradictions considering the characteristics of the Yangtze River Basin, and to develop needed and coordinated legal measures for the protection of the natural resources, management of human activities, and promotion of green development. A draft has been developed and brought to consultation in early 2020. However, as the law itself is comprehensive and associated with a wide range and large number of stakeholders and interest groups at all levels, the legislation process may take long and there is so far no clear agenda for its further development, finalization and promulgation. As aforementioned, cross-sectoral coordination may strengthen the content of the law and facilitate the legislative process.

At the beginning of 2019, MEE and NDRC jointly issued the Action Plan for the Critical Battle for the Conservation and Restoration of the Yangtze River, which proposes that by the end of the year 2020, more than 85 percent of the sections under the national monitoring program in the Yangtze River basin will have enjoyed clean or fairly clean water quality (at or better than Grade III national standard), and less than 2 percent of those sections will not have been fit for any use (worse than Grade V national standard); over 90 percent of the dark and odorous water bodies will have been under control in the built areas of the cities at or above the prefectural level in the Yangtze Economic Belt, and more than 97 percent of the centralized drinking water sources will have attained or been better than Grade III national standard in the cities at or above prefectural level.

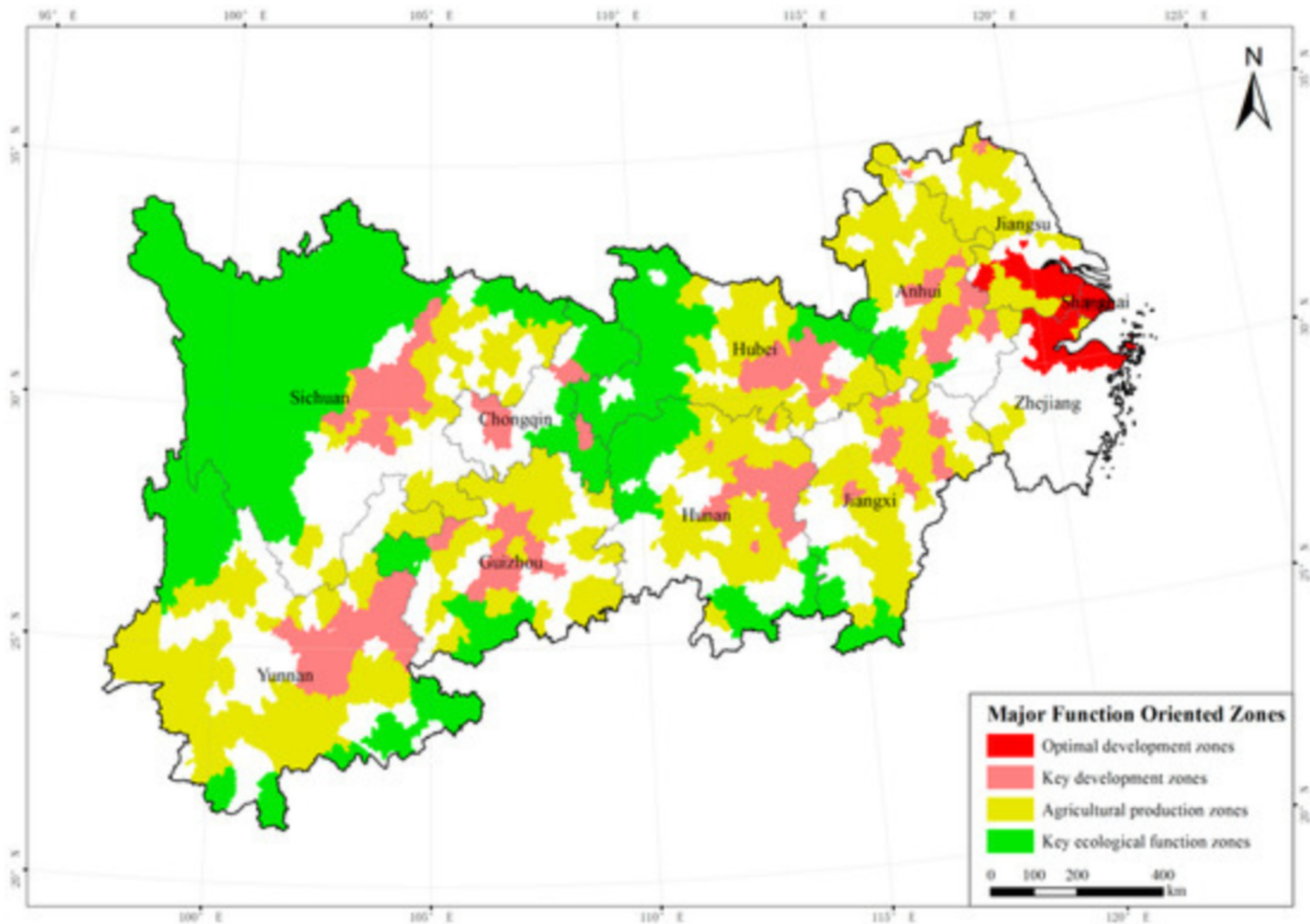


Figure 5 Major Function Zones in Yangtze River Basin provinces

At present, China is advancing the Yangtze River Economic Belt development strategy, the objectives explicitly illustrated that by 2030, the dry tributaries will have sufficient ecological water, the water environment quality, air quality, and water ecological quality will be improved comprehensively, the ecosystem service function will be significantly enhanced, and the ecological environment will be better. The Plan aims to:

- Establishing a harmonious Yangtze River. The water resources being effectively protected and rationally utilized, the ecological flow being effectively guaranteed, and the relationship between rivers and lakes becoming more harmonious.
- Establishing a healthy Yangtze River. The ecosystem services such as soil and water retention are enhanced, the types of biological resources are diverse, the area of protected areas is steadily increasing, and the stability of wetland ecosystems and ecosystem services are gradually improved.
- Establishing a clean Yangtze River. The quality of the water environment continued to improve, the water quality of the mainstream of the Yangtze River is maintained at an excellent level, and the proportion of drinking water sources is reaching Class III water quality and continued to increase.

Moreover, to restore the fishery resources in the Yangtze, a ten-year fish ban has been initiated by the Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Affairs as a basin-level regulation, no captive fishing is allowed in the Yangtze mainstream and key tributaries in the coming decade since 2020. However, this may lead to an increase in aquaculture development especially in central and lower reaches of Yangtze and if not managed well, further water degradation will occur.

The Chinese government also has developed several innovative financing programs to support the YREB Development Plan. In 2018 the Ministry of Finance (MOF) issued the “Guiding Opinions on Establishing Eco-compensation and Long-term Protection Mechanism in the YREB” indicating that the central government will establish incentive mechanisms and increase fiscal support towards eco-compensation and protection in the YREB. These are accompanied by “Management Methods for YREB Green Development Special Investments within the Central Budget” established by the NDRC in 2019 to support efforts to balance ecological environment protection and economic development. These are intended to further standardize the management of projects and support the green development of the YREB with central budget investment, improve the capital use efficiency, and encourage the mobilization of local and social capital. The MOF has reportedly set aside RMB 18 billion (~US\$2.6 billion) to incentivize and promote eco-compensation in YREB over 2018 to 2020.

Future climate change uncertainty requires scientifically sound adaptive management mechanisms that can provide resilient development pathways. The Yangtze River Basin is dominated by subtropical monsoon climates, with distinct spatial and temporal variation in precipitation resulting in frequent floods and droughts, it could be seen again in the summer of 2020. The climate change forecasts for the Basin are highly uncertain making future predictions very uncertain. Nature-based Solutions (NbS) can provide protective measures to mitigate the impacts of floods and droughts. Further enhancing resilience in the face of this uncertainty requires more integrated ecosystem resilience and disaster management approaches, such as applying NbS and improving data monitoring and sharing. Unpredictable future climate conditions advocate for adaptive management measures founded in sound data and analytics and the implementation of robust decision-making under uncertainty principles.

A few major initiatives funded by international donors are ongoing or soon to be effective. This programme will closely coordinate with them in order to complement each other, reduce redundancies and achieve coordination and greater impacts. These include:

- the GEF-6 China's Protected Area System Reform program (C-PAR) being implemented by UNDP as the lead IA, with CI and Foreign Economic Cooperation Office of MEE, aiming to transform China's national protected area system through systematic legal and institutional reform and innovation for conservation of globally significant biodiversity, through improving legal and institutional framework at national and provincial level, systematic PA planning and mainstreaming at national, provincial, county spatial planning and sectors, and raising site level management and supervision standards for different PA types. Sichuan is the common geographical area of this program and C-PAR, and MEE is the common EA. Close coordination will be established taking advantage of these common elements.

- the GEF-7 Demonstrating Eco-Compensation Mechanisms in Yangtze River Basin project (ECM) being formulated by Asian Development Bank (ADB) and NDRC, addressing capacity for natural capital, conservation financing as well as chemical management in the Yangtze River Basin. ECM will be a project with which this programme will have close collaboration, with close coordination and cooperation already planned and going to be established.

- the GEF-7 Transformational wildlife conservation management in China (TWC), being formulated by UNDP and NFGA, aiming to mainstream globally important threatened wildlife conservation across sectors, by harnessing innovative frontier technologies supporting improved management practices. This project will focus on Sichuan and Yunnan, and will include activities on policy influencing and PA management improvement through new technologies. Close coordination will also be established.

- the Yangtze River Revitalization Program by World Bank, expected to be formulated in 2021, improving institutional arrangements for ecological protection, water pollution abatement and green development in selected regions of the Yangtze River Basin

To sum up, China's promotion of Ecological Civilization, and subsequent protected areas system reform, Yangtze protection and YREB development, and restructuring of its government institutions, together with the difficulties and challenges in awareness, governance, legislation, and financing, etc., as well as the ongoing and upcoming initiatives provide the baseline scenario for this programme.

3) the proposed alternative scenario with a brief description of expected outcomes and components of the program;

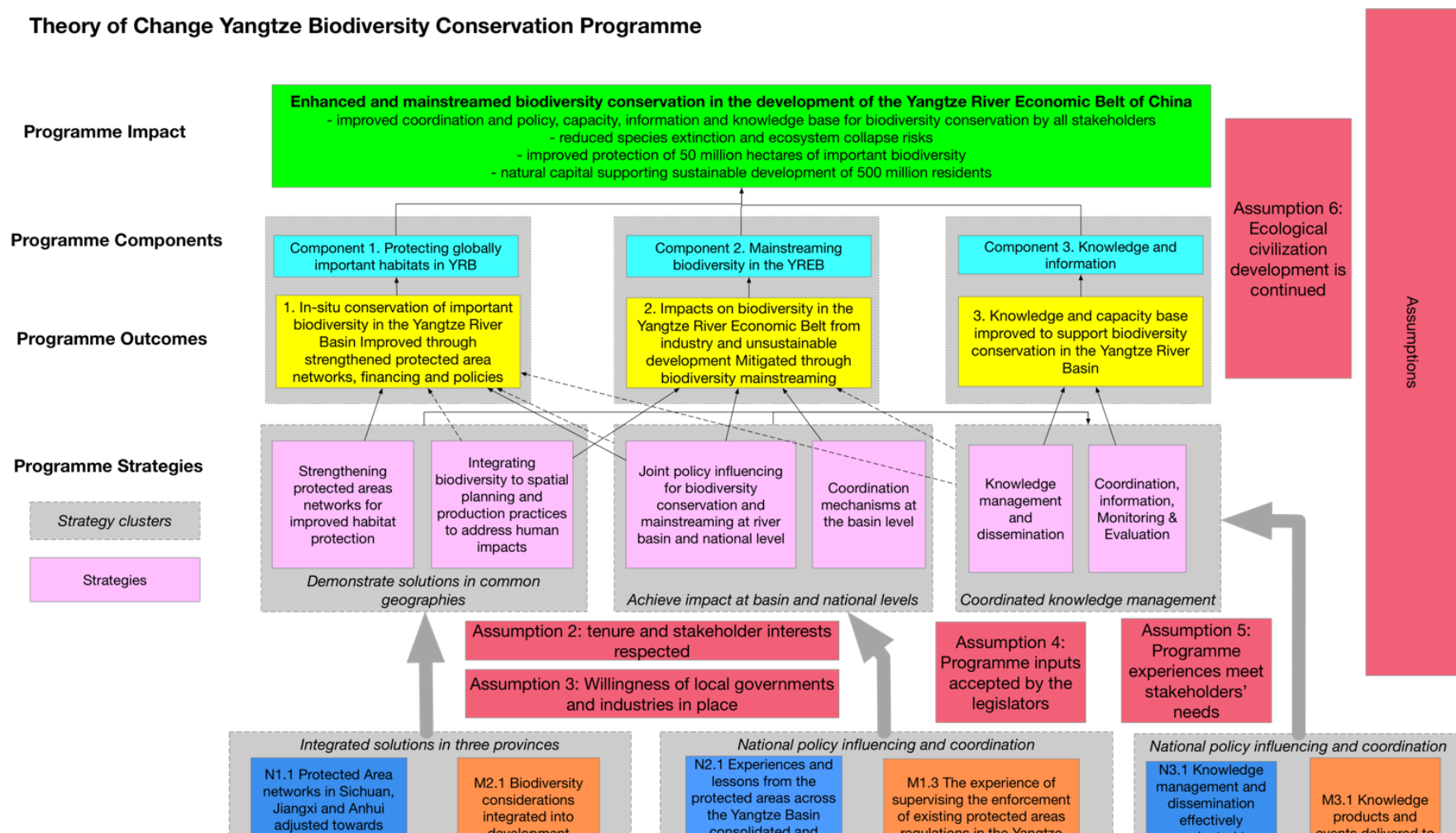
In order to support the biodiversity conservation and environmental protection initiatives as described above, and respond to in the aforementioned barriers, the programme aims to **Enhance and mainstream biodiversity conservation in the development of the Yangtze River Economic Belt of China**, so that:

- coordination among sector agencies for biodiversity conservation in Yangtze is improved, in terms of coherent planning and implementation, concerted investments and actions, as well as joint policy making.

- protected area networks can effectively and sustainably protect nationally and globally important biodiversity in 50 million hectares habitats across the Yangtze River Basin
- species extinction and ecosystem collapse risks to globally important biodiversity are reduced, as per further red list assessments
- effective solutions to food and water provision, disaster reduction, climate change mitigation and adaptation etc. are sustainably provided by the natural capital in the Yangtze River Basin for its 500 million residents.

This programme adopts a Theory of Change (TOC) as shown below in Figure 6. By implementing strategies and approaches clustered under three components to protect globally important habitat, mainstream biodiversity and enhance knowledge, information and capacity base, the programme aims to improve the protection of 1.2 million ha of protected areas and reduce the negative impact from development and production sectors for 1.25 million ha of landscape.

Theory of Change Yangtze Biodiversity Conservation Programme



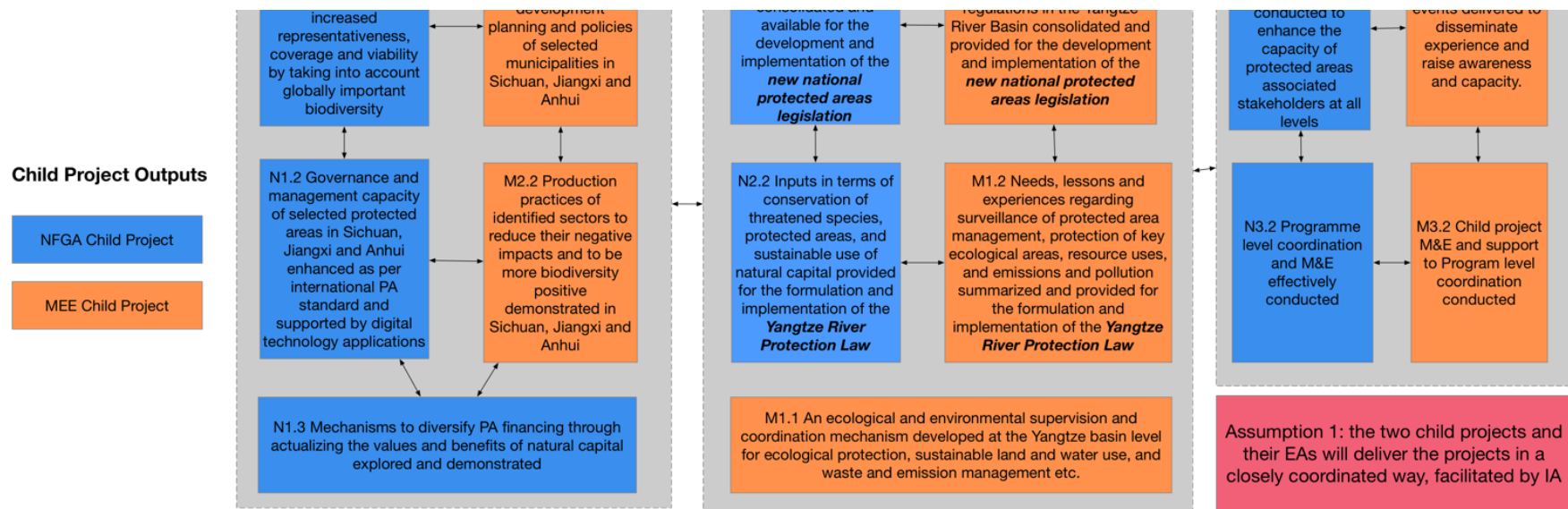


Figure 6 Theory of Change of the programme

In general, the programme's TOC will undertake three key approaches to achieve expected change and transformation, taking advantage of the unprecedented partnership between the two EAs of the CPs, who have been among the most relevant and important sectoral agencies for biodiversity conservation in China, but have not collaborated under an internationally funded initiative:

1) demonstrate integrated solutions in common geographies – guided by the programme, two CPs will work in the same three provinces of the YREB and it is planned that the landscapes and municipalities they further identify to focus on will also be coordinated. In these common geographies, response and solutions would be explored and demonstrated, by addressing the protection of habitats through protected areas management and addressing human impacts through biodiversity mainstreaming in a systematic and integrated way.

2) achieve impact at basin and national levels through joint policy influencing – the programme aims to undertake joint policy influencing with very clear policy targets. The two CPs and their EAs will both contribute to the policy influencing based on respective advantages set in a coordinated, complementary manner. This is expected to achieve greater impact than any of the CPs or EAs doing it on its own.

3) undertake coordinated knowledge and information management – the programme will generate knowledge from both the biodiversity conservation and mainstreaming perspectives, therefore principally meeting the needs to a wide group of stakeholders. The coordinated information management will also improve the data sharing and exchange among sector agencies. The programme will also help with institutional strengthening and capacity building. Monitoring and Evaluation (M&E) will be conducted at both programme and CP levels.

The programme's TOC also takes into account the distinct and respective mandates, roles and responsibilities of the Executing Agencies (EA) of the Child Projects (CP), which will each own certain parts of the TOC, yet support and complement each other on a few cross-cutting strategies, which are expected to lead to greater impacts based on consolidated and coordinated efforts.

The TOC also includes considerable potential for collaboration with the GEF7 ADB-implemented Ecological Compensation Mechanism project, as per early consultation and exchange between the two initiatives.

Three provinces have been identified as the target provinces for the programme, namely, Jiangxi, Anhui and Sichuan Provinces. The provinces were identified through a screening of several aspects, including 1) the biodiversity values and protected area estate, as they all have large number of PAs; 2) the social context of among all the provinces located in the YREB, among which, all three provinces have the lowest GDP per capita, 3) the existence of pressure from climate change and human impacts; and, 4) the willingness for participation and cooperation in the project, as well as 5) potential co-financing and financial leverage from the selected provinces.

The alternative scenarios provided by the Programme will be achieved by delivering the components, outcomes and strategies as following:

Component 1: Protecting globally important habitats in the Yangtze River Basin

Programme outcome: In-situ conservation of important biodiversity in the Yangtze River Basin Improved through strengthened protected area networks, financing and policies, so that:

- 1.2 million ha habitats of globally important biodiversity are better protected by strengthened PA networks that ensure the needed coverage of important and threatened biodiversity, improved PA governance and management effectiveness as per international standards, and diversified financing from both public and non-public sources.
- National protected area legislation in place to ensure greater needed backstopping of institutional and financial sustainability of protected areas systems in the Yangtze Basin.

The strategies to be undertaken under this component include:

1.1 strengthening protected area networks for key landscapes in Sichuan, Jiangxi and Anhui, which will be further delivered through a set of strategies, including:

1.1.1 undertaking a robust, systematic review and protected area network planning process for landscapes with globally important biodiversity, which will be identified by taking into account the Key Biodiversity Areas (KBA), species and ecosystem red lists, tenure situation, scale and coverage of representative habitats, stakeholder interests, which will be consolidated during the preparation phase. Protected areas categorization, value composition, expansion and even new protected areas establishment may be undertaken as a result of the adjustment and optimization processes.

1.1.2 improving governance and management of selected protected areas in the three provinces as per international PA standard and supported by technology applications. Digital technologies such as smart devices, digital connections, AI and Cloud will be explored, as long as conservation efficiency and effectiveness are likely to be improved. The IUCN Green List of Protected Areas (Green List) will be introduced to support the Programme to guide the PAs to improve towards good governance, sound planning, effective management and achieving conservation outcomes. It is expected that up to 6 PAs will be certified by Green List at the end of the programme. Coordination with the GEF-7 TWC and the GEF-7 ECM projects will be actively sought, in order to reduce redundancies while achieve synergies, especially in terms of application of new technologies. During the programme preparation, opportunities to integrate considerations and activities related to COVID-19 and other diseases to PA management will be explored, taking advantage of the evolving knowledge of IUCN on wildlife and health.

1.1.3 exploring and demonstrating system-level mechanisms and approaches to diversify PA financing through actualizing and marketing of the protected area values and benefits at the Green List certified sites. The diversified financing mechanisms will enable the investments to the PAs to be more sustainable. The approaches will include natural capital assessment and accounting to build the needed evidence and knowledge base, payment for ecosystem services with PAs as ecosystem service providers and therefore receiving greater investments from downstream municipalities and industries, including those participating in the practice of improving activities of component 2 of the programme, and technology-based crowd funding to mobilize funding from a wide variety of stakeholders etc. Considering the fact that sustainable PA financing is also now addressed by the C-PAR, focusing on public financing, the programme will consult with the C-PAR in the preparation phase to identify complementary actions and to avoid redundancies. The consultation and collaboration during implementation will be undertaken between the IAs, and will be facilitated by the MEE, who are executing a few CPs under the C-PAR. The programme will also establish close coordination and cooperation with the ECM project on the natural capital related endeavors.

1.2 Providing joint inputs to the legislation and implementation of the new national protected areas law by consolidating the needs and lessons from Yangtze Basin in protected areas development, management, financing as well as enforcement of existing PA regulations. This will be a joint undertaking by both CPs in a coordinated, complementary manner, with a likely coordination role undertaken by NFGA CP. Also inputs from the ECM project will be included in the process, based on close coordination between the two initiatives.

Component 2: Mainstreaming biodiversity in the YREB

Programme Outcome 2: Impacts on biodiversity in the Yangtze River Economic Belt from industry and unsustainable development mitigated through biodiversity mainstreaming:

- 1.25 million ha landscapes and municipal areas integrate biodiversity considerations in development planning and production practices, so as to stop further habitat loss, fragmentation and degradation in these municipalities and landscapes.

- Yangtze protection legislation in place, which ensures from legal perspective the needed protection of natural resources and biodiversity, as well as the reduced negative impacts from human and development activities.

