

**Validated Terminal Review of the UNEP Project  
“Improving Ecosystem Management for Sustainable  
Livelihoods within the Framework of Lancang-  
Mekong Cooperation” (PIMS ID 02101)  
2021 – 2022**



**UNEP Regional Office for Asia and the Pacific  
May 2023**



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Front cover: Sample of farming diversification at pilot site in Cambodia

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This report has been prepared by an external consultant as part of a Terminal Review, which is a management-led process to assess performance at the project's operational completion. The UNEP Evaluation Office provides templates and tools to support the review process and provides a formal assessment of the quality of the Review report, which is provided within this report's annexed material. In addition, the Evaluation Office formally validates the report by ensuring that the performance judgments made are consistent with evidence presented in the Review report and in-line with the performance standards set out for independent evaluations. As such the project performance ratings presented in the Review report may be adjusted by the Evaluation Office. The findings and conclusions expressed herein do not necessarily reflect the views of Member States or the UN Environment Programme Senior Management.

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Improving Ecosystem Management for Sustainable Livelihoods within the  
Framework of Lancang-Mekong Cooperation

PIMS ID: 02101

April 2023

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## **ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS**

This Terminal Review was prepared for the UNEP Regional Office for Asia and the Pacific by Dania Marzouki.

The reviewer would like to express their gratitude to all persons met and who contributed to this review, as listed in Annex II.

The reviewer would like to thank the project team and in particular Ms. Makiko Yashiro and Ms. Marie-Yon Struecker for their contribution and collaboration throughout the review process. Sincere appreciation is also expressed to the Project Steering Committee who took time to provide comments to the draft report.

The review consultant hopes that the findings, conclusions and recommendations will contribute to the successful finalization of the current project, formulation of a next phase and to the continuous improvement of similar projects in other countries and regions.

## **BRIEF EXTERNAL CONSULTANT(S) BIOGRAPHY**

Dania Marzouki has 20 years of work experience, including 18 years working on Monitoring & Evaluation and Results Based Management (RBM), mainly in the Asia Pacific Region as well as in the Arab Region. After 16 years working as staff on RBM in the United Nations System, she now works as an independent consultant. She holds a Masters Degree in International Administration/International Law.

## ABOUT THE REVIEW

**Joint Review:** No

**Report Language(s):** English.

**Review Type:** Terminal Review

**Brief Description:** This report is a management-led Terminal Review of a UNEP project implemented between 2021 and 2022. The review sought to assess project performance (in terms of relevance, effectiveness and efficiency), and determine outcomes and impacts (actual and potential) stemming from the project, including their sustainability. The review has two primary purposes: (i) to provide evidence of results to meet accountability requirements, and (ii) to promote learning, feedback, and knowledge sharing through results and lessons learned among UNEP, the GEF and the relevant agencies of the project participating countries.

**Key words:** Ecosystem Management; Climate Change; Governance; Knowledge Generation and Management, Policy Development Support; Local Communities; Livelihoods.

**Primary data collection period:** January – April 2023

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## LIST OF ACRONYMS

CPA	Community Protected Area
IP	Implementation Partner
LMEC	Lancang-Mekong Environmental Cooperation Center
MoU	Memorandum of Understanding
NGO	Non-Governmental Organisation
PCT	Project Coordination Team
PoW	Programme of Work
PRC	Project Review Committee (internal UNEP committee that approves new projects)
PSC	Project Steering Committee
ProDoc	Project Document (must be reviewed by PRC before any project can be undertaken, with the approval of the managing division director)
SDG	Sustainable Development Goals
SQ	Strategic Question
The Project	Project “Improving Ecosystem Management for Sustainable Livelihoods within the Framework of Lancang-Mekong Cooperation”
ToC	Theory of Change
ToR	Terms of Reference
TR	Terminal Review
UNEP	United Nations Environment Programme
UNEP IEMP	United Nations Environment Programme – International Ecosystem Management Partnership
UNEP ROAP	United Nations Environment Programme - Regional Office for Asia and the Pacific

## PROJECT IDENTIFICATION TABLE

**Table 1. Project Identification Table**

UNEP PIMS ID:	02101		
Implementing Partners	1) UNEP-IEMP, 2) Lancang-Mekong Environmental Cooperation Center (LMEC)		
Relevant SDG(s):	<p>The project and the ecosystem approach it promotes can significantly contribute towards the fulfilment of the following SDGs:            1.b, 2.4, 5.5, 6.3, 6.5, 6.6, 11.6, 11.a, 12.4, 12.5, 13.2, 15.1, 16.7            (with strong focus on SDG 15.1)            Relevant SDG indicators: 15.1.1 and 15.1.2</p>		
Sub-programme:	Nature Action	Expected Accomplishment(s):	<p>PoW 2020-2021, Healthy and Productive Ecosystems (HPE) Subprogramme EA (a)</p> <p>PoW 2022-2023, Living in Harmony with Nature Subprogramme Outcomes 2A and 2B.</p>
UNEP approval date:	19 July 2021	PoW Outcome indicators	<p>PoW 2020-2021, HPE Subprogramme:</p> <p>EA (a)-ii: “The number of countries and transboundary collaboration frameworks that demonstrate enhanced knowledge of the value and role of ecosystem services with the assistance of UNEP”; and</p> <p>EA (a)-iii: “The number of countries and groups of countries that improve their cross-sectoral and transboundary collaboration frameworks for marine and terrestrial ecosystem management with the assistance of UNEP”</p> <p>PoW 2022-2023, Living in Harmony with Nature</p>

			Subprogramme Indicators (iii): "Number of countries and national, regional and subnational authorities and entities that incorporate, with UNEP support, biodiversity and ecosystem-based approaches into development and sectoral plans, policies and processes for the sustainable management and/or restoration of terrestrial, freshwater and marine areas".	
<i>Expected start date:</i>	1 June 2021	<i>Actual start date:</i>	19 July 2021	
<i>Planned completion date:</i>	31 December 2022	<i>Actual operational completion date:</i>	31 December 2022	
<i>Planned project budget at approval:</i>	1,090,390	<i>Actual total expenditures reported as of [date]:</i>	944,015 as of 27 January 2023	
<i>Planned Environment Fund allocation:</i>	90,390	<i>Actual Environment Fund expenditures reported as of [date]:</i>	90,390	
<i>Planned Extra-Budgetary Financing:</i>	1,000,000	<i>Secured Extra-Budgetary Financing:</i>	1,000,000	
		<i>Actual Extra-Budgetary Financing expenditures reported as of 27 January 2023:</i>	909,610	
<i>First disbursement:</i>	12 November 2021	<i>Planned date of financial closure:</i>	31 December 2022	
<i>No. of formal project revisions:</i>	0	<i>Date of last approved project revision:</i>	NA	
<i>No. of Steering Committee meetings:</i>	2	<i>Date of last/next Steering Committee meeting:</i>	Last: 21 November 2022	Next: NA
<i>Mid-term Review/ Evaluation (planned date):</i>	NA	<i>Mid-term Review/ Evaluation (actual date):</i>	NA	
<i>Terminal Review (planned date):</i>	October 2022	<i>Terminal Review (actual date):</i>	January-May 2023	
<i>Coverage - Country(ies):</i>	Cambodia, China, Lao PDR, Myanmar, Thailand, Viet Nam	<i>Coverage - Region(s):</i>	South East Asia	
<i>Dates of previous project phases:</i>	UNEP-China Trust Fund Phase 1 'South-South	<i>Status of future project phases:</i>	Project Proposal under development	



	Capacity Building for Ecosystem Management in the Greater Mekong Subregion' (2015-2016)		
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### Project background

1. With the Lancang-Mekong River Basin national economies highly reliant on goods and services provided by forest, agricultural, freshwater, coastal and marine ecosystems, taking urgent action to manage natural resources/capital, build resilience and adapt to climate change has become socio-economically compelling. Creating landscapes with healthy, functioning ecosystems is not only key to making progress towards the environmental targets embedded in the Sustainable Development Goals, but also to addressing multiple social and economic targets that depend partly or wholly on the benefits that ecosystems provide to people. Although there is a substantial existing body of evidence on the value of natural capital in Southeast Asia, a key challenge is to provide information and tools in a manner that can guide the different stakeholders, private and public sector decision making towards increased investments in sustainable ecosystem management, while improving resource-use efficiency and mitigating negative impacts on fragile ecosystems.
2. The project “Improving Ecosystem Management for Sustainable Livelihoods within the Framework of Lancang-Mekong Cooperation” (the Project) aimed at addressing this core problem through enhancing the adoption of an integrated ecosystem management approach in the Lancang-Mekong region by facilitating cooperation among countries, and across sectors, with ecosystem management for sustainable livelihood demonstrated through pilot activities at selected areas in Cambodia and China. The Project built on the results achieved by the UNEP-China Trust Fund Phase 1 project, entitled, “South-South Capacity Building for Ecosystem Management in the Greater Mekong Subregion’ (2015- 2016)”. Under the Phase 1 project, the countries in the Greater Mekong Subregion acknowledged the significance of healthy and productive ecosystems for implementing the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, and expressed their interest in being further supported by UNEP in the process being undertaken to strengthen ecosystem management, capacity building and mainstreaming of ecosystem conservation at national and sub-regional level, with specific focus on practical application of integrated ecosystem management approaches in pilot sites.
3. The Project interventions were designed to focus on enhancing the relevant stakeholders’ knowledge on ecosystem health and best practices on ecosystem management in the region, promoting cross-sectoral and transboundary cooperation on ecosystem management, and providing practical experience in applying integrated ecosystem management tools and approaches in the selected countries in the region and facilitating regional level knowledge sharing and dialogues. The project was composed of three main components as follow:
  - Assessment and knowledge generation on integrated ecosystem management in the Lancang-Mekong Region.
  - Capacity development for integrated ecosystem management in the Lancang-Mekong countries; and
  - Integrated ecosystem management pilots in Cambodia and China.

4. With a total budget of USD 1,090,390 (of which USD 1,000,000 contributed by the China Trust Fund, and a USD 90,390 in kind contribution from UNEP), the project started in July 2021 and ended as expected on 31 December 2022.

### **This Review**

5. The Review has two primary purposes: (i) to provide evidence of results to meet accountability requirements, and (ii) to promote operational improvement, learning and knowledge sharing through results and lessons learned among UNEP and main project partners. Therefore, the Review will identify lessons of operational relevance for future project formulation and implementation, especially for future phases of the project.
6. The Review assessed a pre-determined list of review criteria: 1) Strategic relevance, 2) Quality of the project design, 3) Nature of external context, 4) Effectiveness, 5) Financial management, 6) Efficiency, 7) Sustainability, 8) Factors affecting the project performance and cross-cutting issues. Each criterion was rated on a 6-point scale. In addition, the Review also intends to address three strategic questions:
  - How well has the project utilized local and national capacity in demonstrating effective approaches for integrated ecosystem management approaches at pilot sites in Cambodia and China, and how effectively have the lessons learned under the project been summarized to be shared with other countries in the Lancang-Mekong countries?
  - How well has the project been able to showcase the successful application of integrated ecosystem management approaches adopted under the project to inform future actions of other countries in the Lancang-Mekong region?
  - What changes were made to adapt to the effects of COVID-19 and how did COVID-19 impact the project?
7. A qualitative design was used, consisting of a document review and key informant interviews.

### **Key findings and Conclusions**

8. With its focus on improving ecosystem management for sustainable livelihoods in the Lancang-Mekong region, the project is highly relevant to national, sub-regional, regional, and global issues. The project is also well aligned with UNEP's strategic priorities, the MTS and PoW, as well as regional and national priorities.
9. The project document has been found to be comprehensive, thoroughly researched, and very well fleshed out. Most of the important elements of a proper design were included in the project document. Financial resources were adequate, governance arrangements were properly described, and a Theory of Change (ToC) was included. While the causal pathways from project outputs to outcome were not fleshed out, they could be easily understood from the Logical Framework and ToC figure. The Logical Framework was well designed with indicators, baseline figures and targets. However, all the indicators were process based, with no qualitative indicators or formulated in a way that would indicate change and achievement of results rather than simply implementation of

activities. The project outcome was realistically formulated, particularly considering the short implementation period. The project document also included an Indicator Tracking Tool establishing data sources, frequency of data collection and responsible person for monitoring of progress. A risk management tool, as well as a clear knowledge management strategy and a well fleshed out communication strategy were also developed. Sustainability issues were properly addressed, particularly considering that the Project was designed as an intermediate step to be built upon in subsequent phases.

10. The Project delivered on all the outputs, although COVID-19 limited regional and sometimes national interactions, as well as some of the training activities, to online events. A total of 18 knowledge products were produced and widely disseminated through various means, including through partners. It is unfortunate that consultations with local communities at the pilot sites were organized during the last quarter of the Project instead of involving them at the Project design stage. Nevertheless, interventions at the pilot sites in Cambodia and China have been successfully identified and implemented together with multidisciplinary and cross-sectoral partners, and three cooperation agreements were established at pilot sites for integrated ecosystem management beyond the duration of the project. Two proposals for follow-up interventions in Cambodia and in Vietnam are under development, and four out of six countries in the region have expressed their support in the various integrated ecosystem management approaches demonstrated under the project and interest in scaling up the efforts in the future.
11. The project was able to make extensive use of local and national capacities in demonstrating effective approaches for integrated ecosystem management approaches at pilot sites in Cambodia and China. In fact, and particularly with the restrictions imposed by the COVID-19 pandemic, their involvement has been instrumental to the successful implementation of activities at pilot sites.
12. The Project was fully funded, and it seems well managed financially, though apart from some mentions of efficiency in the project document, there was little evidence either way. The majority of the funds were delivered through grants to the IPs. The Project was funded by a single donor, and it seems that no further resource mobilization efforts were pursued during the implementation period.
13. While the project document identified a large number of stakeholders, their actual involvement in the project seems to have been limited. It is also unclear whether the Project was able to link up with, build on, or support similar on-going initiatives in the region.
14. Gender aspects were unfortunately limited to tracking the number of women participating in project activities, and no analysis was done to determine how or even whether Project interventions could have affected men and women differently.
15. While the COVID-19 pandemic significantly affected the project implementation in terms of travel restrictions making field visits impossible and the need for online trainings and events instead of in person participation, the ROAP team put in place effective measures to ensure delivery of interventions, in particular in terms of the implementation structure it set up and building on the excellent relationship developed with IPs and counterparts during the Phase 1 project.

However, the risk posed by COVID-19 could have been better fleshed out and planned for in the project document, particularly considering the three years project development process which was well within the earlier and beyond days of the pandemic.

16. The project development phase was excessively lengthy, particularly compared to the subsequently very short implementation timeframe, putting undue pressure on the IPs. However, and considering the very short implementation period, it is remarkable how well the project delivered.
17. In conclusion, and based on the findings from this review, the project demonstrates performance at the '**Satisfactory**' level (a table of ratings against all review criteria is found in the Conclusions section, below). The project has demonstrated strong performance in the areas of Effectiveness, and Monitoring and Reporting. Areas that would have benefited from further attention are Financial Management, and Factors Affecting Performance and Cross-Cutting Issues.

### Lessons Learned

18. Lesson 1: The economic/livelihoods aspect should not be underestimated when working with local communities and engaging them in processes that imply a drastic change in how they use the land they live and work on. Private sector involvement is crucial.
19. Lesson 2: The involvement of national and local partners and communities is crucial to the successful implementation of interventions.
20. Lesson 3: Three years of project development leaving only a little over a year for implementation is not a good ratio. Projects need to be developed/approved faster and allow for a longer implementation time frame.