The strategies to be undertaken under this component include:

2.1 Establishing a coordinated ecological and environmental supervision mechanism at the Yangtze basin level for ecological protection, sustainable land and water use, and waste and emission management etc. This will mainly be achieved through building the capacity of the newly established, dedicated institution under the MEE for the Yangtze.

2.2 Reducing human impacts from development and production in selected municipalities in Sichuan, Jiangxi and Anhui, which includes a two-fold approach:

2.2.1 integrating biodiversity considerations into development planning of selected municipalities in Sichuan, Jiangxi, and Anhui. This includes making sure that the ecological redlines are not impacted, KBAs outside the ecological redlines are maintained, as well as essential ecological processes and corridors are protected from urban, industrial and infrastructure development. The Integrated Biodiversity Assessment Tool that IUCN has been promoting with others will be introduced, based on fundamental information consolidated during the programme preparation phase and provided from Component 1. The municipalities will be selected during the programme preparation phase and together with the critical landscapes to be identified for Component 1. Additional criteria include: 1) inclusion of or strong ecological linkages, e.g. upstream vs downstream, with the selected landscapes having globally important biodiversity, 2) progress in undertakings related to biodiversity conservation and mainstreaming, as well as implementation of national initiatives, 3) willingness for participation and cooperation in the project, as well as 4) the potential co-financing and financial leverage potential.

2.2.2 Improving production practices of selected sectors in Sichuan, Jiangxi and Anhui, to be more biodiversity-positive through improved know-how, capacity building for stakeholders including enterprises, industrial associations and regulators, and development and implementation of pollution and waste management standards and regulatory systems on resource use and emissions. Assessment of the linkage between pollution and resource use/overuse, and distinction and threatening of species and key freshwater habitats will be undertaken to inform the development and implementation of management and regulatory instruments, including the PES mechanism that Component 1 plans to explore. The sectors of consideration tentatively include aquaculture, mining and processing as well as tourism, and will be assessed and confirmed during the programme preparation. Criteria for consideration includes 1) linkages with globally important biodiversity; 2) existing impacts or potential risks to both habitat destruction and degradation; 3) reasonable scale for the programme to make impacts; 4) possibility for identifying and developing champions and agents of change; and, 5) ability for the programme to reach, with CPs' EAs as "boundary partner".

2.3 Providing joint, solid inputs to the legislation and implementation of the Yangtze River Protection Law by summarizing needs, lessons, and experiences regarding protected areas, sustainable and safe wildlife use, bio-safety, ecological redlines, resource uses, emissions and pollution etc. This will be a joint undertaking by both CPs in a coordinated, complementary manner, with likely a coordination role undertaken by the MEE CP. Also inputs from the ECM project will be included in the process, based on close coordination between the two initiatives.

Component 3: Knowledge, capacity and information management

Programme Outcome 3: Knowledge and capacity base improved to support biodiversity conservation in the Yangtze River Basin:

- knowledge products and events developed and delivered
- programme and project coordination and M&E conducted

The planned strategies to deliver the outcomes include:

3.1 Developing and delivering knowledge products and events to disseminate experience and raise awareness and capacity. An integrated communication and knowledge management strategy will be developed during the programme preparation to guide the development and delivery of coordinated knowledge, communications, and awareness raising products and activities of the programme, as well as the learning, sharing and exchange activities between the programme and other relevant initiatives, so as to improve the knowledge base for biodiversity conservation not only in Yangtze, but also in China and even elsewhere in the world.

3.2 Conducting information management, M&E and coordination at programme and child project level. NFGA CP will lead on the M&E and coordination for the programme in general, while meeting the needs for its own. MEE CP will contribute to the programme level coordination and M&E. A coordination and aggregated reporting mechanism will be established and practiced. Through coordinated M&E and information management, data sharing and exchange between the two EAs can be improved.

The programme TOC, components and outcomes will be delivered jointly by the two CPs, as Table 1 shows. Each CP has clear focus based on its institutional mandate and advantages. Yet they will work closely also on: i) programme-level coordination and M&E mechanism; ii) Coordination on site selection; iii) Coordinated data and information management; iv) cooperation and coordination on implementing local activities in landscapes and municipalities; v) Joint policy and law influencing given respective mandates and perspectives but aiming to achieve greater impact; and vi) coordinated knowledge management, capacity building and dissemination at all levels.

Table 1: Programme TOC and Child Project contributions

Summary of Programme Theory of Change			Child Project Contribution	
Objective	Outcome	Strategies	Owner	Explanation
	1: In-situ conse	1.1 Strengthening protected area networks fo	NFGA	As the PA manager for PAs nationwide, the NFGA's CP will own this strategy and deliver expected results through its CP outputs. However, the data and information used by this strategy will also contribute to the relevant strategy on municipal planning under 2.2, owned by MEE CP

Enhanced and mainstreamed biodiversity conservation in the development of the Yangtze River Economic Belt of China	Protection of important biodiversity in the Yangtze River Basin improved through strengthened protected area networks, financing and policies	For key landscapes in Sichuan, Jiangxi and Anhui	NFGA	Owned by MEE CP. Also, the site selection of landscapes and PAs will be coordinated with that of 2.2, owned by MEE CP. Provide common landscapes/municipalities selected, greater synergies and cross-support will be explored and pursued.
		1.2 Providing joint inputs to the legislation and implementation of the new national protected areas law	Joint	Since NFGA is the enforcer of existing PA regulations and MEE is the supervisor for the enforcement, both CPs will undertake this strategy as per their own mandates, yet in a coordinated manner. It is tentatively planned that NFGA CP will take the coordination role on the joint efforts.
	2: Impacts on biodiversity in the Yangtze River Economic Belt from industry and unsustainable development Mitigated through biodiversity mainstreaming	2.1 Establishing an ecological and environmental supervision mechanism at the Yangtze basin level	MEE	As supervisor of human's positive and negative impact on environment, as well as the focal agency for Convention on Biological Diversity, MEE's CP will own this strategy and deliver expected results through its CP output, taking advantage of its newly established institution for Yangtze
		2.2 Reducing human impacts from development and production in selected municipalities in Sichuan, Jiangxi and Anhui	MEE	The MEE CP will own this strategy and deliver expected results through its CP outputs. However, the data and information base consolidated from 1.1 will be referred, and the selection of municipalities will coordinate with that of 1.1, both owned by NFGA CP.
		2.3 Contributing to the formulation and implementation of the Yangtze River Protection Law	Joint	Both as key stakeholders of this new law, NFGA and MEE's CPs will undertake this strategy as per their own mandates, yet in a coordinated manner. It is tentatively planned that MEE CP will take the coordination role on the joint efforts.
	3: Knowledge and capacity base	3.1 Developing and delivering knowledge products	Joint	Both CPs will undertake this, yet in a coordinated and mutually supporting manner

	ind capacity bas e improved to s upport biodiver sity conservatio n in the Yangtz e River Basin	ucts and events		ated and mutually supporting manner.
		3.2 Conducting progra mme and project coor dination and M&E	Joint	Both CPs will undertake project level coordin ation and M&E. The programme level coordination and M&E will be led by NFGA CP.

4) alignment with GEF focal area and/or Impact Program strategies;

As described above, the programme is in line with GEF's definition of the programmatic approach. The programme itself presents a strategic collaboration between the EAs that have not cooperated as closely in this manner previously, and it will also build long term coordination among multiple stakeholder groups. The CPs of the programme are also well interlinked and collectively contribute to large scale impacts from their own yet complementary perspectives and based on comparative advantages of the EAs.

The programme is in alignment with the following objectives under the GEF Biodiversity Focal Area:

BD Objective 1. Mainstream biodiversity across sectors as well as landscapes and seascapes by focusing on the biodiversity Mainstreaming in priority sections and municipalities. The programme will integrate biodiversity considerations into municipal planning to ensure that land and resource use is appropriately situated to optimize production without undermining or degrading biodiversity. It will also improve production practices to be more biodiversity-positive, with a focus on sectors that have significant biodiversity impacts, including fisheries, tourism and mining.

BD Objective 2. Address direct drivers to protect habitats and species, by focusing on improving financial sustainability, effective management, and ecosystem coverage of the protected areas. The programme will achieve effective protection of ecologically viable and climate-resilient representative ecosystems and adequate coverage of threatened species in the Yangtze basin, diversify funding and financing to protected areas and introduce international standards to improve individual and institutional capacity of protected area managers and agencies. The diversified financing to protected areas will also include natural capital assessment and accounting, as an approach to evaluate and quantify the values and benefits of the natural capital of protected areas.

5) incremental/ additional cost reasoning and expected contributions from the baseline, the GEFTF, LDCF, SCCF, and co-financing;

The Chinese government has invested significant funds to protect biodiversity in the Yangtze River Basin, such as giant panda conservation, natural forest protection program, returning farmland to forests, grasslands and wetlands, water and wetland conservation, water pollution prevention initiatives and ecological protection compensation projects in the Yangtze River Basin.

At present, these initiatives are formulated and implemented in an often siloed way by different sectoral agencies, provinces and cities, which lacks coherent planning and effective coordination. Insufficient capital investment and low efficiency of use are unable to cope with the needs of the Yangtze River biodiversity conservation. In particular, the landscape or river basin approach, addressing nature conservation in an integrated and systematic way that involves related sector agencies and stakeholders, has not been widely adopted. This has led to particularly threats to aquatic biodiversity. The white dolphins have not been found in the past forty years, the population of finless porpoises has fallen sharply, and the technical difficulties in artificial breeding couldn't provide sufficient support to endangered species such as the Chinese pangolins that are at risk of extinction. So far, the systematic protection of endangered species of finless porpoise and Chinese sturgeon has not been initiated.

Without the input of the GEF programme, it is difficult to change the current status. GEF investment of this programme will focus on supporting cross-sectoral coordination mechanism for conservation, management and supervision, improvement of laws and regulations, demonstration of integrated solutions, data information sharing mechanism and capacity building , which will fill the gaps of Chinese government funding and programs, promote cross-sectoral cooperation and interregional synergy, clarify the position of departmental responsibilities, promote coordinated planning, management, supervision, and law enforcement, implement the ecological civilization concept "mountains, waters, forests, farmlands, lakes and grasslands are life community" and "green mountain and river are valuable", increase the use efficiency of capital investment of all parties, as well as enhance the level of biodiversity mainstreaming and conservation effectiveness in the Yangtze River Basin to achieve significant environment benefits.

Besides, the field activities of the programme will focus on the three provinces along the Yangtze River Basin, i.e. Sichuan, Jiangxi, and Anhui, from upstream to downstream, which are relatively less developed with many rural communities and populations. Through programme implementation, local communities may also indirectly benefit from the programme, in terms of job opportunities provided by protected areas, and improved provision, regulating, and cultural and recreational services that biodiversity provide.

Table 2: Scenario analysis and programme incremental contributions

Baseline scenario	Business as usual scenario in next 5-7 years	Alternative scenario with added value from GEF's incremental contribution following the programmatic approach
Siloed and sector-divided approach to biodiversity conservation	Certain coordination is in place, and coherent policy making is gradually undertaken. However, sector division remains.	The programme itself and all its components, provides an opportunity to leverage the Governments' initiatives and promote cross-sectoral coordination aimed at addressing sustainable management of shared, common-pool resources in the YRB for sustainable development and biodiversity conservation. In addition to the related results such as the coordination mechanism, the programme's broad strategies, specifically inter

onservation and environment protection in the YRB	aren. However, sector divisions in enforcement, investments, projects and actions is still prominent.	nation mechanism, the programme's broad strategies, specifically integrated demonstration of solutions, joint policy influencing and coordinated knowledge management and information exchange, are expected to demonstrate to the stakeholders, sectoral authorities and local governments the improved effectiveness and transformational impacts that the integrated and coordinated approaches can achieve.
Establishing a new protected areas system in China	<p>PA system reformed, of yet</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - not based on systematic planning and information - usual governance and financing model - no or too many standards on PA management 	<p>Through the component 1, the programme will contribute to a streamlined PA system in the YRB, which integrates systematic planning of protected area networks based on key biodiversity information to ensure needed coverage of representative and viable biodiversity, diversifies governance and financial models, and applies tested standard to guide PA management.</p> <p>The programme will demonstrate and develop needed experience from selected landscapes in the YRB about improving PA networks, enhancing governance and management, and diversifying financing, in order to achieve the expected results. Tenure issues and stakeholder rights will be fully considered in the programme preparation and implementation. International good practices and new approaches will be applied.</p>
Developing new protected area legislations for all PA types	PA law is not enacted on time or enacted with considerable compromises due to diverse and conflicting interests	<p>Through the joint strategy under component 1, the programme will contribute to the new PA law enacted and implemented with less compromises due to the balanced interest and agreements between the likely supervisor (MEE) and enforcer (NFGA) of the new PA legislation, stronger provisions on PA legal status, financing, management measures, and support to diverse governance types and private sector and civil society participation.</p> <p>The programme will provide consolidated and coordinated inputs to the legislation process from both CPs with different yet complementary perspectives. The coordinated inputs will help ensure and strengthen the representativeness of balanced needs and interests of the major stakeholders of the legislation and lead to greater practicality and operability of it.</p> <p>The programme will ensure needed planning and coordinated implementation of the two CPs, and the close engagement with the legislators in order to achieve expected results on this.</p>
		Through the component 2, the programme will contribute to mainstreaming of biodiversity in the further development of YREB, so as to mitigate

Managing pollution and other human impacts in the Yangtze River Basin	Impacts from industries and development to biodiversity gradually reduced or remain stable, but with considerable resistance from other stakeholders, considering the YREB as a national priority for economic growth	<p>te the impacts from development and production.</p> <p>The establishment of an adaptive ecological and environmental management system, with an effective river basin authority is likely to lead to improved coordination, better conservation of biodiversity areas while ensuring municipal development, improved tested standards, better regulatory systems for pollution management based on stakeholder's feedback. These approaches will be able to demonstrate the effectiveness of managing human impacts while supporting sustainable development through improved coordination and the integrated, participatory approach.</p> <p>The programme will identify needed willingness of local governments and business sector stakeholders during the programme preparation to inform the site and partner selections, and will actively engage them during implementation by providing needed participation opportunities.</p>
Formulating the Yangtze River Protection Law	Yangtze River Protection Law is enacted with compromises and lacking biodiversity related articles, and is implemented with difficulty.	<p>Through a joint strategy under the component 2, the programme will contribute to the Yangtze River Protection Law in place and implemented, which includes emphasis on both nature/biodiversity and environment, recognition of protected areas and other area-based measures, diverse instruments for pollution management, and supports biodiversity mainstreaming across Yangtze.</p> <p>The programme will provide consolidated and coordinated inputs from both CPs having complementary perspectives, ensuring representativeness of interests and also making stronger voice for biodiversity conservation and sustainable use.</p> <p>The programme will ensure needed planning and coordinated implementation of the two CPs, and the close engagement with the legislators in order to achieve the expected outputs.</p>

6) global environmental benefits (GEFTF) and/or adaptation benefits (LDCF/SCCF)

The Yangtze basin is a critical global ecoregion that contains some of the earth's richest biodiversity. As the world's third longest river, the Yangtze River Basin supports half of China's total wild animal and plant species. The Yangtze River Basin is the key habitat for both aquatic and terrestrial wildlife, including 1,100 aquatic species (400 fish species). The upper, central, and lower reaches of the Yangtze are the only home of endangered species including the snow leopard, giant panda, and Yangtze finless porpoise, Chinese sturgeon, Yangtze alligator, and golden snub-nosed monkey, etc. Some are critically endangered or even

“functionally extinct” such as the Baiji (Chinese river dolphin) and Chinese paddlefish which was recently claimed. In addition, the Yangtze basin provides critical habitats, stop-overs and wintering grounds for endangered migratory birds along the East Asian - Australasian Fly and many other important ecosystem services critical to the world e.g. the carbon sequestration etc. Therefore, biodiversity conservation of the Yangtze Basin is of global significance not only for China but also for the international community.

The programme is expected to improve the coverage, management and financing of 1.2 million hectares of protected areas as well as mitigate the impacts to biodiversity from 1.25 million hectares of productive landscapes and municipal areas in the Yangtze River Basin. These improved lands and waters will not only provide refugia for the endemic species of Yangtze such as Giant panda, Finless porpoise etc, but also generate global environmental biodiversity benefits, e.g. the stop-over and wintering sites for endangered migratory birds.

The programme will directly contribute to the Aichi Targets 1,6,11,12,14,17, 19 and 20, indirectly contributes to Targets 2,3,7,8,9,13,15 and 18.

Regarding the Post 2020 Global Biodiversity Framework, as per the updated Zero Draft of the framework, the programme will contribute to the tentative target 1, 2, 6, 13 and 19, especially, Target 2 “By 2030, protect and conserve through well connected and effective system of protected areas and other effective area-based conservation measures at least 30 per cent of the planet with the focus on areas particularly important for biodiversity” and Target 6 “By 2030, reduce pollution from all sources, including reducing excess nutrients [by x%], biocides [by x%], plastic waste [by x%] to levels that are not harmful to biodiversity and ecosystem functions and human health”. The improved biodiversity conservation of the Yangtze River through improved PA networks will support the achievement of the global PA target and the mainstreaming of biodiversity to productive sectors will contribute to the pollution target.

7) innovation, sustainability, and potential for scaling up.

Innovativeness:

The programme exhibits innovation in the following aspects:

1. Programmatic Approach for an unprecedented partnership: Two national authorities, MEE and NFGA, that have rarely, if never, worked together in the same international initiative, are now working in coordination in one programme. One common TOC has been developed, and each of the EAs will own certain parts of it, yet collaborate on a few crosscutting ones, aiming to achieve greater impacts at river basin and national levels. The coordinated inputs from both child projects will ensure the representativeness of balanced needs and interests of the major stakeholders.

2. Introduction and application of international standards: The international standards on diversified governance types of PAs, financial models, Key Biodiversity Areas (KBA) and IUCN Green List of Protected and Conserved Areas will be introduced to the Yangtze Basin.

3. Joint policy influencing: instead of advocating for new laws and legislations from the sectoral perspective, this programme and the two EAs will work together, with common vision yet differentiated focuses, to contribute to the important legislation process in China, the PA law and the Yangtze River Protection Law. Inputs to the legislation and implementation process will come from both child projects with complementary perspectives, ensuring representativeness of interests and also making stronger voice of greater biodiversity conservation and sustainable use.

4. Capacity building for new institution: MEE has established a basin level environmental supervision agency, the Yangtze River Basin Ecology and Environment Supervision Administration, however, how effective it is, how it functions in relation to the upcoming Yangtze River Protection Law, how it can work even better, those will be address through particularly capacity building support delivered by the programme. An adaptive ecological and environmental management system could be established, based on this programme's interventions.

5. Technology for Conservation: Digital technology applications will be deployed to improve the governance and management of selected protected areas in the 3 provinces as per the international PA standard. The programme will conduct joint monitoring activities and programs, particularly with digital platforms.

Sustainability:

The programme is sustainable as it builds directly on the strong government baseline initiatives and projects to facilitate the development of the Yangtze River Economic Belt by promoting well-coordinated environmental conservation and avoiding unchecked development.

The programme is highly consistent with the strategic planning and implementation plan for the Yangtze River Protection of national and provincial governments as China attaches great importance to the ecological environment protection of the Yangtze River Economic Belt. The legislative work of the Yangtze River Protection Law has been included in the NPC's legislative plan and is undergoing consultation process.

In the new government institutional reform plan, the Yangtze River Basin Ecology and Environment Supervision Administration, which is managed by the MEE but jointly also guided by Ministry of Water Resources (MWR), has been established. The provinces within the Yangtze River Economic Belt have also formulated and implemented the implementation plan for the provincial-level Yangtze River Economic Belt Ecological Environmental Protection Action. Biodiversity conservation work has been included as an important part of the above strategic planning documents and is also the main content of the China Biodiversity Conservation Strategy and Action Plan (2011-2030). To further strengthen the biodiversity conservation work in the Yangtze River Basin, MEE, the Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Affairs (MARA) and MNR jointly issued the "Key Aquatic Biodiversity Conservation Plan" in April 2018, and the General Office of the State Council published "Opinions on Strengthening the Protection of Aquatic Organisms in the Yangtze River" in October 2018. The content of this programme is in full compliance with the above purposes and can be a demonstration in the process of ecological civilization development.

The programme is also aligned with several other initiatives ongoing in China, including the Ecological Redline initiative, a virtually conducted approach of Other Effective Area-based Conservation Measures, aiming to protect the areas of ecological value and significance.

Thus, the programme will directly provide experiences, technology, coordination, good cases, as well as international support to the YRB's protection and sustainable development of the Yangtze River Economic Belt. Those could be adopted by the government through knowledge products, demonstrated solutions, communication materials, etc. During the programme period, the cross-sectoral institutional coordination mechanism will be strengthened, studied, and modelled in purpose for future integration into the governments' priorities in YREB biodiversity conservation and sustainable development, which will be incentivized and provided the effectiveness and ability to achieve impacts that the programme aims to demonstrate for integrated and coordinated approaches and efforts.

Potential for Scale-Up:

The programme is highly scalable, considering

First of all, the programme intends to promote the legislation and implementation of two national laws, the PA law and the Yangtze River Protection Law that will have profound impacts to China's biodiversity conservation, protected areas governance, and river basin management – much more than just the legislative objects, the national parks/protected areas, and the Yangtze River. China's PA Law will update and further amplify the PA management categories and practices to share with international community, and the Yangtze River Protection Law, as China's first law for a river basin, can be scaled to other large basins including the Yellow River and Pearl River, etc.

Secondly, given that the programme aims to provide focused support for pilot provinces, once the process is complete, the programme outcomes will apply to the entire Yangtze River Basin, which covers 11 provinces from the headwater to estuary. The programme pilots include provinces from the upper, middle, lower reaches of Yangtze mainstream, as well as the main tributary province, which will provide a good range of examples of different types of the natural, economic, and social context that could be learned by other provinces. This programme could collaborate with relevant authorities including MEE, NFGA, MNR, MWR to mobilize the attention from all provinces in the YRB.

Thirdly, the outcomes of the programme have great potential to be scaled up as China is re-establishing its national PA system. The demonstration sites under CPs can provide a wide range of PA diversity and contribute good examples to river basin level PA network (such as the Yangtze River Basin wetland PA network) and national PA system with NFGA. Moreover, IUCN's Green List of Protected Areas programme can also help to share the experiences and lesson learned at international level.

Fourthly, the lessons learned from these projects can be extended more generally across China since they feed directly into China's reform and coordination of government agencies. MEE and NFGA coordination mechanism can function to scale.

Finally, the river basin approach biodiversity conservation has the potential to be introduced to other river basins, especially for large rivers, through relevant Chinese authorities, as well as through IUCN's thematic programmes as knowledge products and demonstrations.