### Recommendations

21. These recommendations should be applied by the UNEP project team in the proposal for a follow-on phase that is currently under design.
22. Recommendation 1: Projects should not only include quantitative, implementation-based indicators, but should also include qualitative indicators that are indicative of change brought about by projects instead of only measuring delivery of activities.
23. Recommendation 2: Support should be provided to the Cambodia Ministry of Environment to secure seed funding to maintain/expand on pilot site intervention until the approval and implementation of the next phase.
24. Recommendation 3: For increased local communities' ownership and future sustainability of interventions, the nexus between ecosystem management and livelihoods needs to be strengthened, and market assurance is needed. Local communities should be consulted and involved from the project development stage, rather than towards the end of the project.
25. Recommendation 4: Gender needs to be addressed in a more comprehensive manner, showing how project interventions affect men and women differently, and not be limited to the number of women participating in project activities.

### **Validation by the UNEP Evaluation Office**

The report has been subject to an independent validation exercise performed by UNEP's Evaluation Office. The performance ratings of the UNEP Project "Improving Ecosystem Management for Sustainable Livelihoods within the Framework of Lancang-Mekong Cooperation" (PIMS ID 02101) set out in the Conclusions and Recommendations section, have been adjusted as a result. The overall project performance, however, was validated at the '**Satisfactory**' level.

## I. INTRODUCTION

26. The Project “Improving Ecosystem Management for Sustainable Livelihoods within the Framework of Lancang-Mekong Cooperation” was developed by UNEP to increase awareness and facilitate cooperation among countries, and across sectors, for the adoption of an integrated ecosystem management approach in the Lancang-Mekong region, with ecosystem management for sustainable livelihood demonstrated through pilot activities at selected areas in Cambodia and China.
27. The Project builds on the results achieved by the UNEP-China Trust Fund Phase 1 project, entitled, “South-South Capacity Building for Ecosystem Management in the Greater Mekong Subregion’ (2015- 2016)”. Under the Phase 1 project, the countries in the Greater Mekong Subregion acknowledged the significance of healthy and productive ecosystems for implementing the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, and expressed their interest in being further supported by UNEP in the process being undertaken to strengthen ecosystem management, capacity building and mainstreaming of ecosystem conservation at national and sub-regional level, with specific focus on practical application of integrated ecosystem management approaches in pilot sites. This need was further highlighted in the Lancang-Mekong Environmental Cooperation Strategic Framework (2020-2025), which includes ‘Ecosystem Management and Biodiversity Conservation’ as one of the priority areas. Although the strong need was expressed and recognized in the strategic framework, there has not been a regional project for countries in the Lancang-Mekong region, which focuses specifically on strengthening ecosystem assessment and integrated ecosystem management approaches, while strengthening regional cooperation. This project is uniquely designed to specifically address these needs.
28. The Project development process started in 2017, and was to be launched by August 2018, but due to UNEP internal procedural issues, the process came to a stop in the fall of 2018. The development process, which had been initiated by the UNEP Ecosystems Division’s Terrestrial Ecosystem Unit was then transferred to the UNEP Regional Office for Asia and the Pacific (ROAP) on 2 July 2020 due to reorganization within the UNEP Ecosystems Division. After the project was transferred in July 2020, ROAP had to review the project concept and go through the whole approval process again, receive approval from the donor for budget revisions, and finalize agreements with the Implementing Partners (IPs) and other partners involved in project implementation. This whole process took a total of three years, leaving only one year for project implementation according to the MoU signed with the donor.
29. The project finally started on 19 July 2021 with an expected and actual end date of 31 December 2022, as the donor didn’t agree to a project extension. The total budget of the project is USD 1,090,390, with USD 1,000,000 contributed by the China Trust Fund (the donor), and a USD 90,390 in kind contribution from UNEP, in the form of staff time, etc.
30. This document describes the design of the Terminal Review (TR) of The Project. In line with the UNEP Evaluation Policy and the UNEP Programme Manual, the TR is undertaken at operational completion of the Project to assess project

performance in terms of relevance, effectiveness, and efficiency, and to determine the outcomes and impacts (actual and potential) stemming from The Project, including their sustainability.

31. The Review has two primary purposes: (i) to provide evidence of results to meet accountability requirements, and (ii) to promote operational improvement, learning and knowledge sharing through results and lessons learned among UNEP and main project partners. Therefore, the Review will identify lessons of operational relevance for future project formulation and implementation, especially for future phases of the project.
32. As per the review's Terms of Reference (ToR), the purpose of this exercise is "to promote operational improvement, learning and knowledge sharing through results and lessons learned among UNEP and main project partners". As such, the conclusions, recommendations and lessons learned from the review would be useful to UNEP (ROAP, IEMP and UNEP Ecosystems Division's Biodiversity, People and Landscapes Unit (formerly the Terrestrial Ecosystem Unit) in particular), to the Lancang-Mekong Environmental Cooperation Center (LMEC) in case of replication of the pilots, as well as all stakeholders. The activities at the pilot sites in particular could be easily replicated. The donor has also indicated a particular interest in the review, and future funding for a new phase of the project is dependent on its findings.
33. The project period to be reviewed is the whole project duration since the actual start date (19 July 2021) until the operational completion date (31 December 2022). The Review covers all key results, with a total project budget of USD 1,090,390. No previous mid-term review or evaluation took place for the Project.



## II. REVIEW METHODS

34. The TR was conducted coherently in line with UNEP's Evaluation Policy<sup>1</sup> and UNEP's programme manual<sup>2</sup> and assessed a pre-determined list of review criteria, which are in line with the criteria suggested by the OECD-DAC network on Development Evaluation. As defined in the terms of reference the review criteria are: 1) Strategic relevance, 2) Quality of the project design, 3) Nature of external context, 4) Effectiveness, 5) Financial management, 6) Efficiency, 7) Monitoring and Reporting, 8) Sustainability, and Factors affecting the project performance and cross-cutting issues. Each criterion was rated on a 6-point scale.
35. Coherently, with the methodological approach proposed in the inception report, the TR intends to address the above-mentioned review criteria. In addition, the TR also addresses three strategic questions (SQ), which were proposed in the ToR. The three SQs are:
- How well has the project utilized local and national capacity in demonstrating effective approaches for integrated ecosystem management approaches at pilot sites in Cambodia and China, and how effectively have the lessons learned under the project been summarized to be shared with other countries in the Lancang Mekong countries?
  - How well has the project been able to showcase the successful application of integrated ecosystem management approaches adopted under the project to inform future actions of other countries in the Lancang Mekong region?
  - What changes were made to adapt to the effects of COVID-19 and how did COVID-19 impact the project?

No surveys or field visits were planned for the TR process. Accordingly, the review could only rely on available feedback provided throughout the implementation of the project, which was analyzed through a desk review. The TR employed a qualitative design consisting of a document review and key informant (KI) interviews.

### **Key informant interviews**

36. The selection of KIs was informed by and discussed with the UNEP ROAP team, and was unfortunately limited by time constraints, language barrier and accessibility. The Review did try to ensure that the selected KIs were still representative of main stakeholders and implementing partners involved in project implementation, and covered the various outputs of the Project, and that interviewees were in relative positions of authority and their responses were of value to the Review.

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<sup>1</sup> <https://www.unenvironment.org/about-un-environment/evaluation-office/policies-and-strategies>

<sup>2</sup> <https://wecollaborate.unep.org>

37. The KI interviews were conducted in a semi-structured manner and consisted of topics and questions derived from the review criteria and SQs, as well as from the document review, and discussions with the UNEP ROAP team. All interviews were conducted remotely.
38. A total of only 8 interviews were conducted, either one-on-one or two-person group interviews, with 13 individuals. The vast majority of the interviewees were female, and most were involved with project implementation. The donor didn't respond to the interview invitation, so there was no opportunity to collect their views on the project.

### **Data analysis process and data triangulation**

39. The reviewer took notes during the KI interviews. During analysis information collected were disaggregated by geographic areas.
40. The TR used analytical triangulation approaches to develop findings and come up with conclusions. Triangulation enabled the TR to cross-verify and cross-validate findings to determine the program's overall effectiveness. In particular, the TR used methodological triangulation to develop parallel protocols with the same or similar questions across KI interviews and the desk review. This enabled greater data triangulation because each method and interview addressed subsets of the same review criterion and SQs, so that findings were validated or refuted by other techniques (findings that were refuted by other techniques were not retained). Methodological triangulation also enabled the TR to strengthen the potential linkages and accuracy of the data.

### **Limitations to the methodology**

41. Due to issues of accessibility, language barrier and time constraints, it was unfortunately not possible to conduct surveys of local communities/beneficiaries at the pilot sites or other (e.g. beneficiaries of capacity development activities), nor was it possible to conduct on-site visits. The Review had to solely rely on available feedback provided throughout the implementation of the project, which was analyzed through a desk review, the provided project documentation, and feedback from interviewed stakeholders.
42. Limited number of respondents and selection bias: as mentioned above, because of a number of constraints, only a limited number of KIs were interviewed, all of them involved in project implementation. Thus, there was the risk of collecting perceptions only of those who benefitted from a project and consequently report only positive aspects. It is an inherent risk when other stakeholders are not reachable, and the reviewer tried to mitigate this risk through data triangulation.

### III. THE PROJECT

#### A. Context

43. The Lancang-Mekong River Basin encompasses six countries of the Greater Mekong Sub-region (GMS): Cambodia, China, Lao PDR, Myanmar, Thailand and Viet Nam. The region is home to more than 300 million inhabitants, with almost 20% of the total population living below the national poverty line. The Basin supports a diverse range of ecosystems with rich and globally significant biodiversity, and contains the region's largest water source, fundamental to economic development and community livelihoods. Approximately 75 million people living in the region rely on ecosystem goods/services derived from the Lancang-Mekong River and a range of ecosystems for their livelihoods. Socioeconomic development, including the development of large infrastructure schemes, the alteration of rivers for navigational purposes, land-use change, and deterioration of water quality due to industrialization and urbanization pose many challenges in the GMS, and these are being exacerbated by climate change.
44. The Lancang-Mekong River Basin is undergoing unprecedented changes. Many of these are positive, reflecting political stabilization and economic growth following decades of poverty and conflict. But the rate and type of development is also threatening critical natural resources, particularly native forests, the Lancang-Mekong River and its tributaries and many wild plant and animal species. Four key drivers have been identified as accounting for these changes in the region's ecosystems:
- Human population growth and increasing population density, along with worsening income inequality;
  - Unsustainable levels of resource use throughout the region, increasingly driven by the demands of export-led growth;
  - Unplanned and frequently unsustainable forms of infrastructure development (dams, roads and others);
  - Government policies, including lack of integrated planning, poor governance, corruption and wildlife crime on a massive scale.
45. These forces are leading to challenges to sustainable development which can be described as:
- Demand by other countries in Asia and beyond for sugar, rice, coffee, rubber, cassava and tropical fruits are transforming the Lancang-Mekong River Basin from subsistence to commercial, export-orientated agriculture. It is unclear what this means for the future of regional food security. The Lancang-Mekong River Basin, known as the 'rice bowl' of Asia, exports half or more of all rice traded globally, much of it produced on about 15 million ha of irrigated land under intensive production. Across the Lancang-Mekong River Basin, croplands, pastures and plantations are expected to expand for the next 30–50 years, replacing natural forest. China, a major trading partner with other Lancang-Mekong River Basin countries, is sourcing timber, palm oil, rubber, wood pulp, minerals and other natural resources from the region and making many financial investments.

- The sub-region's unsustainably high rates of hunting, exploitation of other natural resources and habitat loss have left only about 5 per cent of its natural habitats in relatively healthy conditions.
- Deforestation and fragmentation of forest cover are threatening ecological stability in the region. Before the 1970s, the GMS was a highly forested region. Between 1973 and 2009, the Lancang- Mekong River Basin (excluding China) lost just under a third of its forest cover (22 per cent in Cambodia, 24 per cent in Laos and Myanmar, and 43 per cent in Thailand and Viet Nam).
- Climate change and changes to river flows threaten livelihoods and biodiversity.

46. Other human activities that pose risks to the Lancang-Mekong River Basin include a synergistic mix of:

- Agricultural intensification that has had significant environmental costs, in terms of land degradation, forest cover, biodiversity, wildlife habitat, water quality and quantity, and aquatic ecosystems.
- Soil fertility decline and soil loss through erosion, nutrient depletion from continuous cropping and poor land management.
- Large scale hydropower development and irrigation which have a direct impact on water resources and aquatic ecosystems, driven throughout the Lancang-Mekong River Basin by rapid development, increased energy demands, and high energy prices.

47. The above listed problems faced in the Lancang-Mekong River Basin are caused by the fact that Governments, private sector and other stakeholders in the Lancang-Mekong have not fully taken into account interconnectedness, impacts and dependencies of their operations on critical ecosystems and ecosystem services in managing landscapes. These are caused by limited knowledge and information on impacts and interdependencies of the activities and operations of key economic sectors, such as agriculture, tourism and infrastructure development on ecosystems and ecosystem services provided by the landscapes in the Lancang-Mekong region. Furthermore, although cross-sectoral dialogues and transboundary collaborative actions are essential for successful management of ecosystems and landscapes, there is limited focus and opportunity for cross-sectoral dialogues and joint actions. Limited knowledge, capacity and practical experience in applying integrated ecosystem management tools and best practices that contribute to improved local livelihoods, is another major factor that contributes to the challenges faced in the region.

## **B. Objectives and components**

48. The core problem identified in the problem analysis indicates that government, private sector and other stakeholders in the Lancang-Mekong region manage ecosystems and landscapes without fully taking into account interconnectedness, impacts and dependencies of their operations on ecosystems and ecosystem services.

49. With the Lancang-Mekong River Basin national economies highly reliant on goods and services provided by forest, agricultural, freshwater, coastal and marine ecosystems, taking urgent action to manage natural resources/capital, build resilience and adapt to climate change has become socio-economically compelling. Creating landscapes with healthy, functioning ecosystems is not only key to making progress towards the environmental targets embedded in the Sustainable Development Goals, but also to addressing multiple social and economic targets that depend partly or wholly on the benefits that ecosystems provide to people. Although there is a substantial existing body of evidence on the value of natural capital in Southeast Asia, a key challenge is to provide information and tools in a manner that can guide the different stakeholders, private and public sector decision making towards increased investments in sustainable ecosystem management, while improving resource-use efficiency and mitigating negative impacts on fragile ecosystems.
50. The project aimed at addressing this core problem through enhancing the adoption of an integrated ecosystem management approach in the Lancang-Mekong region by facilitating cooperation among countries, and across sectors, with ecosystem management for sustainable livelihood demonstrated through pilot activities at selected areas in Cambodia and China.
51. The project interventions were designed to focus on enhancing the relevant stakeholders' knowledge on ecosystem health and best practices on ecosystem management in the region, promoting cross-sectoral and transboundary cooperation on ecosystem management, and providing practical experience in applying integrated ecosystem management tools and approaches in the selected countries in the region and facilitating regional level knowledge sharing and dialogues.
52. The project **impact** is "Health and productivity of key ecosystems in the Lancang-Mekong region enhanced and increasingly contribute to supporting the livelihoods of people who depend on ecosystems and ecosystem services in the Lancang-Mekong region improved".
53. The project **outcome** was defined as "Governments /key stakeholders take initial steps to increasingly apply integrated ecosystem management approaches and tools in the management of key ecosystems in the Lancang-Mekong region".
54. The project is composed of three **outputs** as follow:
- a) Knowledge on ecosystem health and best practices on ecosystem management in the Lancang-Mekong region developed;
  - b) Cross-sectoral and transboundary collaboration on ecosystem management in the region enhanced; and
  - c) Application of tools in ecosystem management demonstrated.
55. These initial efforts made under the Project are expected to then contribute towards the **intermediate state**, which states, "Integrated, and cross-sectoral collaborative approach mainstreamed, applied and scaled-up in the management of key ecosystems and landscapes in the Lancang-Mekong region".