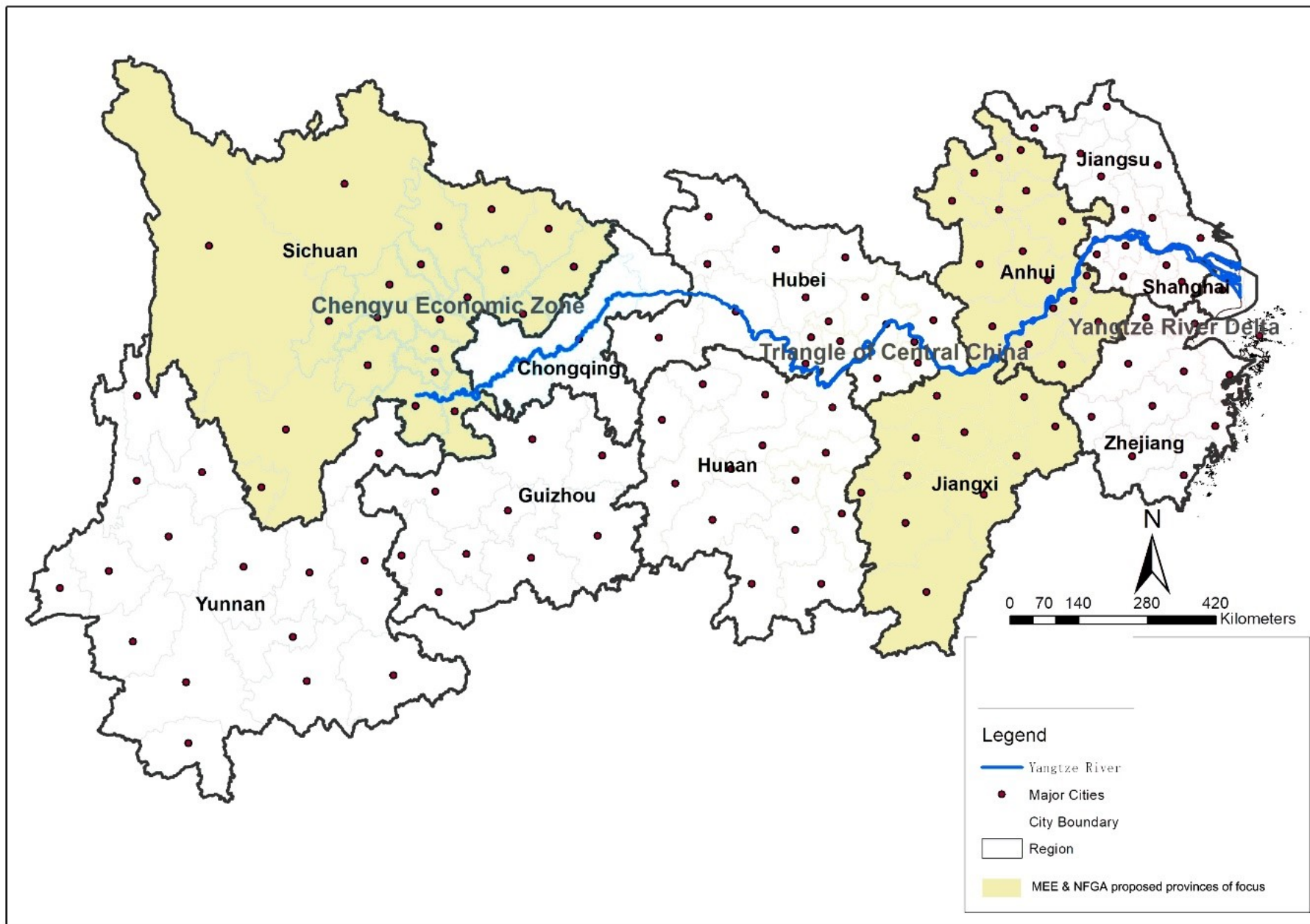
[1] Ecological Redlining initiative (Eco-Redline) delineation defines areas that have special and important ecological functions and must be compulsorily strictly protected. It serves as both a "bottom line" and a "lifeline" in safeguarding national ecological security. The delineation of the Eco-Redline is to help with the implementation of the National Ecological Function Zone that functions such as water conservation, maintenance of biodiversity conservation, soil and water conservation, protection against wind and sand fixation, and stabilization of coastal ecology, as well as ecologically sensitive and vulnerable areas suffering from soil erosion, land desertification, rocky desertification and salinization.

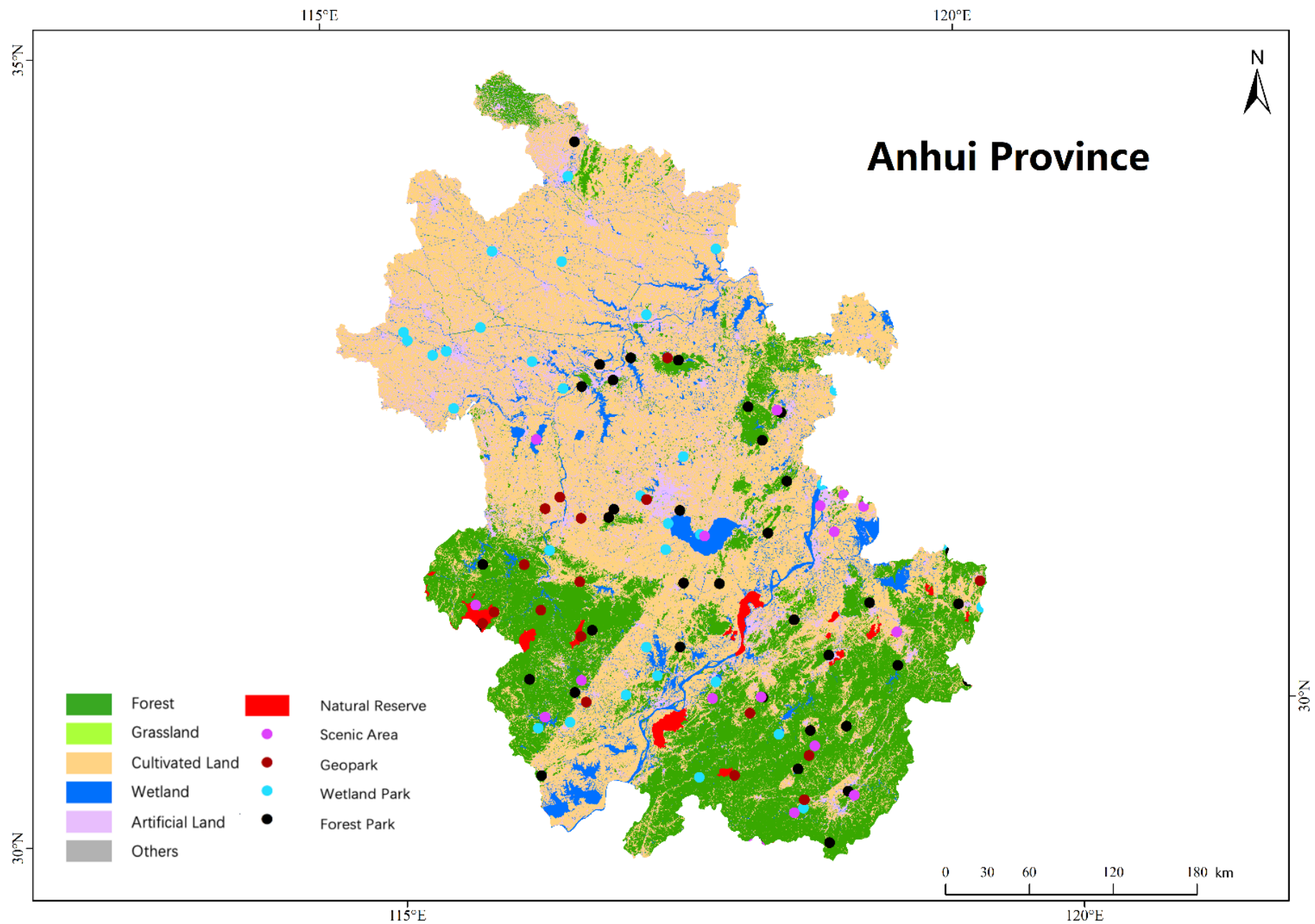
[2] In 2017, the Chinese central government added ecological and environmental planning into the original "three Plans in one" framework (i.e., the National Economic and Social Development Plan, the General Urban Development Plan and the General Land Use Plan), and formed the Multi-plan initiative. It aims to solve the "fights" in existing plans, and integrates the national economic and social development planning, urban and rural planning, land use planning, ecological environmental protection planning and other multiple planning into one planning, so that one city and county will have one plan and one blueprint. In other words, currently, the Ministry of Natural Resources (MNR) exercises all land and spatial use control responsibilities in a unified manner, and the MNR integrates the planning functions of several ministries into one.

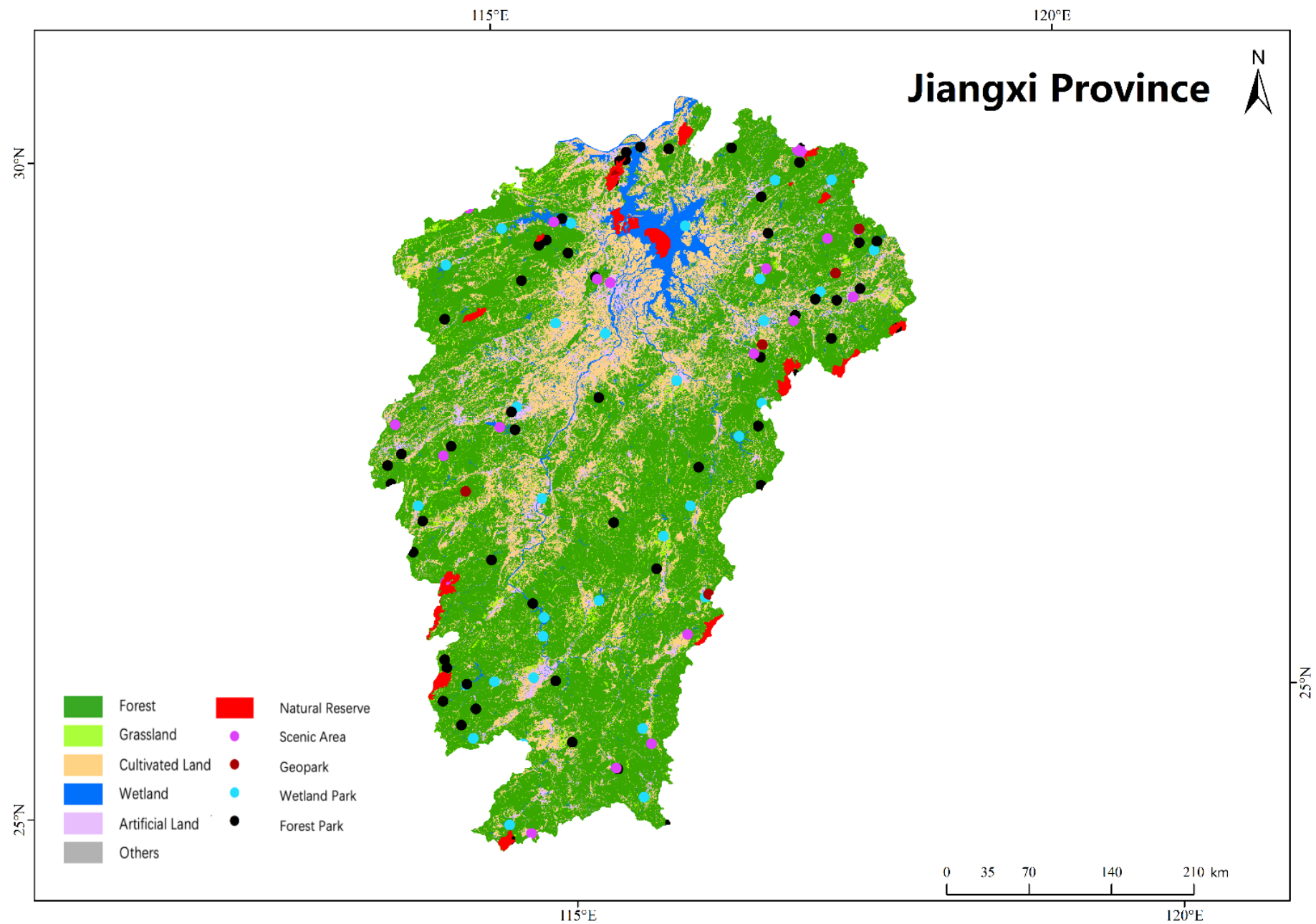
1b. Program Map and Coordinates

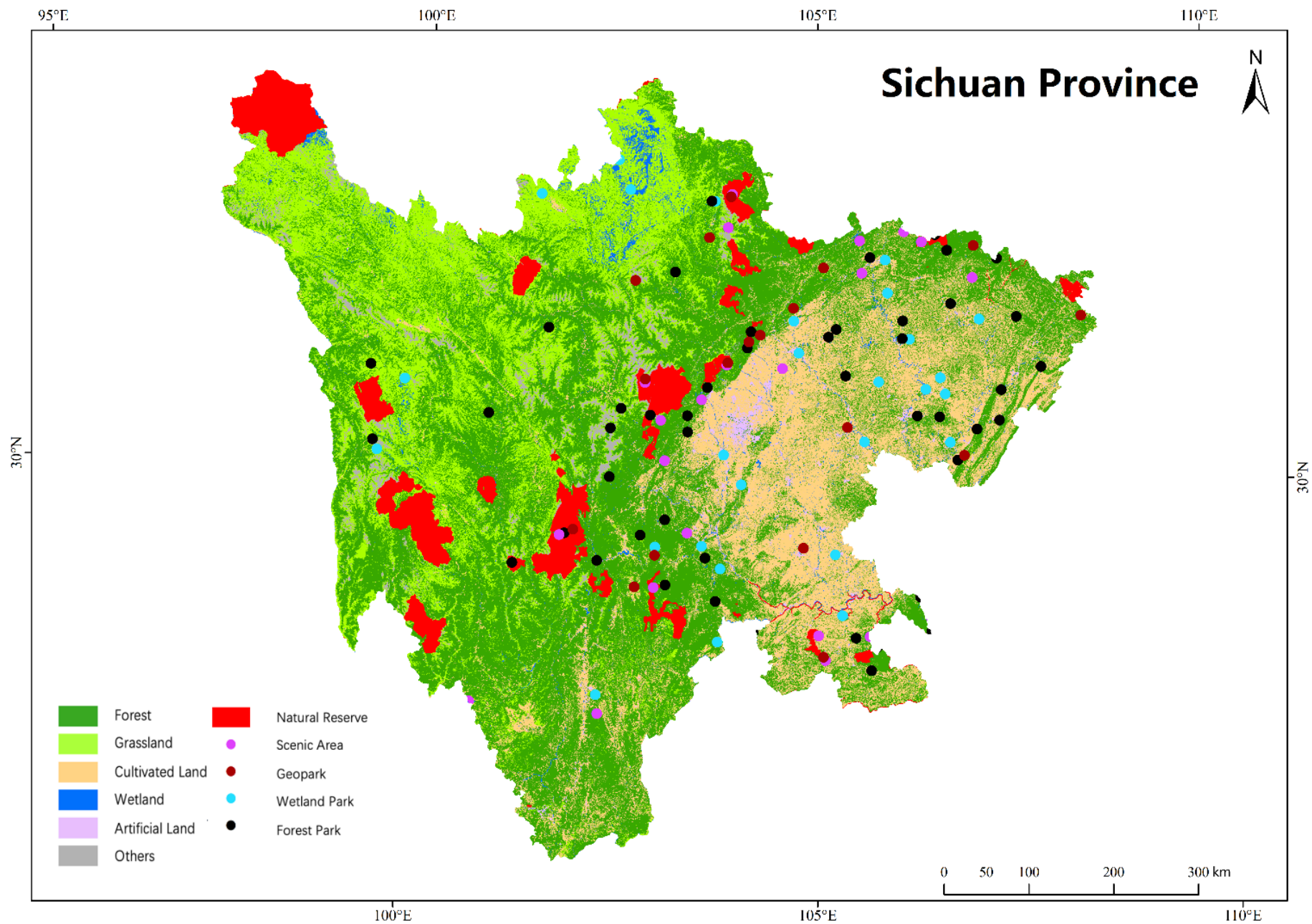
Please provide geo-referenced information and map where the program interventions will take place.

The programme mainly covers the three provinces in the Yangtze River Basin in its site and area-specific interventions, which from upstream to downstream are Sichuan, Jiangxi, and Anhui. Both CPs will focus on Sichuan, Jiangxi and Anhui. However, basin-level ecological and environmental supervision, policy influencing at basin and national levels, and cross-cutting activities on knowledge, awareness and capacity will achieve impacts at higher levels.









2. Stakeholders

Select the stakeholders that have participated in consultations during the program identification phase:

Civil Society Organizations Yes

Indigenous Peoples and Local Communities Yes

Private Sector Entities Yes

If none, please explain why:

In addition, provide indicative information on how stakeholders, including civil society and indigenous peoples, will be engaged in the program preparation, and their respective roles and means of engagement.

Table 3: Stakeholder Engagement

Stakeholder	Roles, Responsibilities and Participation in Programme	Means of Engagement
National People's Congress (NPC)	<p>The highest organ of state power; responsible for the legal framework and development of revision of laws and national regulations.</p> <p>NPC's legislation initiatives have been closely consulted with in programme design and they will be engaged as early and substantially as possible in the policy influencing activities of the programme.</p>	NPC will be engaged as a key "suggestion provider" in the programme preparation through interviews and consultation meetings. NPC will also be regarded as a target group or client for the legislation development activities, and will receive programme information and be invited to join related activities and events.
Ministry of Finance (MOF)	<p>Operational Focal Point (OFP).</p> <p>Coordination and implementation of GEF projects</p>	MOF will be signing grant agreements with IUCN after the CEO endorsements are obtained. They will be Programme Coordination Committee (PCC) member
Ministry of Ecology and Environment (MEE)	<p>Responsible for coordination of environmental issues, pollution, and the supervision of area-based conservation approaches of ecological redlines and protected areas. MEE is the focal agency for CBD and UNFCCC, and the execution of CBPF.</p> <p>MEE will be the EA of a Child Project of this programme and will support NFGA in overall programme coordination</p>	MEE will be the EA of the MEE CP and PCC member.
National Forestry and Grassland Administration	Responsible for forest, grasslands, wetlands and deserts management, as well as the management of all types of protected areas in China. NFGA is the focal agency for Ramsar, WHC, UNCCD, UNFCCC.	NFGA will be the EA of the NFGA CP and member of the PCC.

Grassland Administration (NFGA)	<p>ET etc.</p> <p>NFGA will be the EA of a Child Project and take the leading role in programme-level coordination and M&E activities.</p>	NFGA will be the EA of the NFGA CP and member of the PCC.
Asian Development Bank (ADB)	<p>ADB will implement another GEF 7 project related to Yangtze, focusing on the Eco-compensation, which is an important partner project to this programme.</p> <p>Close coordination and cooperation will be identified during the programme preparation and will be pursued during the implementation.</p>	ADB will be very closely consulted and interacted with during the programme preparation, and in the implementation following the mechanisms above mentioned and elaborated during the preparation.
Ministry of Natural Resources (MNR)	<p>MNR is the authority responsible for spatial planning and control, as well as protection, restoration and sustainable use of natural resources within national boundaries. MNR is also the supervisor of NFGA.</p> <p>It will be an important agency to support policy and knowledge development activities of the programme.</p>	MNR will be engaged as a “suggestion provider” in the programme preparation through interviews and consultation meetings. It will also be engaged as an external supporter and client during the implementation, and will receive programme information and be invited to join related activities and events.
Local Governments - Sichuan, Jiangxi and Anhui Provinces	<p>Provincial governments, especially the provincial Ecology and Environmental Departments and Forestry Bureaus will directly act as implementer for provincial activities as well as for some activities at national level.</p> <p>Municipal level governments will be key implementer for some activities at the target landscape level in child projects, particularly in terms of mainstreaming biodiversity in local development and spatial planning.</p> <p>Provincial Ethnic Affairs Commissions, though not directly related to technical aspects of the programme, will be actively consulted during the preparation and implementation, in order to ensure the needed considerations of ethnic minorities and indigenous people are included.</p>	<p>Local governments will be a key stakeholder group. They will support the preparation of the programme with key perspectives and inputs. They will also be directly responsible for executing the activities in provinces.</p> <p>They are PCC members.</p> <p>The Ethnic Affairs Commissions will be suggestion provider, and consulted during the programme preparation through interviews and consultation meetings. They will be engaged as appropriate during implementation.</p>
Academic institutes	<p>Responsible for assessment, surveys, monitoring, data collection and database development, these including Chinese Academy of Sciences (CAS), Chinese Research Academy of Environmental Sciences (CRAES) and Chinese Academy of Forestry (CAF).</p> <p>The academic institutions will provide technical expertise and data to the programme.</p>	Academic institutes will provide important inputs to programme preparation as resource persons and/or service providers, which will also be continued during implementation.

Protected areas and their management bureaus	<p>Protected areas including nature reserves and national parks etc. are direct managers of species, ecosystems and biodiversity within their sites.</p> <p>They have been involved in programme design, and will be responsible for site-level execution and monitoring.</p>	Protected area management bureaus will be a key stakeholder group of the programme. They will be visited and substantially consulted through in person meetings and interviews. They will also be directly executing local activities.
Local communities	<p>Communities are primary resource users and land managers and a key consideration for Environmental and Social Safeguards.</p> <p>Early information about them have been collected during programme design through the local government and protected areas in target provinces, but they will be increasingly consulted during planning processes and programme implementation.</p>	Though communities and livelihoods are not programme focus, local communities remain as a key stakeholder given their affiliation, rights and stakes in resource management. They will therefore be very closely consulted through community interviews and village meetings during programme preparation and implementation. Free, Prior and Informed Consent (FPIC) principles will be followed.
Civil Society Organizations	<p>Local and international NGOs relevant to the Yangtze River Basin can provide additional support to the Programme in terms of technical inputs, voices on behalf of groups with particular interests and values, as well as mobilization of societal support.</p> <p>They will be engaged as appropriate and needed in the programme preparation and implementation of appropriate activities.</p>	Relevant international, national and grassroots NGOs will be consulted through consultation meetings during programme preparation, and once potential for collaboration is identified, they will become collaborators and partners in appropriate activities. They will also receive programme updates and be invited to join appropriate events.
Business at local and basin levels	<p>Businesses are resource users and emission makers but can also be a force for conservation actions and financing.</p> <p>Early contacts with some enterprises have been made through IA, but they will be increasingly consulted during planning processes, and engaged in the programme implementation to reduce their impact and increase technical and financial contributions to conservation.</p>	Businesses will be a key stakeholder group of the programme, especially those related to priority sectors that the programme intends to improve. After the sectors are confirmed during the programme preparation, a list of business entities, including companies, associations etc, will be compiled as advised by local governments etc. Consultations through visits, interviews and meetings will be conducted, to identify potential partners or target groups of the programme, who will be engaged intensively in programme's activities related to production improvement. For business entities showing considerable interest and willingness, MOUs may be established.

During the programme identification phase, NFGA, MEE, provincial governments in the three provinces, as well as due to resource limits, a small sample of protected areas agencies, academic institutions and civil society organizations have been consulted through interviews and formal and informal exchanges undertaken by both the IA and EAs. Their opinions, interests and suggestions have helped design the programme's TOC as well as activities. They also

provided insights based on their experience of some other stakeholder groups, such as communities and businesses. They will continue to be consulted during the programme preparation and engaged to participate in the programme activities. Consultation with full range of stakeholders, especially local communities and business sector entities, will be undertaken during the programme preparation.

The consultation with ADB has been undertaken in a timely and regular manner, in order to explore synergies and coordinated activities and to avoid redundancies and overlaps. During the programme preparation, the consultations with NPC, MNR, local communities and wider businesses, which were not directly consulted as the programme itself was uncertain, will be substantially undertaken through field visit, community meetings, consultation workshops etc., in order to better understand the needs, interests and opportunities that are relevant for designing specific activities.

3. Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment

Are gender dimensions relevant to the success of program. Yes

If yes, please provide indicative information on these dimensions and how these will be addressed in the program. If no, please explain why

The programme will ensure gender equality and promote participation of women from different economic and social backgrounds in programme planning and decision making, as women in rural communities are more vulnerable to the impacts of resources extraction, pollution, and climate change yet often able to provide insightful perspectives that are essential and critical to the success and sustainability of interventions, decisions and actions.