## C. Stakeholders

56. A wide variety of stakeholders has been involved in the implementation of the project and identified in the Project Document. These include UNEP staff, implementing partners, government agencies at national and local levels, local Civil Society Organizations (CSOs) and local academic institutions, local communities (at pilot sites), private sector and financial institutions, and international and regional research and environmental organizations.

57. The following table summarizes the key stakeholders involved in the project as based on the project document and the documentation provided:

**Table 1: Stakeholder Analysis**

Type of Stakeholder	Stakeholder (if identified in project document)	Expected Involvement in Project Implementation	Output level involvement
<b>Whole Project</b>			
<b>Implementing Partners</b>	UNEP ROAP	Overall coordination and management, and lead the implementation of knowledge management, communication and outreach, and development of follow-up proposals.	All outputs
	LMEC	Develop policy briefs on cross-sectoral and transboundary cooperation frameworks, lead pilot activities in China, convene high-level dialogues at regional level, organize final workshop	Output 3 - China
	UNEP IEMP	Lead the ecosystem assessment, collection of local knowledge and best practices on ecosystem management, lead pilot activities in Cambodia, dissemination of project outputs	All outputs Output 3 - Cambodia
	UNEP Ecosystems Division's Biodiversity, People and Landscapes Unit (formerly Terrestrial Ecosystem Unit)	Lead the development of a monitoring and evaluation system for monitoring and assessing the impact of landscape approaches	Output 3, activity 3.3
<b>Donor</b>	China Trust Fund	Donor to the project	All outputs
<b>Focal Ministry of Environment</b>	- Ministry of Environment - Cambodia - Ministry of Environmental Conservation and Forestry - Myanmar - Ministry of Natural Resources and Environment - Lao PDR - Thailand - Vietnam	Focal national partners in project implementation: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Engagement with country level stakeholders</li> <li>Co-implementors on in country activities</li> <li>Participation in international and regional cooperation in environmental area</li> <li>Policy makers in environmental area</li> </ul>	All outputs
<b>Line agencies</b>	- Ministry of Agriculture - Ministry of Internal Affairs - Ministry of Planning - Ministry of Tourism	Participate in implementation of activities in pilot sites to ensure there is no conflict between project interventions and other aspects. Enhance cross-sectoral cooperation across other activities.	Output 3 mainly All outputs to a certain extent
<b>Local level/Pilot sites (Cambodia and China)</b>			
<b>Local Government Agencies</b>		- Participate in decision making at pilot sites - Contribute to technical inputs and upscale of knowledge generated by the project - Project beneficiaries in capacity building and awareness raising activities	Output 3

Cambodia	Department of Biodiversity, General Secretariat of National Council for Sustainable Development (GSSD), Ministry of Environment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Focal point to execute the project</li> <li>- Develop policy, strategy and guidelines for project</li> <li>- Upscaling of similar initiatives in other parts of Cambodia</li> <li>- Promote cross-sectoral collaboration</li> </ul>	
China	Xishuangbanna Rubber Industry Development Office	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Advocacy, awareness raising, policy making</li> <li>- Facilitate engagement with private sector</li> <li>- Technical contribution</li> <li>- Upscaling of similar initiatives in other parts of China</li> </ul>	
	People's Government of Xishuangbanna Dai Autonomous Prefecture	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Advocacy, policy making</li> </ul>	
<b>Locally based organizations</b>		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Project team members and beneficiaries in capacity building and awareness raising activities</li> <li>- Contribute technical capacity and facilitation skills</li> </ul>	Output 3
Cambodia	Gender and Development for Cambodia	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Inputs to assessment and pilot activities for integration of gender considerations</li> </ul>	
China	Women's empowerment organizations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Advocacy, awareness raising, policy making</li> <li>- Facilitate engagement with private sector</li> <li>- Technical contribution</li> <li>- Upscaling of similar initiatives in other parts of China</li> </ul>	
	Xishuangbanna Tropical Botanical Garden, CAS	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Implementation partner, provide seedling and technical assistance</li> </ul>	
	Jingtai Green Industry Rubber Plantation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Implementation partner, provide demonstration platform and model for advocacy efforts</li> </ul>	
<b>Local communities</b>		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Direct beneficiaries of the project</li> <li>- Participate in project planning and implementation</li> <li>- Contribute in local/traditional knowledge, needs, implementation arrangements, etc.</li> </ul>	Output 3
<b>Private sector and financial institutions</b>			
<b>Private sector</b>	Not identified specifically in the provided documentation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Participate in awareness raising/capacity building, policy dialogue</li> <li>- Promote investments in integrated ecosystem management</li> </ul>	All outputs
<b>Financial institutions</b>	Not identified specifically in the provided documentation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Participate in awareness raising/capacity building, policy dialogue</li> <li>- Promote investments in integrated ecosystem management</li> </ul>	All outputs
<b>Regional and International Organizations</b>			
<b>Regional Organizations</b>	China ASEAN Environmental Cooperation Center	No actual information was found on their involvement in the provided documentation beyond them being identified as a stakeholder.	
<b>International and regional research and environmental organizations</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- World Agroforestry Centre (ICRAF)</li> <li>- Chinese Academy of Sciences (CAS)</li> <li>- ASEAN Centre for Biodiversity</li> <li>- Mekong River Commission (MRC)</li> <li>- ADB's Greater Mekong Subregion Environment Operations Center (GMS- EOC)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Contribute to technical support on knowledge products/assessments</li> <li>- Participate in dialogue platform</li> <li>- Engage in pilot activities</li> <li>- Collaborate on co-financing opportunities</li> </ul>	All outputs

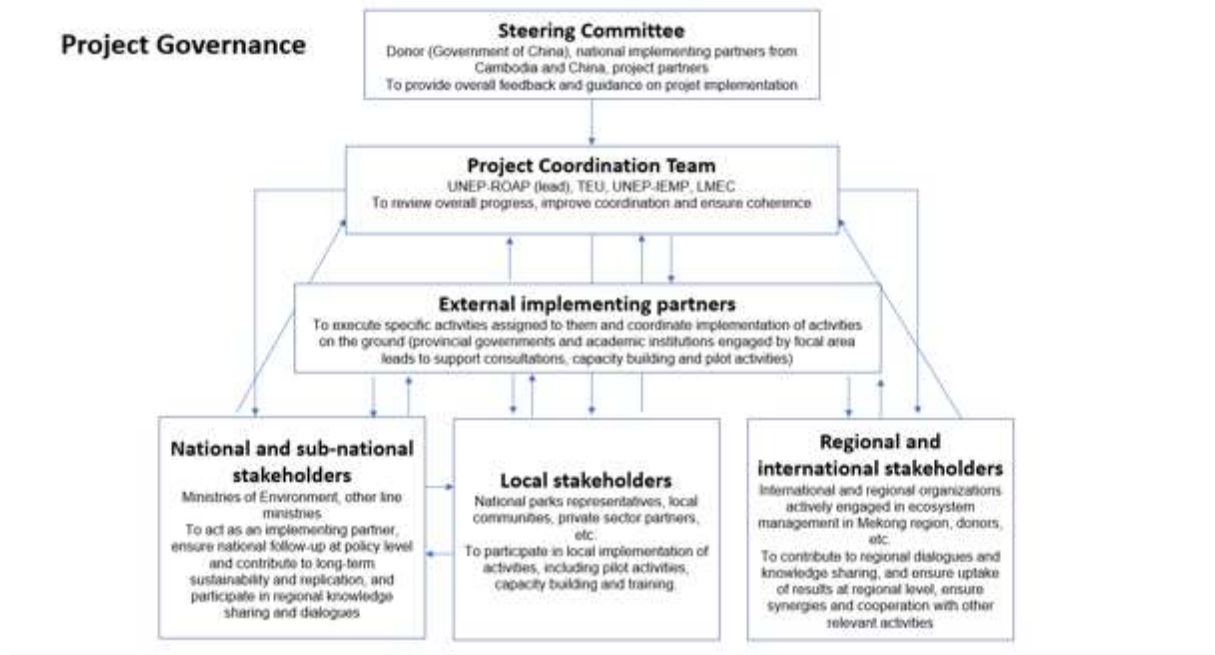
#### D. Project implementation structure and partners

58. The project was coordinated by a Project Coordination Team (PCT) led by the Regional Office for Asia and the Pacific (ROAP) including all other

implementation leads, i.e. UNEP Ecosystem Division's Terrestrial Ecosystems Unit, UNEP-IEMP and LMEC. The PCT met regularly and was responsible for reviewing overall progress; ensuring project coherence, synergy and coordination between components; improving cost-effectiveness of all project interventions by promoting internal collaboration and synergies of UNEP inputs/activities; ensuring regular consolidated reporting on progress; reviewing and adjusting project approach and focus, to ensure adaptive management and continued alignment with UNEP PoW and MTS, the SDGs, and emerging issues in the global environmental agenda.

59. The project was governed by a Project Steering Committee (PSC) to provide overall guidance on the project implementation. The PSC is chaired by the Deputy Regional Director of the UNEP ROAP. The PSC consisted of representatives from China, and Cambodia, UNEP Ecosystems Division, UNEP-IEMP and LMEC (see figure below for overall project governance structure). The donor was also invited to be part of the Steering Committee as observer, allowing the China Fund to provide feedback during project implementation.
60. The dedicated ROAP Project Team had overall responsibility for day-to-day project coordination, management and delivery of the project, and reporting in PIMS, based on work and inputs to be timely provided by the respective implementation leads. The ROAP Team was also designated implementation lead for activities 2.2 and 3.4. The Project Team at ROAP was composed of the Project Manager (P4), an Administrative Assistant (G5) and technical consultants. The core implementing partners for the project were:
  - UNEP International Ecosystem Management Partnership (IEMP): implementation lead for activities 1.1, 1.2, 2.1 (Cambodia), 2.2, 3.1 (Cambodia), and 3.2 (Cambodia)
  - Lancang-Mekong Environmental Cooperation Center (LMEC): implementation lead for activities 1.3, 2.1 (China), 2.2, 2.3, 3.1 (China), and 3.2 (China)
  - UNEP Terrestrial Ecosystem Unit: implementation lead for activities 3.3
61. In addition to these core implementing partners, Ministry of Natural Resources and Environment and line agencies (from national to local levels) of selected countries were engaged for pilot implementation and high-level dialogues, and Chinese-based institution (e.g. Chinese Ecosystem Research Network, Kunming Institute of Botany, Chinese Academy of Sciences) were engaged as partners on knowledge generation, together with other relevant international/regional organizations.





**Figure 1: Organigram of the Project with key project key stakeholders**

## E. Changes in design during implementation

62. While changes in design were minimal during implementation – apart from some staff turn-over within UNEP IEMP- it is important to note that the project experienced a number of significant delays during its finalization and approval process. The management of the project was transferred from HQ to ROAP in July 2020, leading to an adjustment of the original proposal. The final project document was approved in June 2021, over 3 years after its original concept development in 2017. All agreements were signed by October 2021, leaving only one year for implementation.
63. No mid-term assessments were conducted.

## F. Project financing

64. The total budget planned for the project was USD 1,090,390, with USD 1,000,000 to be contributed by the China Trust Fund (the donor), and a USD 90,390 in kind contribution from UNEP, in the form of staff time. 91.8% of the China Fund resources were allocated to ROAP, while 8.2% went to the Ecosystems Division. The majority of expenses went towards direct transfer/grants to IP (64.3%), with the second most important source of expenditures being staff costs (17.9%).
65. Only one budget revision took place during project implementation, with the main purpose being adjustments/redeployment of funds according to real costs of activities.

**Table 2: Project Funding Sources Table**

Funding source	Planned funding	% of planned funding	Secured funding	% of secured funding
All figures as USD				

<b>Cash</b>				
Funds from the Environment Fund	0	0	0	0
Funds from the Regular Budget	0	0	0	0
Extra-budgetary funding (China Trust Fund):	1,000,000	91.71%	973,451	97.35%
<b>Sub-total: Cash contributions</b>	<b>1,000,000</b>	<b>91.71%</b>	<b>973,451</b>	<b>97.35%</b>
<b>In-kind</b>				
Environment Fund staff-post costs	47,415	4.35%	47,415	100%
Regular Budget staff-post costs	42,975	4.94%	42,975	100%
Extra-budgetary funding for staff-posts (listed per donor)	0	0	0	0
<b>Sub-total: In-kind contributions</b>	<b>90,390</b>	<b>8.29%</b>	<b>90,390</b>	<b>100%</b>
<b>Co-financing*</b>				
Co-financing cash contribution	0	0	0	0
Co-financing in-kind contribution	0	0	0	0
<b>Sub-total: Co-financing contributions</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>
<b>Total</b>	<b>1,090,390</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>1,063,841</b>	<b>97.57%</b>

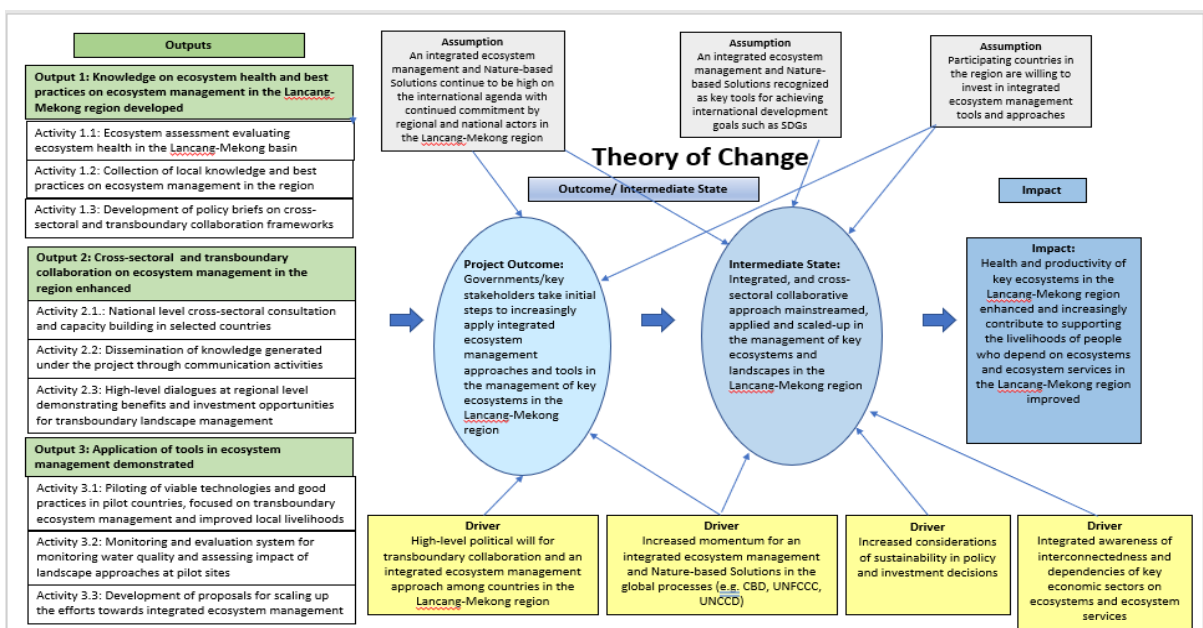
\*Funding from a donor to a partner which is not received into UNEP accounts, but is used by a UNEP partner or collaborating centre to deliver the results in a UNEP – approved project.