The programme will make certain that women are not disadvantaged by the programme activities and will benefit from programme activities. In order to achieve gender mainstreaming in the programme, IUCN as the IA will ensure that programme preparation will pay a great attention to the participation of women so as to fully take into account the different perspectives, priorities and socio-economic realities that women and men face. Programme design pertaining to systemic and institutional strengthening and capacity building will ensure women will be the main target trainees and mainstream gender in the institutional system and decision-making mechanisms.

At the site level, the programme will carefully examine local conditions pertaining to local livelihoods, traditional culture, resource use and management systems, as well as factors affecting the livelihoods and socioeconomics of women in rural communities. Women in rural areas and communities will be given a particular consideration. Consultation sessions will be held to obtain views and inputs from them in selected landscapes and sites to inform project plans with needed consideration of the needs, interests and likely impacts on women in rural areas, and the needed management actions. Gender disaggregated target and baseline will also be established as part of the programme and project monitoring plans. Efforts will be made to ensure that gender-specific targets are built into site related activities and people-focused capacity building activities. Gender considerations will be fully elaborated during the programme preparation.

In addition, please also indicate whether the program the program will include gender sensitive indicators in its result framework

Yes

4. Private sector engagement

Will there be private sector engagement in the program?

Yes

Please briefly explain the rationale behind your answer.

Business sector is one of the main users of biological resources, which may cause environmental pollution, habitat destruction, climate change, changes in land-use patterns, and even threaten biodiversity in its investment, production, and business activities. However, at the same time, business sector is also a key force, in terms of actions and financing, in biodiversity conservation, as one of their sustainability needs is to achieve biodiversity conservation and environmental protection which they are also dependent on.

The programme will encourage business sector participation in biodiversity conservation and production improvement in various ways in the YRB. Several considerations regarding how the sectors will be prioritized tentatively include:

- existing impacts or potential risks to both habitat destruction and degradation
- reasonable scale for the programme to make impacts
- possibility for identifying and developing champions and agents of change
- ability for the programme to reach, with CPs' EAs as "boundary partner"

An initial screening as per above consideration suggests the likely focus on the following sectors:

- Infrastructure - human settlements are distributed widely and with high density across the Yangtze Basin, constituting a serious threat, through direct exploitation of natural resources in rural areas or high and increasing footprint of urban population. Roads and railways increase habitat fragmentation and degradation, as well as facilitate poaching and other problems. Traffic and train noise amplify these and other threats to conservation. The construction and operation of water infrastructure not taking into account conservation requirements have huge impacts on the aquatic organisms, the water supply for ecological purpose, passageway for migratory aquatic organisms and overall the integrity of ecological function of the Yangtze River water system. A wide range of interests, stakeholders and entities are associated with the infrastructure development. The programme will engage with them especially in the work concerning municipal development planning as well as on the Yangtze River Protection Law, both under Component 2.

- Tourism - tourism development and related operations, often with direct occupation of habitats, are liable to cause the isolation of species and other major threats such as over-exploitation and pollution to biodiversity. All areas of the Yangtze River Basin are heavily affected by tourism development. Sichuan, Jiangxi and Anhui all have famous tourism destinations for Chinese and even international visitors. Therefore, the tourism businesses, including destinations,

resorts, hotels and restaurants, will be a main target group and stakeholder of both Component 1 and 2 of the programme. Their views will be consulted and capacity building and awareness raising will be provided for them on sustainable tourism, biodiversity friendly hotels and resorts as well as the compliance with relevant laws and regulations.

- Mining - the Yangtze River Basin has rich, widespread minerals resources. Mining operations change local vegetations and site landforms causing losses and damages of biodiversity and the habitats. The mining businesses will be a main target group and stakeholder of Component 2 of the programme in terms of changing their practices and Component 1 if their operations are associated with PAs. Their views will be consulted and capacity building and awareness raising will be provided for them good mining practices such as biodiversity risk assessment, biodiversity offset, and the compliance with relevant laws and regulations.

- Fisheries - though fish catch has been banned since 2020 in the Yangtze mainstream and key tributaries. Aquaculture will remain and likely increase as a result of the ban. The increased aquaculture will result in issues of habitat loss, invasive species and pollution. Therefore, the fisheries businesses will be a main target group and stakeholder of Component 2 of the programme in terms of changing their practices and Component 1 if their operations are associated with PAs. Their views will be consulted in programme preparation and during the implementation. Capacity building and awareness raising will be provided for them on good aquaculture practices and the compliance with relevant laws and regulations.

- Other sectors - support to conservation will be mobilized from a wide range of business sector entities including technology companies. The protected area management under Component 1 of the programme will benefit from the application of new technologies including connectivity, AI and Cloud. Increased in-kind and financial support will also be leveraged from various businesses such as food and beverage through the promotion of natural capital assessment and accounting. Participation and support from various types of business will be pursued across Component 1, 2 and 3, including PA financing, biodiversity mainstreaming as well as awareness and knowledge raising.

The means of engagement with the identified will take various forms that will be further elaborated during the programme preparation. The existing relations of the EAs, e.g. NFGA with the tourism sector, the MEE with mining and aquaculture sector etc., local government with infrastructure sector will provide the basis to establish initial contacts with the key players, associations and major companies, of these sectors. During the programme preparation, visits, interviews and consultation meetings will be undertaken to help decide the scope, identify key business sector partners as well as develop practical, effective activities to improve their production practices. During the implementation, the programme will collaborate with the identified partners to explore, test and scale up good and more biodiversity friendly and even positive practices. The programme provide opportunities for the business sector partners to provide inputs to the standard and policy making processes, and will help them prepare for the likely raised and stricter requirements as per the Yangtze River Protection Law. Programme knowledge and communications products will also include the experiences and success of the business sector partners as case studies or feature stories. They will also be invited to present and share their work at appropriate events the programme will organize.

5. Risks to Achieving Project Objectives

Indicate risks, including climate change, potential social and environmental risks that might prevent the Program objectives from being achieved, and, if possible, propose measures that address these risks to be further developed during the Program design (table format acceptable)

Table 4: Risks and mitigation

Risks	Rating	Preventive & Mitigation Measures
Cross-departmental coordination: Difficulty in reaching consensus or synergy between different governmental agencies and provinces.	Medium	To Strengthen the institutional arrangement and mechanisms development, the programme will emphasize the laws and regulations, to establish a solid systemic foundation for increased investment and efforts.
Private sector interests are reluctant to invest in protection due to a lack of information and experience	Medium	A key emphasis of activities under Component 2 and 3 will be to further develop, test, and scale-up risk mitigation instruments that demonstrate the potential for protection to yield a reasonable return on investment. Work under Component 1 and 2 to develop and strengthen the enabling policy environment should send a strong signal to private investors on the willingness of the public sector to engage in potential public-private partnerships on environmental protection and biodiversity conservation.
Climate change may add uncertainty to the programme	Medium	<p>It is identified that the future climate of the Yangtze River Basin has a continuous warming and drying trend, while the trend of precipitation is insignificant and there is a large spatial heterogeneity, which is related to the future greenhouse gas emission scenario; the frequency of extreme climate events shows an increasing trend, but the uncertainty of the future is large. Under the dual pressures of climate change and human activities, the wetlands in the middle and lower reaches of the Yangtze River have shrunk dramatically over the past few decades, and wetland fragmentation has intensified; rising water temperatures and declining water levels have threatened wetland biodiversity, leading to declines in fish and migratory bird species and populations, and altering the species composition and productivity of wetland plant communities. Vulnerability of ecosystems and reduction of ecosystem service functions has also occurred. Also, Climate change has significantly reduced the yield of major crops in the Yangtze River Basin, but the fertilization effect brought about by the increase in atmospheric CO₂ concentration will effectively offset this negative factor, greatly reducing the yield reduction and even increasing the yield in some areas. In addition, future climate change will increase the sensitivity and vulnerability of forests in YRB, especially in the middle and lower reaches.</p> <p>Yangtze River Basin is affected by a number of climatic hazards and extreme events, and these are projected to worsen with climate change. The most common are floods, both river (fluvial) floods and flash floods, and drought. Landslides occur in the basin triggered by heavy rainfall. The programme will follow the GEF STAP guidance on climate risk screening to identify the risks of climate change and related measures, and develop during the preparation an adaptive management approach for 1) timely assessment/ adjustment of conservation boundaries to accommodate change; 2) highlighted monitoring- adjust priorities based on feedback; 3) result-oriented, revise management rules following changes. And also, the project will demonstrate an improved resilience within the target sites.</p>
The ability to involve provinces to effectively coordinate with each other	Low	The programme will apply participatory process management to ensure effective coordination among all parties. At the preparation stage, the programme will consider the coordination with demonstration provinces/regions and endeavour to reach agreement over key targets, outcomes and outputs through organizing

er.		meetings with the officers in charge of selected NPs, to create sound conditions for smooth and efficient implementation of the programme.
Low participation and recognition of Indigenous people	Low	<p>More than 98% population in YRB is Han nationality, the most populated minorities are Tujia, Miao and Yi. About 3 million Yi minority are living in Sichuan Province. As the programme will only work at the areas that is owned by the government that is unlikely to have a direct negative impact on indigenous people. The indigenous people engagement shall be improved and ensured through the following measures: 1) during the implementation of the programme, the participation of indigenous people especially in decision making process at PA and local level will be monitored and documented. 2) the experiences and lessons learned from the programme shall be provided for the legislation of PA and YR Law. 3) There will be preference given to indigenous people during staff hiring process of the programme shall be provided.</p>
Delays in launching and implementation of the programme due to the COVID-19 pandemic	Medium	<p>As the situation of COVID-19 in China has been under control since mid-2020 (with only a handful new foreign cases per day and non-domestic cases), the capacity of implementing the programme is expected to be not significantly impacted by COVID-19 with the current situation continuing, and also the capacity will be gradually improved along with the recovery of all the sectors.</p> <p>But nonetheless, with close engagement and communication with the GEF Secretariat, IUCN, NFGA and ME E will adaptively identify potential risks related to COVID-19 at the PPG stage and during the implementation of the programme. Also, World Health Organization guidance, especially in terms of travel and social distancing, will be followed throughout the programme cycle.</p> <p>In addition, IUCN is actively promoting management strategies for COVID-19 response and as such programme team members will have needed knowledge and experience with the needed procedures required for travel, events and project management, as well as the alternatives when they are not possible. The alternatives will include remote interaction with stakeholders, on line consultations, workshops, trainings and capacity-building events. Engagement with communities and on-the-ground undertaking will be conducted by team members experienced and trained to operate in potentially hazardous environments and involve digital contact tracing and outbreak monitoring, as promoted and available in China. Vaccine will be taken for needed programme members as long as it is approved and available in China.</p> <p>Meanwhile, broader impact of COVID-19 on stakeholders especially communities will be assessed and monitored by the programme if the pandemic remains. The programme will aim to create opportunities for people negatively impacted.</p> <p>It is expected that during the implementation of the programme, due to improvement of the implementation of eco-redlining and better legislation and management of PA and YRB, the relationship with human and wildlife shall be significantly improved in terms of decreasing risk of zoonotic transmission. Needed considerations have been made to integrate COVID-19 and future pandemic into the programme activities and will be further explored during the PPG.</p>

6. Coordination

Outline the institutional structure of the program including monitoring and evaluation coordination at the program level. Describe possible coordination with other relevant GEF-financed programs and other initiatives.

Considering the needs to put in place a well-developed and functioning coordination system between the two EAs and their CPs to ensure projects/activities are complementary in design and implementation, a Programme Coordination Committee (PCC) will be established and comprise representatives from the Ministry of Finance, NFGA, MEE, IUCN, and other relevant ministries and local governmental entities from the programme demonstration areas. PCC is a decision-making mechanism responsible for assuring the progress, overseeing the coordination, and providing policy guidance.