66. The most recent expenditure breakdown provided to the TR dates 27 January 2023 (that is, three weeks past the operational project end). Table 4 (in Annex IV) compares planned expenditures as presented in the project budget by output with actual expenditures as of 27 January 2023.

## IV. THEORY OF CHANGE AT REVIEW

67. The Theory of Change (ToC) presented in the project document is comprehensive, built in line and in response to the problem analysis and is logical when analyzed against the Logical Framework.
68. The ToC clearly identifies key drivers, and assumptions, and while no causal pathways are developed, the causal pathways from project outputs to outcome could be understood from the logical framework and ToC figure. There is no description of pathways from outcome to impact, only a one sentence "Intermediate State".

Figure 2: Theory of Change as per project document



## V. REVIEW FINDINGS

### A. Strategic Relevance

#### Alignment to UNEP's UNEP Medium Term Strategy<sup>3</sup> (MTS), Programme of Work (POW) and Strategic Priorities

69. The project primarily supports the achievement of the objectives of the **UNEP Programme of Work 2020- 2021**, Healthy and Productive Ecosystems Subprogramme in the UNEP Programme of Work, as well as Programme of Work 2022-2023, Living in Harmony with Nature Subprogramme. Specifically, the project also aims to (a) establish strong linkages and strategic synergies with other relevant projects in the Programme of Work; (b) provide a central anchor for other relevant Global Environment Fund, Green Climate Fund and extra-budgetary funded programs managed by UNEP, linking together initiatives spearheaded by several UNEP collaborating centres i.e. United Nations Environment Programme's World Conservation Monitoring Centre (UNEP-WCMC), UNEP-DHI and UNEP-International Ecosystem Management Partnership (UNEP-IEMP in China), GEMS/Water for water quality monitoring, and UNEP's technical teams on freshwater and land ecosystems; (c) act as the 'host' for developing joint initiatives and projects with FAO under the FAO-UNEP Memorandum of Understanding (signed in 2014), especially on Work Area 2; and (d) provide the base for all UN-Water, inter-agency collaboration and country support related to advancing the water related SDG targets, specifically those that UNEP are the custodian agency for (6.3, 6.5 and 6.6).
70. The project is also fully aligned with **UNEP's Medium-Term Strategy 2018-2021 and 2022-2025**, which focuses strongly on supporting countries by providing tools, best practice and support on cross sector collaboration around ecosystem management, and supporting the institutionalization of the ecosystem approach across society, including in monitoring, economic decision-making and cross-sector and transboundary collaboration frameworks.
71. Furthermore, the project expected results are also related to the following **United Nations Environment Assembly resolutions**:
- Delivering on the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development (2/5)
  - Global Environmental Monitoring System of Water Quality (1/9)
  - UNEP Governing Council at its 27th session (first universal session), adopted a decision GC 27/3 to develop International Water Quality Guidelines for Ecosystems (IWQGES), now finalized as a "Framework for Freshwater Ecosystem Management" launched at UNEA 3
  - Sustainable management of natural capital for sustainable development and poverty eradication (2/13)
  - Mainstreaming of biodiversity for well-being (2/16)

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<sup>3</sup> UNEP's Medium-Term Strategy (MTS) is a document that guides UNEP's programme planning over a four-year period. It identifies UNEP's thematic priorities, known as Sub-programmes (SP), and sets out the desired outcomes, known as Expected Accomplishments (EAs), of the Sub-programmes. <https://www.unenvironment.org/about-un-environment/evaluation-office/our-evaluation-approach/un-environment-documents>.

- Enhancing the work of UNEP in facilitating cooperation, collaboration and synergies among biodiversity-related conventions (2/17)
- Investing in human capacity for sustainable development through environmental education and training (2/3)
- Combating desertification, land degradation and drought and promoting sustainable pastoralism and rangelands (2/24)
- Supporting the Paris Declaration (2/6)
- Addressing water pollution to protect and restore water-related ecosystems (3/10)
- Innovation on biodiversity and land degradation (4/10)

### **Alignment to Donor/GEF/Partners Strategic Priorities**

72. The project is well aligned with the following priorities of the phase II (2016-2018, which covers the period when the Project was under development) of the China Trust Fund (the donor):

- Capacity building programs on ecosystems and biodiversity in the ASEAN region and Mainland Southeast Asia
- Fulfilling obligations set out in the multilateral environmental agreements on chemicals and provision of a platform for experience sharing and technology transfer
- Building capacity to tackle water, air and soil-based pollution and reporting on the implementation of the 2030 Agenda on Sustainable Development

73. GEF is mentioned as target for potential resource mobilization and in terms of complementarity for the implementation of activities where they are taking place in the same area (as in the Cambodia pilot site).

### **Relevance to Global, Regional, Sub-regional and National Priorities**

74. The project document clearly identifies **Regional** (“the project will significantly contribute to the work under the three main regional bodies related to Lancang-Mekong transboundary management. These three bodies are: i) Lancang-Mekong Cooperation Mechanism; ii) Mekong River Commission (MRC); and iii) Greater Mekong Subregion Economic Cooperation Program. Ecosystem management is an important area of all the three bodies but at different degrees. [e.g. Lancang-Mekong Environmental Cooperation Strategic Framework (2020-2025)]”) and country level priorities, particularly with regards to **national commitments to international instruments** such as UNFCCC, Convention on Biological Diversity, etc.

### **Complementarity with Existing Interventions/Coherence**

75. The project document details how the project builds on a previous initiative “UNEP-China Trust Fund Phase 1, South-South Capacity Building for Ecosystem Management in the Greater Mekong Subregion (2015-2016)”, and establishes that “the expertise and lessons from [these] past and ongoing initiatives could be brought in to support the implementation of this project”. There is however no information on the particular aspects of said expertise and lessons.
76. The project document also states that based on strong relationships and partnerships with key regional partners and processes, UNEP is “uniquely positioned to lead this initiative, and bring together these key programmes and partners in the region to ensure synergy and complementarities among these initiatives”. There is however no mention of what these are or how this will be done. This was also not further expanded upon during the implementation phase of the project.
77. No particulars are provided on other on-going initiatives or how the project would have engaged with those.

**Rating for Strategic Relevance: Moderately Satisfactory**

## **B. Quality of Project Design**

78. The Project design is quite extensive in terms of situation analysis, context, stakeholders identification, implementation arrangements, and planned activities, including a detailed Project workplan.
79. Indeed it is clear that a lot of research and thought has been given to the project rationale and objectives, as well as to the activities and how they would feed into each other between outputs, such as between the activities at the pilot sites and knowledge generation and dissemination.
80. A comprehensive Theory of Change was developed for the Project, and it identifies key drivers and assumptions and how they feed into the Project outcome. While the causal pathways from project to outcome could be understood from the logical framework and ToC figure, there is no description of pathways from outcome to impact, only a one sentence “intermediate state”. The document also defines the roles of key actors and stakeholders, however not their roles for each causal pathway toward outputs and outcomes.
81. The project also extensively identifies all potential stakeholders to the project. Most identified stakeholders were however defined as broad categories and were not consulted at project development stage except for direct partners and IPs. The document indicates that they would be consulted during project implementation, however, apart from local communities involved in pilot sites activities, there is no evidence that such consultations ever took place.
82. The Logical Framework was well-developed with proper baseline and target figures – though all indicators were quantitative and implementation based rather than results oriented. This has in turn been an issue to determine achievement of results rather than the project just having been delivered. Allocated financial resources were reported to be adequate, as further evidenced by only one single budget revision being done at project implementation stage to

adjust/redeploy funds slightly according to real costs of activities. Learning, communication and outreach were strongly embedded in the project design.

83. The Project results were realistically defined for the planned short implementation period and relatively modest budget, with the project outcome mentioning only “initial steps”.
84. Risks are included in a dedicated part of the document entitled “Project Management Risks”. They address a wide range of potential risks and accompanied by credible risk mitigation strategies and actions.
85. The gender aspect is mentioned in the document but is limited to the number of women participants in activities and fail to show how the project could affect men and women differently.
86. Considering the approval date of the project, the issue of the COVID-19 pandemic and how it could affect the implementation of the project – in particular output 2 - and the achievement of project results is surprisingly lacking. COVID-19 is only mentioned three times in the project document:
  - It is mentioned that the project is aligned with the UNEP’s strategic response to COVID-19;
  - COVID-19 is then identified as one management risk; and
  - it is mentioned once in the Project safeguard risk checklist.
87. The governance and supervision arrangements are properly described in the project document, and roles and responsibilities are clearly attributed. The project also established a Project Steering Committee with clearly identified members, and also included the donor as a non-voting member.
88. The project document also specifically includes issues of sustainability, uptake and replicability, in line with expected results of project activities.
89. Considering that the Project only had less than one year and a half of implementation timeline, the project document itself is extremely complete and extensive.

**Rating for Project Design: Satisfactory**

### **C. Nature of the External Context**

90. The Project clearly responds to a need in the region, and is in line with regional and country priorities.
91. The active involvement of national partners clearly shows the high level of interest for and commitment to implement project activities, particularly at the Cambodia pilot site where national counterparts were instrumental in making the activities a success and would like to maintain and replicate results beyond Project completion.
92. However, the impact of COVID-19 to output 2 in particular was underestimated, and travel bans have greatly affected the achievement of this output in the way it was originally intended.



93. There were no risks of conflict and the areas of intervention are not prone to natural disasters, and it is clear that only a positive environmental impact could result from project activities.

**Rating for Nature of the external context: Favorable**

#### **D. Effectiveness**

94. Considering the difficulties in getting the Project started and its very short implementation period, the project has been quite effective in achieving results. This was partly due to realistic planning, as well as the set-up of effective management and implementation arrangements.

95. Indeed, and beyond the structure of Project Team and PSC, the choice of IPs was judicious, building on the excellent relationship established during Phase 1, particularly concerning the implementation at pilot sites. The Cambodia counterparts (who even set up a PMU in the Ministry of Environment for the implementation of the Cambodia based activities) and China team were extremely effective at mobilizing the local communities, organizing activities and delivering on the planned interventions.

96. The established Project Steering Committee has also proven an extremely effective management mechanism, with members being actively engaged and helpful in addressing issues.

#### **Availability of Outputs**

97. **Output 1** is defined as “Knowledge on ecosystem health and best practices on ecosystem management in the Lancang-Mekong region developed”. A review of all the knowledge material developed by the project and monitoring of this output’s associated indicators shows that the output has been achieved and all targets reached, with the target on dissemination actually being overachieved.

98. Through this output, the following knowledge products were developed:

- 1 ecosystem assessment covering both the upper and lower parts of the Lancang-Mekong basin, evaluating threats to ecosystem health in the region, highlighting dependencies of priority economic sectors on key ecosystem services, as well as ecosystem service-dependent livelihoods.
- 4 knowledge products comprising:
  - Compilation of regional good practices and local/traditional knowledge on ecosystem management and ecosystem-based sustainable livelihoods
  - Compilation of transboundary management good practices and tools for transboundary landscape management
  - Exploration of ecosystem management options to support sustainable livelihoods in the Phnom Kulen National Park of Cambodia
  - Compilation of financial mechanisms for integrated ecosystem management



- 4 policy briefs on cross-sectoral and transboundary collaboration frameworks were developed and completed on the topics of Benefits of Environmental-friendly Rubber Plantation, Development and Environmental Impact of Rubber Forests in the Lancang-Mekong Region and Practical Cases as well as Community-Awareness of Ecological Rubber plantations.
99. The knowledge products of the project were disseminated through the project website and/or directly shared with 23 institutions. All knowledge products were also distributed to the participants to the Project organized Senior-level dialogue which took place in November 2022.
100. **Output 2**, “Cross-sectoral and transboundary collaboration on ecosystem management in the region enhanced” focused on national capacity building and cross-sector dialogues, the facilitation of cooperation agreements at the pilot sites, the generation and dissemination of communication material, and the organization of regional dialogues.
101. The Project organized national consultations/cross-sectoral capacity building activities at pilot sites, involving 176 participants (of which 73 were women) in Cambodia, and 392 in China (of which 185 were women). The participation far exceeded the project document established targets in terms of overall participation, though the proportion of men to women fell short (the aim having been to have a 50/50 ratio).
102. A total of 3 agreements were signed as a result of the Project activities at the pilot sites. In **Cambodia**, the cooperation agreement signed between the Ministry of Environment, the members of Community Protected Areas (CPA) from two villages and the Angkor Khmer Honey Bee Co.,Ltd. aims at promoting the participation and cooperation of CPA members in the Phnom Kulen National Park and the private sector in providing technical support and market assistance on beekeeping to improve local livelihoods and promote the ecosystem management and restoration under the framework of Mekong-Lancang cooperation. This greatly contributes to ensuring the sustainability of the Project activities at the pilot site. In **China**, the two agreements signed between Foreign Environment Cooperation Center of Ministry of Ecology and Environment and the Xishuangbanna Tropical Botanical Garden, Chinese Academy of Sciences aim at conducting several studies to enhance synergistic capacity of climate change and ecosystem management in the Mekong region and the provision of consulting services for the Lancang-Mekong River Region Integrated Ecosystem Management Evaluation Project.
103. Two websites were created for the dissemination of knowledge, one under UNEP ROAP, the other under UNEP-IEMP, making knowledge products easily available. In total, 18 communication products including articles, social media posts and presentations were developed and disseminated through various channels, including the two above mentioned websites, partners, and social media. The Project also developed a Project flyer to give the Project a common visuality.
104. A total audience of 298,055 was reached through project communication and outreach efforts, including clicks on the established project websites, as well as clicks via social media such as Weibo and WeChat. However, it is unclear how this knowledge has been used by those who were exposed to it. The indicators

for knowledge focused only on number of products developed and their dissemination, and there was unfortunately no indicator to track the actual use of these products.

105. The project was also presented at two regional events bringing together a high number of participants from various connected institutions.
106. Finally, the project organized a Senior Level Policy Dialogue on the 23rd of November as a hybrid meeting in Beijing. While four of the six countries of the Lancang-Mekong region specifically expressed their support in the various integrated ecosystem management approaches demonstrated under the project and expressed their interest in scaling up the efforts in the future, COVID-19 travel restriction only allowed for the physical presence of China based participants – other representatives had to follow discussions online, which while useful, certainly didn't allow for the same level of discussions, networking/exchanges and side events as would normally take place at such an event.
107. **Output 3**, spelled out as “Application of tools in ecosystems management demonstrated” focused largely on the implementation of activities at the pilot sites in Cambodia and China.
108. The Project successfully identified and implemented the interventions to be implemented at the pilot sites, focusing on viable technologies and good practices. In **Cambodia**, the five identified interventions focused on agroforestry, bamboo plantation, beekeeping, organic vegetable farming and the raising of free-range chicken in the Phnom Kulen protected areas, involving the local communities and Community Protected Areas (CPAs). In **China**, the interventions focused on sustainable rubber production in three pilot sites in the Xishuangbanna Prefectures.
109. The feedback collected from the involved local communities by the project (particularly during the Action Learning Process) was extremely positive, even though some reluctance was originally felt (e.g. with regards to bamboo plantation in Cambodia), with communities' livelihoods improved thanks to the diversification of activities. While the above-mentioned agreements (under output 1) will support the continuation of some of the activities, the local communities are keen on receiving further support in other areas. The connection to private sector to sell their goods will be key. The feedback received also clearly highlighted that the success of the interventions in terms of ecosystem management needed to be linked to the improvement of livelihoods to ensure the communities' involvement and buy-in.
110. National consultations were successfully conducted in Cambodia (including 17 women and 35 men) and in China (including 25 women and 27 men). The total number of participants exceeded expectations (with targets set at 20 for Cambodia and 50 for China).
111. Because of the pandemic, national consultations in **China** had to be held online. Local environmental departments, research institutions, enterprises and local communities participated in the consultation, and discussed the progress and challenges of the pilots of environmentally friendly rubber forest. In **Cambodia**, participants included people working at the Phnom Kulen National Park and

representatives from international organizations, private sector, and NGOs with potential interest to replicate/scale up the project activities.

112. Various trainings on integrated ecosystem management practices were successfully held at the pilot sites with 230 participants (of which 67 women) for Cambodia and 562 participants (of which 177 women) in China. Here again, the number of participants far exceeded planned targets (100 for Cambodia and 200 for China), and while women participation was high, it didn't reach the expected target of achieving a 50/50 ratio.
113. The Project also delivered on its target of producing four knowledge products on evaluation methodologies and tools, as well as lessons learned. The knowledge products focused on:
- Action Learning Process and Guidelines
  - Monitoring Evaluation and Learning Methodology Report
  - Cambodia Monitoring Evaluation and Learning Draft Report
  - China Monitoring Evaluation and Learning Draft Report
114. A field trip to Cambodia was undertaken to conduct the Action Learning approach activities as the main means to learn from and contribute to ecosystem and landscape-based approaches with direct participation of project beneficiaries of the villages. These activities were extremely well received by the communities and their feedback very positive, though the activities were conducted later than planned in the project implementation period and would have benefitted from having taken place at the beginning of the project rather than at the end. It is understood that this delay was linked to an unexpected staff turnover at UNEP-IEMP who was in charge of the implementation of this activity.
115. It was unfortunate that no field trip could be undertaken to the China pilot sites because of COVID-19 travel restrictions, and activities had to be conducted online only.
116. While the Project targeted to develop only one new proposal to mobilize additional funding, covering additional project sites for applying and replicating integrated ecosystem management approaches, it has actually managed to develop two – one for the China Trust Fund Phase 2 Unspent Funds, and one under GEF-8 for Vietnam. The proposal under the China Trust Fund focuses on transforming agricultural commodities in the Lancang-Mekong region towards sustainability through integrated ecosystem management practices along the value chain of cashew nut and rubber, while the one under GEF-8 aims at applying integrated ecosystem management practices for conservation and sustainable management of coastal ecosystems, through sustainable ecotourism development in the coastal zone of Quang Nam Province and improved financial sustainability of Cu Lao Cham-Hoi An Biosphere.

### **Achievement of Project Outcome**

117. The Project outcome was formulated as “Governments/key stakeholders take initial steps to increasingly apply integrated ecosystem management approaches and tools in the management of key ecosystems in the Lancang-Mekong region”. While this may seem modest in terms of outcome level result,

the Review feels that this was actually quite ambitious, considering the modest budget and short implementation period. All Project targets were either achieved or over-achieved.

118. The government of Cambodia has expressed its full support to the China Trust Fund Phase 2 Unspent Funds concept proposal, focused on transforming agricultural commodities in the Lancang-Mekong region towards sustainability through integrated ecosystem management practices along the value chain of cashew nut and rubber.
119. The government of Vietnam has been collaborating with UNEP and under the project, a concept proposal has been prepared for a potential GEF-8 project on the application of integrated ecosystem management practices for conservation and sustainable management of coastal ecosystems through sustainable eco-tourism development in the coastal zone of Quang Nam Province and improved financial sustainability of Cai Lao Cham-Hoi An Biosphere Reserve. This concept is to be further developed in 2023, in close coordination with the Institute of Strategy, Policy on Natural Resources and Environment of Vietnam (MONRE).
120. Interventions at the pilot sites in Cambodia and China have been successfully identified and implemented together with multidisciplinary and cross-sectoral partners. In total, three cooperation agreements were established at pilot sites for integrated ecosystem management beyond the duration of the project.
121. Four of the six countries of the Lancang-Mekong region, at the senior-level policy dialogue held in November 2022, specifically expressed their support in the various integrated ecosystem management approaches demonstrated under the project and expressed their interest in scaling up the efforts in the future.

### **Achievement of Likelihood of Impact**

122. The definition of the impact included in the ToC is “Health and productivity of key ecosystems in the Lancang-Mekong region enhanced and increasingly contribute to supporting the livelihoods of people who depend on ecosystem services in the Lancang-Mekong region improved”. This is an extremely ambitious target that can only be achieved through a coordinated long-term effort (including policy changes) rather than the results of a single one-year project.
123. The knowledge generated by the Project was successfully disseminated, but there is no indication or developed means of tracking how it has or will be used.
124. While activities at the pilot sites have been extremely well received and successful, only time will tell whether they will be expanded upon and more importantly replicated in a higher number of sites and in other countries of the region.
125. One positive indication are the agreements signed at the pilot site, which highlight the importance of bringing communities and private sector together to ensure local communities have a venue to sell their produce, but it is unclear as of now whether these will be maintained and/or expanded upon in the future.

**Rating for Effectiveness: Satisfactory**

## E. Financial Management

126. There is no evidence of lack of compliance to UNEP’s financial policies and procedures.

127. Interviewed IPs reported that cash advances were made on time, though the Cambodia team had to advance funding at the start of project implementation until they could receive the first cash advance. This was due to administrative delays on their part in opening a separate bank account for the Project.

128. The Project established a realistic budget at design time, as evidenced by the need for a single budget revision during project implementation – the budget revision only made some adjustments/redeployment of funds to reflect real costs of activities during implementation and was approved by the donor. Project costs at design were available by output in the Project budget and by activity in the Detailed Project Workplan.

129. As reported by the Fund Manager, UNEP performed complete fund management function including budget, commitment, payments and recording of expenditures.

130. Communication between the project technical management and the related administrative and financial positions were reported to be smooth and conducive to proper project implementation.

**Table 3: Financial Management Table**

Financial management components:		Rating	Evidence/ Comments
<b>1. Adherence to UNEP’s policies and procedures:</b>		<b>HS</b>	
Any evidence that indicates shortcomings in the project’s adherence <sup>4</sup> to UNEP or donor policies, procedures or rules		No	
<b>2. Completeness of project financial information<sup>5</sup>:</b>			
Provision of key documents to the reviewer (based on the responses to A-H below)		<b>HS</b>	
A.	Co-financing and Project Cost’s tables at design (by budget lines)	Yes	Project costs at design were available by output in the Project Budget, and by activity in the Detailed Project Workplan
B.	Revisions to the budget	Yes	One budget revision was made to adjust/redeploy funds according to real costs of activities
C.	All relevant project legal agreements (e.g. SSFA, PCA, ICA)	Yes	2 Agreements (with LMEC and IEMP) were signed and shared with the Reviewer
D.	Proof of fund transfers	Yes	The financial office provided a sample of proofs for 2 contracts (LMEC and IEMP)

<sup>4</sup> If the review raises concerns over adherence with policies or standard procedures, a recommendation maybe given to cover the topic in an upcoming audit, or similar financial oversight exercise.

<sup>5</sup> See also document ‘Criterion Rating Description’ for reference

E.	Proof of co-financing (cash and in-kind)	Yes	Available in the signed Project Budget/Summary
F.	A summary report on the project's expenditures during the life of the project (by budget lines, project components and/or annual level)	Yes	Interim Financial Reports were provided in the PSC reports. Expenditures were presented by type of expenditure only (e.g. grant staff costs, etc.) The financial office also provided 2 interim expenditure reports from 2 partners
G.	Copies of any completed audits and management responses (where applicable)	N/A	Project Audit not completed at time of the Review
H.	Any other financial information that was required for this project (list):	N/A	
<b>3. Communication between finance and project management staff</b>		<b>S</b>	
	Project Manager and/or Task Manager's level of awareness of the project's financial status.	S	Based on feedback from the Fund Manager
	Fund Management Officer's knowledge of project progress/status when disbursements are done.	N/A	No evidence was provided either way
	Level of addressing and resolving financial management issues among Fund Management Officer and Project Manager/Task Manager.	N/A	No evidence was provided either way, but no financial management issues were reported either
	Contact/communication between by Fund Management Officer, Project Manager/Task Manager during the preparation of financial and progress reports.	S	Communication between the project technical management and the related administrative and financial positions were reported to be smooth and conducive to proper project implementation
	Project Manager, Task Manager and Fund Management Officer responsiveness to financial requests during the review process	HS	Fund Manager extremely responsive
<b>Overall rating</b>		<b>HS</b>	

**Rating for Financial Management: Satisfactory**

## F. Efficiency

131. Based on the expenditure breakdown dated 27 January 2023, only a balance of USD 29,438 remains, suggesting that most of the activities were implemented as planned.

132. A project audit is on-going but couldn't be shared with the Review as it is not yet completed.

133. The project and budget were realistically designed, but with delays in start of implementation, the implementation period was reduced to a little over a year. This could have proven difficult to deliver, though with the measures put in place by the UNEP ROAP team, it was achieved on time and within the agreed budget without any major changes to the original project budget – only one budget revision was needed during the implementation of the Project to accommodate for minor adjustments reflecting real costs.
134. The project also built on a previous initiative and capitalized on the excellent relationship built at the time with the implementing partners and donor.

**Rating for Efficiency:** **Satisfactory**

## **G. Monitoring and Reporting**

### **Monitoring Design and Budgeting**

135. The project document has a comprehensive Logical Framework that captures the ToC from outputs to outcome, but not from outcome to impact. The Logical Framework is a good reflection of the scope of work and ambitions as further detailed in the project document. All outcome and outputs have established milestones as well as indicators that are accompanied by baselines and targets.
136. Responsibilities for monitoring activities are detailed in an indicator Tracking Tool which establishes data sources, frequency of data collection, and responsible person for monitoring of progress.
137. While all the indicators are SMART in that they are specific, measurable, achievable and time bound, it is regrettable that they are all quantitative and set at the deliverable level, thus not appropriate to actually demonstrate change. The indicators clearly show that the project has been delivered, versus achieved. Also, and consequently, all baselines are set as zero, at the Project activity level, which seems like a missed opportunity to showcase the value added of the Project in complementarity to other projects that may have been implemented in the same areas by other development actors.
138. While the indicators tried to provide gender disaggregated data, it only concerned the number of participants in activities such as trainings and consultations. No qualitative indicators were established as a whole, nor to take into account how Project activities may affect men and women differently.
139. One budget line covers one project activity which is to set up a monitoring and evaluation system of landscape approaches, and another covers the costs of “Evaluation” (the Project TR), but there is no dedicated budget for regular project monitoring activities. However, all indicators being activity based with evidence to be found in project implementation and various project reports, no funding would have been necessary for tracking.

### **Monitoring of Project Implementation**

140. The UNEP ROAP team has done a great job closely monitoring Project implementation, particularly taking into consideration that because of COVID-19 restrictions, they were never able to either travel to the Project sites or meet with

any of the IPs and counterparts in person. To mitigate these constraints, the ROAP team set up monthly partner coordination meetings and monthly internal monitoring of indicators to track progress closely, identify risks in advance and take necessary measures to address them.

## **Project Reporting**

141. Based on the evidence provided, regular monitoring in PIMS was completed, as well as PSC reporting for both PSC meetings that were organized during the implementation period. The quality of the reporting was good, with extensive substantive reporting, though minimal financial information was provided.

**Rating for Monitoring and Reporting: Satisfactory**

## **H. Sustainability**

142. The project document developed a detailed sustainability plan, presenting how implemented activities and strategic partnerships and relationships with IPs would ensure sustainability. Evidence is compelling for the sustainability of activities at the pilot sites both in Cambodia and China.

### **Socio-political Sustainability**

143. There was unfortunately no opportunity for the Review to talk with Chinese counterparts or the donor.

144. However, with regards to the Cambodia based activities at the pilot site, it is clear that there is immense interest on the part of the Ministry of Environment in maintaining project achievements at the pilot site as well as to expand these activities to more sites in the country.

145. Feedback from involved communities at the project sites also indicates a desire to continue, and has been expressed to their representatives and subsequently to the Ministry of Environment.

146. In **Cambodia**, a cooperation agreement has been signed on 1st November 2022 between three parties: members of Community Protected Areas from two villages, Angkor Khmer Honey Bee Co., Ltd. and Ministry of Environment. This agreement aims to promote the participation and cooperation of Community Protected Areas members in the Phnom Kulen National Park and the private sector in providing technical support and market assistance on beekeeping to improve the local livelihood and promote the ecosystem management and restoration under the framework of Mekong-Lancang cooperation.

147. In **China** the work on all 3 pilot sites is to be continued. 2 agreements have been signed between the Foreign Environment Cooperation Center of the Ministry of Ecology and Environment and the Xishuangbanna Tropical Botanical Garden, Chinese Academy of Sciences. One agreement focuses on enhancing synergistic capacity of climate change and ecosystem management in the Mekong region, while the other covers the provision of consulting services for the Lancang-Mekong River Region Integrated Ecosystem Management Evaluation Project.

148. At the senior-level policy dialogue held in November 2022, Governments in the region also expressed their interest and support in the various integrated



ecosystem management approaches demonstrated under the Project and expressed their interest in scaling up the efforts in the future.

149. The government of Cambodia has expressed its full support to the China Trust Fund Phase 2 Unspent Funds concept proposal, focused on transforming agricultural commodities in the Lancang-Mekong region towards sustainability through integrated ecosystem management practices along the value chain of cashew nut and rubber.
150. The government of Vietnam has been collaborating with UNEP and under the project, a concept proposal has been prepared for a potential GEF-8 project on the application of integrated ecosystem management practices for conservation and sustainable management of coastal ecosystems, through sustainable eco-tourism development in the coastal zone of Quang Nam Province and improved financial sustainability of Cai Lao Cham-Hoi An Biosphere Reserve.

### **Financial Sustainability**

151. The project was designed as an intermediate step that will be built upon in subsequent phases. Its full fledged Sustainability Plan building on institutional sustainability through implementing partners' engagement, use of existing networks, linkages with other UNEP umbrella project and core initiatives, knowledge dissemination, capacity building, etc.
152. The UNEP ROAP team is already in the process of developing concept proposals for the next phases (China Trust Fund, GEF-8).
153. However, there is a risk of losing momentum for lack of availability of bridge funding in between phases.

### **Institutional Sustainability**

154. The project design includes institutional sustainability, however not always defined in those terms.
155. Evidence and feedback from counterparts suggest a high level of institutional sustainability for activities implemented at the Cambodia pilot site, though it is debatable whether this is true sustainability rather than assumption at this point.
156. There is also an issue of capacities at the institutional level, underlined by a high rate of staff turnover in Cambodia. This is a constraint to instituting policy change.

***SQ: How well has the project utilized local and national capacity in demonstrating effective approaches for integrated ecosystem management approaches at pilot sites in Cambodia and China, and how effectively have the lessons learned under the project been summarized to be shared with other countries in the Lancang Mekong countries?***

157. The project has made extensive use of local and national capacities in demonstrating effective approaches for integrated ecosystem management approaches at pilot sites in Cambodia and China. In fact, and particularly with

travel restrictions due to the COVID-19 pandemic, their extensive involvement has been instrumental to the implementation of activities at pilot sites.