At child project level, Project Steering Groups (PSG) will be set up for the coordination and management of each CP and led by MEE and NFGA respectively, and meanwhile inviting representatives from the other EA to join the PSG meeting.

IUCN will supervise, provide oversight and evaluate the progress of the programme and the CPs. NFGA and MEE will undertake the project execution under the guidance of PCC. The programme doesn't include a dedicated CP for coordination and consolidation. NFGA through its CP will lead on the coordination at the programme level, including organizing PCC meetings, consolidating programme work plans and reports etc. Needed budgets for programme level coordination and M&E have been allocated from the NFGA CP.

The project level monitoring and evaluation will be conducted by respective EAs, and the programme-level M&E will be led by NFGA, both following the guidelines of the GEF projects implemented by IUCN, which include the annual planning and reporting, quarterly financial monitoring, annual inspection missions, audits and internal and external evaluations.

Regarding coordination with other GEF initiatives working on biodiversity and in the YRB, three of them will be of particular relevance:

- GEF-7 Demonstrating Eco-Compensation Mechanisms in Yangtze River Basin (ECM) – being formulated by ADB and NDRC
- GEF-7 Transformational wildlife conservation management in China (TWC), being formulated by UNDP and NFGA
- GEF-6 China's Protected Area System Reform (C-PAR), being implemented by UNDP as the lead IA, CI and Foreign Economic Cooperation Office of MEE

All the IAs have had consultations and shared project documentation, with a view to achieving complementarity, leveraging the comparative advantage of each, avoiding duplication of resources / geographies and maximizing impact and global environmental benefits in the Yangtze River Basin. A "coordination framework" is being developed which will outline areas of cooperation and coordination – and will be included in greater detail during programme and project preparation.

Early consultations indicate that ADB and IUCN regarding coordination and cooperation between this programme and the ECM would ensure: i) Clear demarcation of geographies, where IUCN will not engage in PA in Guizhou province as initially envisioned, ii) Coordinated capacity development and data/information management across local governments, where relevant, iii) Joint monitoring activities, particularly through use of digital platforms, iv) Sharing of good practice on protected area management and threat mitigation, v) Sharing of good practices on integrated river basin management; and eco-compensation mechanisms or PES as relevant, and v) creation of a Technical Advisory and Coordination Committee (TACC), which would include representatives of IAs and EAs of both initiatives. Further, ECM would be invited to participate in activities related to policy influencing of this programme, and this programme will participate in appropriate ways in the Natural Capital Lab work to be undertaken by the ECM.

The coordination with TWC and C-PAR will also be elaborated during the programme preparation. Clear demarcation of focal geographies including landscapes and protected areas will be a fundamental principle and the programme will avoid working in the already identified sites of TWC and C-PAR, while undertake close coordination with TWC and C-PAR on technical topics and approaches to complement each other. In addition to the coordination on specific activities described under component 1, a coordination mechanism similar to TACC among IUCN, UNDP, MEE and NFGA and their associated central and provincial departments would be one of the possibilities.

7. Consistency with National Priorities

Yes

Is the Program consistent with the National strategies and plans or reports and assessments under relevant conventions

- National Bio Strategy Action Plan (NBSAP) ✓
- CBD National Report ✓
- Cartagena Protocol National Report ✓
- Nagoya Protocol National Report ✓
- UNFCCC National Communications (NC)
- UNFCCC Biennial Update Report (BUR)
- UNFCCC National Determined Contribution
- UNFCCC Technology Needs Assessment
- UNCCD Reporting
- ASGM National Action Plan (ASGM NAP)
- Minamata Initial Assessment (MIA)
- Stockholm National Implementation Plan (NIP)
- Stockholm National Implementation Plan Update
- National Adaptation Programme of Action Update
- Others

The programme is highly consistent with the strategic planning and implementation plan for the Yangtze River Protection of national and provincial governments. China attaches great importance to the ecological environment protection of the Yangtze River Economic Belt. President Xi Jinping requested to attach great importance and strengthen the ecological environment protection work of the Yangtze River Basin. The Central Committee of the Communist Party of China and relevant departments of the State Council successively introduced the 'Outline for the Development of the Yangtze River Economic Belt' and the "Eco-Environmental Protection Plan for the Yangtze River Economic Belt", which has defined the overall strategy of ecological priority and green development in the Yangtze River Economic Belt. The legislative work of the Yangtze River Protection Law has been included in the 13th National People's Congress legislative plan and is expected to be approved shortly.

The programme is also aligned with several other initiatives ongoing in China, including the Ecological Redline initiative, a virtually conducted approach of Other Effective Area-based Conservation Measures, aiming to protect the areas of ecological value and significance.

As a programme focused on biodiversity, it has clear reference and potential contributions to the Convention on Biological Diversity as its associated undertaking by the parties, including the NBSAP and the national reports. The programme will directly contribute to the realization of the Aichi Biodiversity Targets, especially for target 11 "increase protected areas, improve management effectiveness", 12 "prevention of extinction of known endangered species", and 14 "key ecosystem services have been restored and maintained", and 19 "biodiversity knowledge sharing, communication, and application".

It is also envisioned that the clear linkages and references to the Post 2020 Global Biodiversity Framework will also be clarified and reflected in detail programme and project design during the preparation phase, once it is developed and agreed in 2021. As per the updated Zero Draft of the framework, the programme will contribute to tentative target 1, 2, 6, 13 and 19.

8. Knowledge Management

Outline the Knowledge management approach for the Program, including, if any, plans for the Program to learn from other relevant Programs and initiatives, to assess and document in a user-friendly form, and share these experiences and expertise with relevant stakeholders.

Effective knowledge management is integral to the programme's objective and outcomes at scale. Knowledge management will receive support under Component 3 and each of the Child Project activities. It is anticipated that the programme will undertake a coordinated approach for knowledge development and management, with consolidated contributions from both child projects. A communication and knowledge management strategy will be developed and elaborated in detail in the next programme preparation phase to achieve the overall goal of creating linkages between the stakeholders from local to national and global level. The communication and knowledge management strategy will help to bridge the policy makers, media, researchers, private sector, NGOs, and the public through a comprehensive platform including consultation, awareness raising, brand building, and environmental education, etc. The strategy will involve interactive process-oriented engagement with key groups including the local project partners, in terms of policy and practice at local, provincial, and national levels and the wider civil society in the Yangtze River Basin.

The programme will learn from other ongoing GEF and non-GEF PA and Yangtze related initiatives implemented by IUCN worldwide, such as the Restoration Initiative, the World Bank/GEF Sahel and West Africa Program in support of the Great Green Wall Initiative, the UNEP/GEF project "Building the Foundation for Forest Landscape Restoration at Scale" and other GEF programmatic approaches, including the PRC-GEF Land Degradation Partnership. These information and knowledge will be collected and documented for programme reference.

The programme will ensure that information and knowledge generated and accumulated within each child project will be codified and documented for sharing and upscaling efforts in a coordinated way, as knowledge management component will benefit both child projects, it will adapt existing tools to the needs of the programme and make them available in a user-friendly format to all participating stakeholders. Training and capacity building on the application of tools will be provided to ensure consistent quality, reporting, and dissemination of lessons learned, and harmonization of M&E systems of Child Projects to enable aggregated reporting of results. The ecosystem and PA monitoring systems and information on programme inputs will provide the key information to promote transparency, accountability, and equity during and after the project.

A coordination and aggregated reporting mechanism will be established across the programme as Component 3 is dedicated to knowledge, capacity, and information management. Consolidation of data and information will be made accessible over the internet for different agencies and the general public. Periodic updates will be developed at programme level and distributed widely to facilitate exchange to demonstrate different experiences and expertise to benefit stakeholders who are not directly connected with project activities. Online and on field exchange and study will also be planned during the whole programme period.

Finally, the programme will embed information in the coordination mechanism, which will involve the government, private sector, research institutes, local government, and communities in coordination.

9. Child Program Selection Criteria

Outline the criteria used or to be used for child program selection and the contribution of each child program to program impact.

Each child project shall meet the following criteria:

1. It has to be executed by an agency directly involved in the biodiversity conservation and threat management in the Yangtze River Basin, and having the interest and stakes in the policy and legislation development.
2. The Child Project shall include nationally or basin-wide -executed activities focused on developing and/or demonstrating field application of approaches to improve conservation, improved ecosystem services, sustained use of ecosystem services, and enhanced community livelihood benefits.
3. Each child project will secure significant co-financing from various sources, including national and local public budgets, already secured or leveraged for the Yangtze River Basin.
4. Each child project will partake in sharing lessons and testing approaches for replication based on learning from other projects and other parallel programmes.

The Child Projects will have different focuses considering the mandates and advantages of the respective EAs. Yet they will cooperate, coordinate and complement to each other on crosscutting and policy influencing activities, so as to amplify the impacts than 2 standalone projects. The Child Projects are also expected to work in common geographies within the Yangtze River Basin, so as to achieve synergies and focused and amplified results.

10. Environmental and Social Safeguard (ESS) Risks

Provide information on the identified environmental and social risks and potential impacts associated with the project/program based on your organization's ESS systems and procedures

Overall Project/Program Risk Classification*

PIF

CEO Endorsement/Approval MTR

TE

Medium/Moderate

Measures to address identified risks and impacts

Provide preliminary information on the types and risk classifications/ratings of any identified environmental and social risks and potential impacts associated with the program (considering the GEF ESS Minimum Standards) and describe measures to address these risks.

The programme is expected to lead to social and in particular environmental outcomes that are highly positive. Nevertheless, some environmental and specifically social risks have been identified that require detailed assessment during the PPG phase.

The Standard on Access Restrictions and the Indigenous Peoples Standard might be triggered; there is a smaller likelihood that Cultural Heritage Standard be triggered as well. This will be confirmed during PPG and, if confirmed, will be responded to with the development of the respective safeguard tools as described above

The programme is preliminarily categorized as moderate risk project. The categorization will be reviewed during the full ESMS Screening once a more detailed project design is available, at an early stage of the PPG phase.

Supporting Documents

Upload available ESS supporting documents.

Title**Submitted**

esms preliminary screening_China_GEF7-Yangtze_AS_revised_231020 CLEAN

Part III: Approval/Endorsement By GEF Operational Focal Point(S) And Gef Agency(ies)

A. RECORD OF ENDORSEMENT OF GEF OPERATIONAL FOCAL POINT (S) ON BEHALF OF THE GOVERNMENT(S): (Please attach the Operational Focal Point endorsement letter with this template).

Name	Position	Ministry	Date
Mr. Xiang Peng	Operational Focal Point	Ministry of Finance	9/28/2020

ANNEX A: LIST OF CHILD PROJECTS UNDER THE PROGRAM

Child Projects under the Program ^{a/}							
<u>Country</u>	<u>Project Title</u>	<u>GEF Agency</u>	<u>GEF Amount (\$)</u>			<u>Agency Fee (\$)</u>	<u>Total (\$)</u>
			<u>Focal Area 1</u>	<u>Focal Area 2</u>	<u>TOTAL</u>		
			<u>Project</u>	<u>Project</u>	<u>Project</u>		
-	<u>FSPs</u>	-					
CHINA	1. Mainstreaming biodiversity in the development of the Yangtze River Economic Belt	MEE	3,119,266		3,119,266	280,734	3,400,000
CHINA	2. Strengthening in-situ biodiversity conservation in the Yangtze River Economic Belt	NFGA	3,302,752		3,302,752	297,248	3,600,000
	3.				0		0
	4.				0		0
	5.				0		0
-	<u>Subtotal</u>	-	6,422,018	0	6,422,018	577,982	7,000,000
-	<u>MSPs</u>	-					
	1.				0		0
	2.				0		0
	3.				0		0
-	<u>Subtotal</u>	-	0	0	0	0	0
-	<u>Total</u>	-	6,422,018	0	6,422,018	577,982	7,000,000

ANNEX A1: Project Map and Geographic Coordinates

Please provide geo-referenced information and map where the project intervention takes place