158. In **Cambodia**, the Ministry of Environment (IP to the Project for these activities) established a project management unit (PMU) to work on interventions at the pilot sites at Phnom Kulen National Park in the Siem Reap province. The team identified several options on ecosystem management and sustainable livelihoods, including mechanisms for agroforestry at cashew nut plantations, beekeeping, organic vegetable farming, sustainable bamboo plantation and chicken (free-range) raising. Working closely together with smallholder farmers at the periphery of the National Park, these tools on integrated ecosystem management were successfully demonstrated and shared with the local communities and surrounding villages.
159. Department of Biodiversity and Department of Community Livelihoods of the Ministry of Environment; Siem Reap Department of Environment (Park director); leaders of Phnom Kulen' Community Protected Areas network, and the provincial department of environment, private sector, local authorities, international and local NGOs were also closely involved in the implementation of activities.
160. In **China**, the interest, acceptance and participation of local communities have been key factors of the success of the interventions at the selected pilot sites. Participation in national consultations and capacity building events greatly surpassed Project set targets, and the high demand for training demonstrated the positive effects of close collaboration with local communities. It also showed the interest in continuing and scaling up interventions on integrated ecosystem management.
161. In terms of knowledge production and sharing, the Project has been quite prolific, particularly taking into account the short implementation time frame. The below are just some examples:
- 1 ecosystem assessment was produced covering both the upper and lower parts of the Lancang-Mekong basin, evaluating threats to ecosystem health in the region, highlighting dependencies of priority economic sectors on key ecosystem services, as well as ecosystem service-dependent livelihoods.
  - 4 knowledge products were developed and completed on ecosystem management systems.
  - 4 policy briefs on cross-sectoral and transboundary collaboration frameworks were developed and completed, with the topics of Benefits of Environmental-friendly Rubber Plantation, Development and Environmental Impact of Rubber Forests in the Lancang-Mekong Region and Practical Cases as well as Community-Awareness of Ecological Rubber plantations
162. In total, 18 communication products were developed and disseminated through different communication channels from UNEP and partners, including knowledge products on the websites, articles, social media posts and presentations.
163. A total audience of 298,055 has been reached through project communication and outreach efforts.

## **I. Factors Affecting Performance and Cross-Cutting Issues**

### **Preparation and Readiness**

164. There were significant delays in the project development process which took three years after the process initiated originally by the UNEP Terrestrial Ecosystem Unit was transferred to UNEP ROAP, leaving a very short period for implementation, just over a year.
165. However, the ROAP Team was diligent in taking remedial action for these delays by establishing strong relationships with partners even prior to Project approval to ensure implementation could start immediately upon approval.
166. Further delays were experienced in Cambodia due to the IP's administrative procedures in opening a new bank account for the Project, as per UNEP's rules and regulations. However, the potential negative effects of this delay were mitigated by the willingness of the Ministry of Environment to start with the implementation of activities at the pilot site prior to receiving the first grant.

### ***SQ: What changes were made to adapt to the effects of COVID-19 and how did COVID-19 impact the project?***

167. While the project was only approved in July 2021 and was developed over a period of three years, well within the occurrence of the COVID-19 pandemic, the project document only mentions COVID-19 three times: It is mentioned that the project is aligned with the UNEP's strategic response to COVID-19; COVID-19 is then identified as one management risk; and it is mentioned once in the Project safeguard risk checklist. Considering that the project main activities were centered around capacity development and knowledge sharing at regional, national and local level, with one of the two pilot sites being in China where COVID-19 related restrictions were notoriously strict, more care could have been given in fleshing this part out and presenting mitigation strategies to account for the difficulties this would pose in Project implementation.
168. However, beyond the information included in the project document and in reality, the UNEP ROAP team has been extremely diligent in setting up measures that would allow them to overcome the imposed restrictions.
169. As mentioned above, the ROAP team built on their previously established excellent relationship with implementation partners and counterparts to ensure their presence in country and to build on their own in country networks – though the LMEC team in charge of the implementation of the Project activities at the China pilot site were only able to have one field visit towards the end of the project.
170. The ROAP team also set-up monthly online coordination meetings and ensured they were kept abreast of any new development, and according to IPs feedback were always extremely proactive and responsive to needs.

171. While the above allowed for an effective and timely delivery of the Project, it is clear that not all expected benefits were reaped from the activities. The November 2022 regional workshop in Beijing had to be organized in a hybrid manner, with only China based participants being physically present, and all other participants following the proceedings online. This didn't allow for the exchanges, side events and networking opportunities this type of event usually offers.
172. Some of the training of local communities at the Cambodia pilot site had to be organized online, and while feedback from the beneficiaries was overall positive, it didn't allow for practical on-site demonstrations (e.g. one of the training on bamboo plantation was very well received, but didn't allow for the trainers to go out in the field with the participants to help them identify the ideal locations to be planted).
173. The ROAP team never had an opportunity to meet in person with either the IPs or counterparts or conduct monitoring visits. Similarly, the various IPs never met each other and couldn't always visit the intervention sites, though this was not only due to COVID-19 related travel restriction but also to accessibility issues and lack of funding. PSC meetings also had to take place virtually.

### **Quality of Project Management and Supervision**

174. Based on implementing partners' feedback, the UNEP ROAP Team has been extremely active and responsive in managing and supervising the Project on a day-to-day basis. Monthly partner coordination meetings were organized (albeit virtually because of COVID-19 induced restrictions), and monthly internal monitoring of indicators were established to track progress closely, identify risks and arising issues in advance, and take necessary measures to mitigate and address them.
175. As described in greater detail above, the project management and implementation structure developed in the project document was carefully thought through, building on the excellent relationship UNEP developed in the previous phase with the IPs and on their in-country knowledge, networks and strengths.
176. The established Project Steering Committee has also proven an extremely effective management mechanism, with members actively engaged and proactive in addressing issues.

### **Stakeholders Participation and Cooperation**

177. The project document identifies a large number of stakeholders, though some are only identified by category and most are indicated as "to be consulted during project implementation". It is not clear from the available evidence which were in the end involved during Project implementation, nor whether consultations have actually taken place.
178. While the local communities at pilot sites were fully involved and consulted – project activities could not have been implemented without their complete participation and cooperation – they were only consulted during towards the end of the implementation period (through the Action Learning Process) and not at

project design. This was seemingly due to a lengthy staff turnover process within UNEP IEMP, which in turn led delays in organizing the Action Learning Process activities.

### **Responsiveness to Human Rights and Gender Equality**

179. The project does mention a human rights-based approach but without any details.
180. With regards to gender, and while the document repeatedly mentions “gender considerations”, these aren’t fleshed out and the focus is mainly on ensuring “equal gender participation and analysis will be disaggregated by sex”, not on a gender-based approach. This is also reflected in the lack of gender specific indicators in the Logical Framework, beyond women’s participation in Project activities (e.g. number of women participating in training).
181. While the bulk of the work in the pilot sites is about how to have an integrated approach to human/natural systems, there is no evidence that project implementation was any more responsive to these issues than what has been mentioned in the project document.

### **Environmental and Social Safeguards**

182. No potential negative impacts were defined and no safeguard measures mentioned in the project document. However, and due to the characteristics of the project, positive environmental impact was expected.

### **Communication and Public Awareness**

183. The project developed a large number of knowledge products under all outputs and deployed a wide range communication and public awareness tools and means. Section D above includes details on these and the high number of people reached.
184. Two of the Project developed knowledge products are currently being reviewed and finalized to become official UNEP publications.
185. A project specific flyer was developed and the project has been promoted at several closely related regional events, such as the Roundtable Dialogue on Sustainable Infrastructure of the Green Lancang-Mekong Initiative in April 2022, and the China-ASEAN Environmental Forum in September 2022.

***SQ: How well has the project been able to showcase the successful application of integrated ecosystem management approaches adopted under the project to inform future actions of other countries in the Lancang Mekong region?***

186. As extensively detailed in section D above, the Project has been extremely prolific in the development of knowledge products, including on the successful application of integrated ecosystem management approaches adopted under the project. LMEC in particular has developed a number of short papers on their experience with rubber plantations at the China pilot sites.
187. The quality of those material is not in doubt, and their dissemination has been extensive with a total audience of 298,055 reached through project

communication and outreach efforts, including clicks on the established project websites, as well as clicks via social media such as Weibo and WeChat.

188. However, there is no evidence as to the impact these knowledge products will have in terms of informing future actions of other countries in the Lancang-Mekong region. While four of the six countries have expressed interest and both Cambodia and Vietnam more formally so with the development of new proposals (China Trust Fund Phase II unspent funding and GEF-8 respectively), the project having come to an end, there is no funding or operational means to continue tracking this aspect. Subsequent phases may want to factor this aspect in and capitalize on the work of the Project.

**Rating for Factors Affecting Performance and Cross-Cutting Issues:**

**Moderately Satisfactory**

## VI. CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

### A. Conclusions

189. With its focus on improving ecosystem management for sustainable livelihoods in the Lancang-Mekong region, the Project is highly relevant to national, sub-regional, regional, and global issues. The project is also well aligned with UNEP's strategic priorities, the MTS and PoW, as well as regional and national priorities.
190. The Project built on the results achieved by the UNEP-China Trust Fund Phase 1 project, entitled, "South-South Capacity Building for Ecosystem Management in the Greater Mekong Subregion' (2015- 2016)" and the expressed interest of countries in the region in being further supported by UNEP in the process being undertaken to strengthen ecosystem management, capacity building and mainstreaming of ecosystem conservation at national and sub-regional level, with specific focus on practical application of integrated ecosystem management approaches in pilot sites. The project document has been found to be comprehensive, thoroughly researched, and very well fleshed out. Most of the important elements of a proper design were included in the project document. Financial resources were adequate, governance arrangements were properly described, and a ToC was included. While the causal pathways from project outputs to outcome were not fleshed out, they could be easily understood from the Logical Framework and ToC figure. The Logical Framework was well designed with indicators, baseline figures and targets. It is regrettable that all the indicators were process based, with no qualitative indicators or formulated in a way that would indicate change and achievement of results rather than implementation of activities. The project outcome was realistically formulated, particularly considering the short implementation period. The project document also included an Indicator Tracking Tool establishing data sources, frequency of data collection and responsible person for monitoring of progress. A risk management tool, as well as a clear knowledge management strategy and a well fleshed out communication strategy were also developed. Sustainability issues were properly addressed, particularly considering that the Project was designed as an intermediate step to be built upon in subsequent phases.
191. The Project delivered on all the outputs, although COVID-19 limited regional and sometimes national interactions, as well as some of the training activities to online events. A total of 18 knowledge products were produced and widely disseminated through various means, including through partners. It is regrettable that consultations with local communities at the pilot sites were organized during the last quarter of the Project instead of involving them at the Project design stage. Nevertheless, interventions at the pilot sites in Cambodia and China have been successfully identified and implemented together with multidisciplinary and cross-sectoral partners, and three cooperation agreements were established at pilot sites for integrated ecosystem management beyond the duration of the project. Two proposals for follow-up interventions in Cambodia and in Vietnam are under development, and four out of six countries in the region have expressed their support in the various integrated ecosystem management approaches demonstrated under the project and interest in scaling up the efforts in the future.

192. The Project was able to make extensive use of local and national capacities in demonstrating effective approaches for integrated ecosystem management approaches at pilot sites in Cambodia and China. In fact, and particularly with the restrictions imposed by the COVID-19 pandemic, their involvement has been instrumental to the successful implementation of activities at pilot sites.
193. The Project was fully funded, and it seems well managed financially, though apart from some mentions of efficiency in the project document, there was little evidence either way. The majority of the funds were delivered through grants to the IPs. The Project was funded by a single donor, and it seems that no further resource mobilization efforts were pursued during the implementation period.
194. While the project document identified a large number of stakeholders, their actual involvement in the project seems to have been limited. It is also unclear whether the Project was able to link up with, build on, or support similar initiatives in the region.
195. Gender aspects were unfortunately limited to tracking the number of women participating in project activities, and no analysis was done to determine how or even whether Project interventions could affect men and women differently.
196. While the COVID-19 pandemic significantly affected the Project implementation in terms of travel restrictions making field visits impossible and the need for online trainings and events instead of in person participation, the ROAP team put in place effective measures to ensure delivery of interventions, in particular in terms of the implementation structure it set up and building on the excellent relationship developed with IPs and counterparts during the Phase 1 project. However, the risk posed by COVID-19 could have been better fleshed out and planned for in the project document, particularly considering the three year project development process which was well within the earlier and beyond days of the pandemic.
197. The project development phase was excessively lengthy, particularly compared to the subsequently very short implementation timeframe, putting undue pressure on the IPs. However, and considering the very short implementation period, it is remarkable how well the project delivered.

## **B. Summary of project findings and ratings**

198. The table below provides a summary of the ratings and finding discussed in Chapter V. Overall, the project demonstrates a rating of **'Satisfactory'**.

### **UNEP Evaluation Office Validation of Performance Ratings:**

The UNEP Evaluation Office formally quality assesses (see Annex VIII) management led Terminal Review reports and validates the performance ratings therein by ensuring that the performance judgments made are consistent with evidence presented in the Review report and in-line with the performance standards set out for independent evaluations.

The Evaluation Office assesses a Terminal Review report in the same way as it assesses the initial draft of a Terminal Evaluation report. It applies the following assumptions in its validation process:



- That what is being assessed is the contents of the report and the extent to which it makes a consistent and justifiable case for the performance ratings it records.
- That the consultant has, within the report, presented all the evidence that was made available to them.
- That the Review has been based on a robust Theory of Change, reconstructed where necessary, which reflects UNEP's definitions at all levels of results.
- That the project team and key stakeholders have already reviewed a draft version of the report and provided substantive comments and made factual corrections to the Review Consultant, who has responded to them. The Evaluation Office assumes, therefore, that it has received the Final (revised) version of the report.

In this instance the Evaluation Office validates the overall project performance rating at the '**Satisfactory**' level.

**Table 4: Summary of project findings and ratings**

Criterion	Summary assessment	Rating	Justification for any ratings' changes due to validation (to be completed by the UNEP Evaluation Office – EOU)	EOU Validated Rating
<b>Strategic Relevance</b>		<b>Moderately Satisfactory</b>	<b>Aggregated from below</b>	<b>Satisfactory</b>
1. Alignment to UNEP MTS, POW and strategic priorities	The project very clearly and extensively presents how the project is in line with UNEP MTS, PoW (both 2020-2021 and 2022-2023) and Strategic Priorities, as well as South South Cooperation	Highly Satisfactory	Rating validated	Highly Satisfactory
2. Alignment to Donor/Partner strategic priorities	The Project is well aligned with 3 of the China Trust Fund Phase II priorities. GEF is mentioned as target for potential resource mobilization and in terms of complementarity for the implementation of activities where they are taking place in the same area (as in the Cambodia pilot site).	Moderately Unsatisfactory	Due to the clear alignment with the China Trust Fund priorities indicated in the narrative section in para. 71, this rating is adjusted to 'Satisfactory'.	Satisfactory
3. Relevance to global, regional, sub-regional and national environmental priorities	The document clearly identifies Regional (“the project will significantly contribute to the work under the three main regional bodies related to Lancang-Mekong transboundary management. These three bodies are: i) Lancang-Mekong Cooperation Mechanism; ii) Mekong River Commission (MRC); and iii) Greater Mekong Subregion Economic Cooperation Program. Ecosystem management is an important area of all the three bodies but at different degrees. [e.g. Lancang-Mekong Environmental Cooperation Strategic Framework (2020-2025)]”) and country level priorities, particularly with regards to national commitments to international instruments such as UNFCCC, Convention on Biological Diversity, etc.	Highly Satisfactory	Rating validated	Highly Satisfactory

Criterion	Summary assessment	Rating	Justification for any ratings' changes due to validation (to be completed by the UNEP Evaluation Office – EOU)	EOU Validated Rating
4. Complementarity with relevant existing interventions/coherence	<p>The document details how the project builds on a previous initiative “UNEP-China Trust Fund Phase 1, South-South Capacity Building for Ecosystem Management in the Greater Mekong Subregion (2015-2016)”, and establishes that “the expertise and lessons from [these] past and ongoing initiatives could be brought in to support the implementation of this project”. There is however no information on the particular aspects of said expertise and lessons.</p> <p>The document also states that based on strong relationships and partnerships with key regional partners and processes, UNEP is “uniquely positioned to lead this initiative, and bring together these key programmes and partners in the region to ensure synergy and complementarities among these initiatives”. There is however no mention of what these are or how this will be done.</p> <p>During project implementation, presentations were made at the policy dialogue event in November 2022 related to relevant initiatives (The Economics of Ecosystems and Biodiversity and UN-REDD Programme in the Mekong region), with an attempt to have alignments with relevant initiatives in the region. GEF project development in Vietnam was done in close engagement with the partner UNEP has engaged through other relevant initiatives (from the Ministry of Natural Resources and Environment). However, this remained more at the communications/sharing of information level and there was no concrete cooperation between projects, and no indication on the way forward at this stage.</p>	Moderately Unsatisfactory	Rating validated	Moderately Unsatisfactory

Criterion	Summary assessment	Rating	Justification for any ratings' changes due to validation (to be completed by the UNEP Evaluation Office – EOU)	EOU Validated Rating
<b>Quality of Project Design</b>	<p>The Project design is quite extensive in terms of situation analysis, context, stakeholders identification, implementation arrangements, and planned activities.</p> <p>It is however lacking in terms of providing information on consultations that may have been conducted or to be conducted with stakeholders, and in terms of the logical framework, all indicators are quantitative, implementation based and do not show achievement (or lack thereof) of results.</p> <p>Gender aspects also only cover number of women participants in activities and fail to show how the project could affect men and women differently.</p>	<b>Satisfactory</b>	Rating validated	<b>Satisfactory</b>
<b>Nature of External Context</b>	<p>The Project clearly responds to a need in the region, and is in line with regional and country priorities. The active involvement of national partners clearly shows the high level of interest for and willingness to implement project activities, particularly at the Cambodia pilot site where national counterparts were instrumental in making the activities a success.</p> <p>There were no risks of conflict and the areas of intervention are not prone to natural disasters.</p>	<b>Favorable</b>	Rating validated	<b>Favorable</b>
<b>Effectiveness</b>		<b>Satisfactory</b>	Rating validated	<b>Satisfactory</b>
1. Availability of outputs	The three project outputs are clearly defined and seem realistic for the project.	Satisfactory	Rating validated	Satisfactory
2. Achievement of project outcomes	Based on the outcome indicators and targets, the outcome has been achieved. It is however regrettable that all outcome indicators were purely quantitative.	Satisfactory	Rating validated	Satisfactory
3. Likelihood of impact	<p>This is difficult to assess based on the very short implementation framework, particularly for outputs 1 and 2 which were heavily affected by the Covid-19 pandemic and associated travel bans.</p> <p>Activities at the pilot sites have had positive impacts on the involved communities and could be easily replicated and expanded on.</p>	Likely	Rating adjusted to 'Moderately Likely' given that impact is predicated on further project support and para 152 highlights the danger of a loss of momentum without bridge funding between phases and therefore to replicate/expand on pilot work.	Moderately Likely
<b>Financial Management</b>		<b>Satisfactory</b>	<b>Aggregated from below</b>	<b>Highly Satisfactory</b>

Criterion	Summary assessment	Rating	Justification for any ratings' changes due to validation (to be completed by the UNEP Evaluation Office – EOU)	EOU Validated Rating
1. Adherence to UNEP's financial policies and procedures	There was no evidence of lack of compliance.	Moderately Satisfactory	Rating assigned to this sub-criterion in Table 3 'Financial Management Table' is HS. The former is validated.	Highly Satisfactory
2. Completeness of project financial information	Project budget, budget revision, broad PSC financial reporting and financial status as of 27 January 2023 were provided to the Review. 2 samples of implementing partners' financial reporting were provided (LMEC and CAS).	Satisfactory	Rating assigned to this sub-criterion in Table 3 'Financial Management Table' is HS. The former is validated.	Highly Satisfactory
3. Communication between finance and project management staff	Communication between the project technical management and the related administrative and financial positions were reported to be smooth and conducive to proper project implementation.	Satisfactory	Rating validated	Satisfactory
<b>Efficiency</b>	<p>The project was realistically designed, but with delays in start of implementation, the time frame became much shorter and potentially difficult to deliver, though with the measures put in place by the UNEP ROAP team, it was achieved on time and within the agreed budget.</p> <p>The project also built on a previous initiative and capitalized on the excellent relationship built at the time with the implementing partners and donor.</p> <p>The project also has a short "Cost-effectiveness" section.</p>	<b>Satisfactory</b>	Note Reviewer's mention of activities related to Action Learning being delivered late, para 113. Also, the ratio of project development time to implementation reflects inefficiency. Rating adjusted to 'Moderately Satisfactory'	Moderately Satisfactory
<b>Monitoring and Reporting</b>		<b>Satisfactory</b>	<b>Rating validated</b>	Satisfactory

Criterion	Summary assessment	Rating	Justification for any ratings' changes due to validation (to be completed by the UNEP Evaluation Office – EOU)	EOU Validated Rating
1. Monitoring design and budgeting	<p>The Logical Framework is comprehensive. All outcome and outputs have indicators that are accompanied by baselines and targets.</p> <p>However, at outputs level, all indicators are quantitative and at the deliverable level, thus not appropriate to actually demonstrate change. Consequently, all baselines are set as zero, at the project activity level.</p> <p>Responsibilities for monitoring activities are detailed in an Indicator Tracking Tool which establishes data sources, frequency of data collection and responsible person for monitoring of progress.</p> <p>One project activity is to set up a monitoring and evaluation system of landscape approaches, and a budget has been allocated for this, as well as for the project terminal review, but not for regular project monitoring activities. However, all indicators being activity based with evidence to be found in various project reports, no funding would have been necessary for tracking.</p>	Satisfactory	Rating validated	Satisfactory
2. Monitoring of project implementation	<p>The UNEP ROAP team has been closely monitoring project implementation through monthly partner coordination meetings and monthly internal monitoring of indicators to track progress closely, identify risks in advance and take necessary measures to address them.</p>	Satisfactory	<p>The Reviewer notes several times that the indicators were related to processes rather than results and therefore the quality/utility of the monitoring of project implementation would have been affected.</p> <p>Rating adjusted to 'Moderately Satisfactory'.</p>	Moderately Satisfactory
3. Project reporting	<p>Based on the evidence provided, regular monitoring in PIMS was completed, as well as PSC reporting for both PSC meetings that were organized during the implementation period.</p>	Satisfactory	Rating Validated	Satisfactory
<b>Sustainability</b>		<b>Likely</b>	<b>Aggregated from below</b>	<b>Moderately Likely</b>

Criterion	Summary assessment	Rating	Justification for any ratings' changes due to validation (to be completed by the UNEP Evaluation Office – EOU)	EOU Validated Rating
1. Socio-political sustainability	The project design includes socio-political sustainability, however not always defined in those terms. Feedback from involved communities and the interest expressed in subsequent phases by various governments in the region is quite indicative.	Highly Likely	Rating Validated	Highly Likely
2. Financial sustainability	The project was designed as an intermediate step that will be built upon in subsequent phases. It also has a full fledged Sustainability Plan building on institutional sustainability through implementing partners' engagement, use of existing networks, linkages with other UNEP umbrella project and core initiatives, knowledge dissemination, capacity building, etc. The UNEP ROAP team is already developing concept proposals for the next phases (China Trust Fund, GEF-8). However, there is a risk of losing momentum for lack of bridge funding in between phases.	Likely	As indicated in the narrative (para. 152), "there is a risk of losing momentum for lack of availability of bridge funding in between phases". Rating adjusted to Moderately Likely.	Moderately Likely
3. Institutional sustainability	The project design includes institutional sustainability, however not always defined in those terms. Evidence suggests a high level of institutional sustainability for activities implemented at the Cambodia pilot site.	Likely	The narrative (para. 155) mentions a capacity issue at the institutional level due to the high rate of staff turnover, especially in Cambodia. Rating adjusted to Moderately Likely.	Moderately Likely
<b>Factors Affecting Performance</b>		<b>Moderately Satisfactory</b>	<b>Rating validated</b>	<b>Moderately Satisfactory</b>
1. Preparation and readiness	There were significant delays in the project development process which took three years after the process initiated by the UNEP Terrestrial Ecosystem Unit was transferred to UNEP ROAP. Further delays were experienced in Cambodia due to the IP's administrative procedures in opening a new bank account for the project. However, the ROAP team was diligent in taking remedial actions and establishing strong relationships with partners prior to project approval to ensure speedy implementation.	Moderately Unsatisfactory	This criterion refers to the project inception or mobilisation stage (ie. the time between project approval and first disbursement), not the project development phase. Rating adjusted to Moderately Satisfactory.	Moderately Satisfactory

Criterion	Summary assessment	Rating	Justification for any ratings' changes due to validation (to be completed by the UNEP Evaluation Office – EOU)	EOU Validated Rating
2. Quality of project management and supervision	<p>Based on implementing partners' feedback, the UNEP ROAP team has been extremely active and responsive in managing and supervising the project.</p> <p>The UNEP ROAP team has been closely monitoring project implementation through monthly partner coordination meetings and monthly internal monitoring of indicators to track progress closely, identify risks in advance and take necessary measures to address them.</p>	Satisfactory	Rating Validated	Satisfactory
2.1 UNEP/Implementing Agency:		Satisfactory	Rating Validated	Satisfactory
2.2 Partners/Executing Agency:		Satisfactory	Rating Validated	Satisfactory
3. Stakeholders' participation and cooperation	<p>Local communities at project sites were fully involved – project activities could not have been implemented without their complete participation and cooperation. However, they were only consulted during project implementation and not at the project design phase.</p>	Satisfactory	Rating adjusted to Moderately Satisfactory based on the evidence provided in para. 176 and 177 (i.e. local communities at pilot sites only consulted at the end of the implementation period).	Moderately Satisfactory
4. Responsiveness to human rights and gender equality	<p>The project does mention a human rights based approach but without any details.</p> <p>With regards to gender, and while the document repeatedly mentions "gender considerations", these aren't fleshed out and the focus is mainly on ensuring "equal gender participation and analysis will be disaggregated by sex", not on a gender based approach.</p> <p>However, the bulk of the work in the pilot sites is about how to have an integrated approach to human/natural systems.</p> <p>There is no evidence that project implementation was any more responsive to these issues than what has been mentioned in the project document.</p>	Unsatisfactory	Rating Validated	Unsatisfactory
5. Environmental and social safeguards	<p>No potential negative impacts were defined and no safeguard measures mentioned in the project document.</p> <p>However, and due to the characteristics of the project, positive environmental impact was expected.</p>	Moderately Unsatisfactory	Rating Validated	Moderately Unsatisfactory



Criterion	Summary assessment	Rating	Justification for any ratings' changes due to validation (to be completed by the UNEP Evaluation Office – EOU)	EOU Validated Rating
6. Country ownership and driven-ness		N/A	The take up by China and Cambodia, along with the support they provided during COVID-19, suggests good ownership.	Satisfactory
7. Communication and public awareness	<p>A total of 18 communication products were developed and disseminated through different communication channels from UNEP and partners, including knowledge products on the websites, articles, social media posts and presentations. A simple visual identity was developed through a project flyer.</p> <p>A total audience of 298,055 has been reached through project communication and outreach efforts, including clicks on the established project websites, as well as clicks via social media such as Weibo and WeChat.</p> <p>The project was also presented at several related regional events.</p>	Satisfactory	Rating Validated	Satisfactory
<b>Overall Project Performance Rating</b>		<b>Satisfactory</b>	<b>Rating validated</b>	<b>S</b>

## C. Lessons learned

<b>Lesson Learned #1:</b>	The economic/livelihoods aspect should not be underestimated when working with local communities and engaging them in processes that imply a drastic change in how they use the land they live and work on. Private sector involvement is crucial.
<b>Context/comment:</b>	Local communities were originally reluctant to apply new ways of working the land and to diversify/integrate new activities. However, once they realized this would enhance their livelihoods and provide them with new sources of income, they embraced the changes and are now keen on pursuing these activities. The involvement of other partners (including private sector) provided the beneficiaries with a way to sell their produce (black ginger and honey), and has been instrumental in bringing around the way the intervention was viewed.
<b>Lesson Learned #2:</b>	The involvement of national and local partners and communities is crucial to the successful implementation of interventions.
<b>Context/comment:</b>	With the COVID-19 travel and meeting restrictions, the project could not have been delivered in the short implementation period without the national actors involved. The IPs and counterparts involved were instrumental in the timely implementation of the interventions, and their bringing their commitments and national and local networks to the plate were what allowed the Project's success.
<b>Lesson Learned #3:</b>	Three years of project development leaving only a little over a year for implementation is not a good ratio. Projects need to be developed/approved faster and allow for a longer implementation time frame.
<b>Context/comment:</b>	It has been challenging for the UNEP teams to maintain interest and momentum of partners and stakeholders over the three years it took for the Project to be finalized and approved. The lengthy process left a very short timeframe for implementation, putting incredible pressure on the IPs. The short implementation period also didn't allow for project interventions at the pilot site to go over more than one turn of the seasons cycle and to monitor their continued success over time.

## D. Recommendations

These recommendations should be applied by the UNEP project team in the proposal for a follow-on phase that is currently under design.

<b>Recommendation #1:</b>	Projects should not only include quantitative, implementation-based indicators, but should also include qualitative indicators that are indicative of change brought about by projects instead of only measuring delivery of activities.
<b>Challenge/problem to be addressed by the recommendation:</b>	The Project's current indicators make it difficult to measure achievement of results and only allow to say that the Project has been delivered. They also don't allow to assess potential future impact of interventions.
<b>Priority Level:</b>	Important
<b>Type of Recommendation</b>	Project
<b>Responsibility:</b>	UNEP ROAP Director
<b>Proposed implementation time-frame:</b>	Continuous

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

- Section V. G

<b>Recommendation #2:</b>	Support should be provided to the Cambodia Ministry of Environment to secure seed funding to maintain/expend on pilot site intervention until the approval and implementation of the next phase.
<b>Challenge/problem to be addressed by the recommendation:</b>	There is a strong commitment and high interest in Cambodia in continuing and expanding on the interventions implemented at the project site. However, depending on when the next phase will be approved and actually start, there is a high risk that the momentum built over the past year and the active involvement of the local communities may wax. There is also a need for more time, skills and technology that can only be procured with additional funding. This would also help diversify the source of funding for these activities and possibly attract new donors for subsequent phases.
<b>Priority Level:</b>	Important
<b>Type of Recommendation</b>	Project
<b>Responsibility:</b>	UNEP ROAP and UNEP IEMP teams
<b>Proposed implementation time-frame:</b>	July 2023

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

- Section V. H

<b>Recommendation #3:</b>	For increased local communities' ownership and future sustainability of interventions, the nexus between ecosystem management and livelihoods needs to be strengthened, and market assurance is needed. Local communities should be consulted and involved from the project development stage, rather than towards the end of the project.
<b>Challenge/problem to be addressed by the recommendation:</b>	True buy-in by local communities at pilot sites was only achieved when it was clear that the project interventions would enhance their livelihoods. For change to not only be initiated but actually sustained and integrated, people need to see how it will benefit them not only in the long term, but also immediately, in their daily lives. Bringing in private sector and guaranteeing beneficiaries that their new produce would be bought has been key.
<b>Priority Level:</b>	Important
<b>Type of Recommendation</b>	Project
<b>Responsibility:</b>	UNEP ROAP and UNEP IEMP teams
<b>Proposed implementation time-frame:</b>	July 2023 – December 2024 (next phase development phase)

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

- Section V. D and I

<b>Recommendation #4:</b>	Gender needs to be addressed in a more comprehensive manner, showing how project interventions affect men and women differently, and not be limited to the number of women participating in project activities.
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<b>Challenge/problem to be addressed by the recommendation:</b>	The gender aspect of the project was very weak, only focused on the participation of women in activities (numbers). A stronger analysis could have provided better and more interesting information on how project interventions, particularly at the pilot sites, may have affected men and women differently depending on their respective traditional roles in their communities.
<b>Priority Level:</b>	Low
<b>Type of Recommendation</b>	Project
<b>Responsibility:</b>	UNEP Gender Focal Point
<b>Proposed implementation time-frame:</b>	Continuous

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

- Section V. I

**ANNEX 1. RESPONSE TO STAKEHOLDER COMMENTS**

**Table 5: Response to stakeholder comments received but not (fully) accepted by the reviewers, where appropriate**

Page Ref	Stakeholder comment	Reviewer Response
	Xxx	Xxx

## ANNEX II. PEOPLE CONSULTED DURING THE REVIEW

**Table 6: People consulted during the Review**

Organisation	Name	Position	Gender
UNEP ROAP	Makiko Yashiro	Sub-programme Manager Ecosystem Management	F
UNEP ROAP	Marie-Yon Struecker	Project Consultant Lancang-Mekong	F
UNEP ROAP	Nannapas Sukwattananipaat	Programme Management Assistant	F
UNEP ROAP	Mohamed Elharati	Fund Officer	M
UNEP-IEMP	Linxiu Zhang	Director of UNEP-IEMP (PSC member)	F
UNEP-IEMP	Guoqin Wang	Programme Manager	F
UNEP-IEMP	Tatirose Vijitpan	Focal Point, Greater Mekong Sub-region Portfolio	F
LMEC	Yujuan Wang	Senior Specialist	F
LMEC	Zhuqing Wen	Project Manager	F
Consultant for UNEP BPLU (former TEU)	Ed Barrow	Consultant for Action learning	M
UNEP BPLU (former TEU)	Melissa De Kock	Head of Biodiversity, People and Landscapes Unit	F
Ministry of Environment, Cambodia	Monyrak Meng	Deputy Secretary General, GSSD	M
Ministry of Environment, Cambodia	Chhin Sophea	Head Office, DBD	M

## ANNEX III. KEY DOCUMENTS CONSULTED

### Project planning and reporting documents

- Project Document and budget
- Project budget revision – 15.07.2021
- Result-Based Budget LMEC
- Implementation Plan LMEC
- Project Cooperation Agreement UNEP LMEC Signed
- Approved agreement amendment LMEC Signed
- Project Cooperation Agreement UNEP CAS Signed
- Funds Transfer Remittance Advice CAS June 2022
- Funds Transfer Remittance Advice LMEC December 2022
- Financial Status of the Project – 27 January 2023
- Interim-Expenditure Report CAS – March 2023
- Interim Expenditure Report LMEC -October 2022
- Minutes 1<sup>st</sup> PSC meeting
- Minutes 2<sup>nd</sup> PSC meeting
- ToR for PSC
- List of Partners PSC meeting
- Gender – memo and PRC Report
- Gender comments – ecosystem assessment
- Scenario analysis – June 2022
- Project overview – 14 September 2022
- Report for capacity building in China
- Draft Compilation of good practices and tools for transboundary landscape management in the LM region
- Draft Compilation of good practices on ecosystem management and livelihoods in the Lancang Mekong Region
- Status of knowledge products
- Report on activities at pilot sites Cambodia
- Progress Report China Lancang-Mekong - March-October 2022
- China Fund project on IEM in Mekong region - PIMS report Dec 2022
- Operational Completion Report – IEM in Mekong Region

### Project outputs – Overall

- Outputs + outcomes closure workshop – 15 Dec 2022 UNEP-IEMP
- Project components UNEP - 14.12.22
- Report of the closure workshop

### Project output 1:

- Ecosystem Assessment in the Lancang-Mekong Basin for Sustainable Agriculture
- Phnom Kulen knowledge product
- Local traditional practices knowledge product
- Compilation of good practices and tools for transboundary landscape management in the LM region
- Compilation of financial mechanisms for integrated ecosystem management in the Lancang-Mekong
- Practice Cases for Construction of Environmental Friendly Rubber Plantations
- Enhance Community Awareness and Level of Environmental Friendly Ecological Rubber Plantation
- Development and environmental impact of rubber forest in Lancang-Mekong region
- Benefits of Environment-friendly Rubber plantation study

**Project output 2:**

- Summary report for capacity buildings and namelist of 394 participants
- Cooperation Agreement Cambodia
- Agreement 1 China
- Agreement 2 China
- Cambodia Trip Report & Workshop - October 2022
- National Awareness Raising – 23 June 2022
- National Consultation Report – 13 June 2022
- Report for Senior-level Dialogue on Integrated Ecosystem Management in the Lancang-Mekong Region with 96 participants
- Outcomes - presentation
- Agenda for Integrated Ecosystem Management in the Lancang-Mekong Region

**Project outputs 3:**

- Report of national consultations in China with 52 participants
- 1st Project Committee Meeting - Jan 2022
- First meeting with Cambodia after project approval - Sep 2021
- Meeting Report Consultation workshop for the China TF project – 25 April 2018
- Summary of meeting Ministry of Environment Cambodia - 21 March 2018
- Training material at pilot sites
- Report of different trainings at pilot sites in Xishuangbanna with a total of 562 participants
- Interventions for environmental Friendly Rubber Plantations at China pilot sites
- Training report on honey beekeeping – 17 November 2022



- Report on Bamboo Training in PKNP on 22-24 August 2022
- Training course report on black ginger under cashew plantation
- Training course report on organic vegetable
- Training course report on free range chicken
- MEL Methodology Report - 5-12-22
- China MEL Report - 18-12-22
- Cambodia MEL Report
- Action Learning Process report and Guidelines
- UNEP Concept CTF2 extension Lancang Mekong Region
- Mail Support from government Cambodia
- Concept for GEF-8 Vietnam

**Communication/knowledge products:**

- Pitch for webstory
- Project flyer
- Study on Benefit of Environmental friendly Rubber Plantation
- Practice Cases for Construction of Environmental Friendly Rubber Plantations
- Enhance Community Awareness and Level of Environmental Friendly Ecological Rubber Plantation
- List of relevant partners that received KPs
- Summary of communication materials and audience reached
- Project Overview UNEP - 23.11.22
- Lancang-Mekong roundtable dialogue - 21.04.22
- 2nd session ASEAN China Environmental Cooperation Forum - 14.09.22
- Clicks Weibo
- Clicks WeChat
- Clicks on UNEP-IEMP website

## ANNEX IV. PROJECT BUDGET AND EXPENDITURES

**Table 4: Expenditure by Outcome/Output\***

<b>Component/sub-component/output</b> <b>All figures as USD</b>	<b>Estimated cost at design</b>	<b>Actual Cost/ expenditure</b>
Component 1 / Output 1	160,000	158,377
Component 2 / Output 2	181,000	172,576
Component 3 / Output 3	473,956	458,555

\* The above expenditure by output does not account for expenditures for the final closure workshop and Terminal Review

## ANNEX V. BRIEF CV OF THE REVIEWER

### Dania Marzouki

<b>Profession</b>	Results Based Management Expert
<b>Nationality</b>	German and Tunisian
<b>Country experience</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Africa: Lebanon, Senegal, Tunisia</li><li>• Americas: USA (covering Arab Region)</li><li>• Asia: Cambodia, India, Myanmar</li><li>• Europe: Austria, Belgium, France</li></ul>
<b>Education</b>	Diplôme d'Etudes Supérieures Spécialisées en Administration internationale, Université Paris 1, Panthéon – Sorbonne, France Maîtrise de Droit Public, Relations Internationales et Droit Européen, mention assez bien (with honors), Université de Poitiers, France

### Short biography

Dania Marzouki has 20 years of work experience, including 18 years working on Monitoring & Evaluation and Results Based Management (RBM), mainly in the Asia Pacific Region as well as in the Arab Region. After 16 years working as staff on RBM issues in the United Nations System, she now works as an independent consultant. She holds a Masters Degree in International Administration/International Law.

Key specialties and capabilities cover:

- Results Based Programme & Project development, management and monitoring & evaluation
- Corporate HQ/Regional/Country Office planning, performance monitoring & reporting management
- Financial management: Programme & Project budgeting, Financial planning & management
- Corporate guidelines development input, interpretation, simplification and implementation
- Common Country Programming Processes management & UN Reform
- Knowledge building and training/mentoring
- Networking and partnership development

## ANNEX VI. REVIEW TORS (WITHOUT ANNEXES)

### TERMS OF REFERENCE

#### Terminal Review of the UNEP project

#### *“Improving Ecosystem Management for Sustainable Livelihoods within the Framework of Lancang-Mekong Cooperation ”*

#### Section 1: PROJECT BACKGROUND AND OVERVIEW

##### 1. Project General Information

**Table 1. Project summary**

<b>UNEP PIMS ID:</b>	311.3		
<b>Implementing Partners:</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• UNEP-IEMP, 2) Lancang-Mekong Environmental Cooperation Center (LMEC)</li> </ul>		
<b>SDG(s) and indicator(s)</b>	<p>The project and the ecosystem approach it promotes can significantly contribute towards the fulfilment of the following SDGs: 1.b, 2.4, 5.5, 6.3, 6.5, 6.6, 11.6, 11.a, 12.4, 12.5, 13.2, 15.1, 16.7 (with strong focus on SDG 15.1) Relevant SDG indicators: 15.1.1 and 15.1.2</p>		
<b>Sub-programme:</b>	<b>Nature Action</b>	<b>Expected Accomplishment(s):</b>	PoW 2020-2021, HPE Subprogramme EA (a) PoW 2022-2023, Living in Harmony with Nature Subprogramme Outcome 2A and 2B
<b>UNEP approval date:</b>	<b>19 July 201</b>	<b>Programme of Work Output(s):</b>	
<b>Expected start date:</b>	01 June 2021	<b>Actual start date:</b>	19 July 2021
<b>Planned operational completion date:</b>	31 Dec 2022	<b>Actual operational completion date:</b>	31 Dec 2022
<b>Planned total project budget at approval (show breakdown of individual sources/grants):</b>		<b>Actual total expenditures reported as of [date]:</b>	
<b>Expected co-financing:</b>		<b>Secured co-financing<sup>6</sup>:</b>	
<b>First disbursement:</b>		<b>Planned date of financial closure:</b>	
<b>No. of project revisions:</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>Date of last approved project revision:</b>	
<b>No. of Steering Committee meetings:</b>		<b>Date of last/next Steering Committee meeting:</b>	
<b>Mid-term Review/ Evaluation<sup>7</sup> (planned date):</b>	<b>No MTR</b>	<b>Mid-term Review/ Evaluation (actual date):</b>	
<b>Terminal Review (planned date):</b>	<b>10/2022</b>	<b>Terminal Review (actual date):</b>	<b>01/2023</b>
<b>Coverage - Country(ies):</b>		<b>Coverage - Region(s):</b>	

<sup>6</sup> State whether co-financing amounts are cash or in-kind.

<sup>7</sup> UNEP policies require projects with planned implementation periods of 4 or more years to have a mid-point assessment of performance. For projects under 4 years, this should be marked as N/A.

<b>Dates of previous project phases:</b>		<b>Status of future project phases:</b>	
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## 2. Project Rationale

The Lancang-Mekong River Basin encompasses six countries: Cambodia, China, Lao PDR, Myanmar, Thailand and Viet Nam. With the Lancang-Mekong River Basin national economies highly reliant on goods and services provided by forest, agricultural, freshwater, coastal and marine ecosystems, taking urgent action to manage natural resources/capital, build resilience and adapt to climate change has become socio-economically compelling. Creating landscapes with healthy, functioning ecosystems is not only key to making progress towards the environmental targets embedded in the Sustainable Development Goals, but also to addressing multiple social and economic targets that depend partly or wholly on the benefits that ecosystems provide to people. Although there is a substantial existing body of evidence on the value of natural capital in Southeast Asia, a key challenge is to provide information and tools in a manner that can guide the different stakeholders, private and public sector decision making towards increased investments in sustainable ecosystem management, while improving resource-use efficiency and mitigating negative impacts on fragile ecosystems.

Funded by the China-UNEP Trust Fund, the ***“Improving Ecosystem Management for Sustainable Livelihoods within the Framework of Lancang-Mekong Cooperation”*** project was initiated in 2021. The project aims to enhance the adoption of an integrated ecosystem management approach in the Lancang-Mekong region by facilitating cooperation among countries, and across sectors, with ecosystem management for sustainable livelihood demonstrated through pilot activities at selected areas in Cambodia and China.

### **Objectives**

The project aims at increasing awareness, institutional, technical, and financial capacity of countries in the Lancang-Mekong region to adopt an integrated ecosystem management approach, with demonstrated ecosystem management for sustainable livelihood through pilot activities at selected transboundary areas.

### **Project components**

1. Assessment and knowledge generation on integrated ecosystem management in the Lancang-Mekong Region.
2. Capacity development for integrated ecosystem management in the Lancang-Mekong countries; and
3. Integrated ecosystem management pilots in Cambodia and China.

These project interventions will contribute towards promoting integrated, and cross-sectoral collaborative approach in the management of key ecosystems and landscapes in the Lancang-Mekong region. The environmental impact that the project will work towards is “Health and productivity of key ecosystems in the Lancang-Mekong region enhanced and increasingly contribute to supporting the livelihoods of people who depend on ecosystems and ecosystem services in the Lancang-Mekong region improved”. The Regional Office for Asia and the Pacific (ROAP) is in charge of overall project management as well as knowledge dissemination and the development of targeted proposals to mobilize additional resources for future initiatives in liaison with donors. In addition to ROAP, UNEP International Ecosystem Management Partnership (UNEP-IEMP), Lancang-Mekong Environmental Cooperation Centre (LMEC), as well as the Terrestrial Ecosystems Unit of UNEP Ecosystems Division will lead the implementation of specific project activities as outlined in this project document.

The project is expected to contribute significantly to the Healthy and Productive Ecosystems Subprogramme's Expected Accomplishments, in particular, EA(a) through mainstreaming and institutionalizing integrated ecosystem management approaches at the national and regional levels. It also contributes towards the EA particularly through its strong focus on providing opportunities for the public and private sectors to pilot test integrated ecosystem management approaches in the management of key ecosystems in the Lancang-Mekong Region. UNEP is well-positioned to implement the project due to its extensive networks with the public and private sector actors in the region, as well as its strong convening power to facilitate knowledge exchange and dialogues at the regional level to promote collaborative approaches towards ecosystem management.

## Partners

Under this project, interventions are implemented by the [UN Environment Programme Regional Office for Asia and the Pacific](#) in partnership with [UNEP International Ecosystem Management Partnership](#), the [Lancang-Mekong Environmental Cooperation Centre](#), and the [Biodiversity, People and Landscapes Unit of UNEP Ecosystems Division](#).

### 3. Project Results Framework

The Theory of Change for the project, presented in Figure 2 below provides a comprehensive framework to guide the implementation of activities under the project, while ensuring that those activities and deliverable contribute towards the following ultimate **impact: "Health and productivity of key ecosystems in the Lancang-Mekong region enhanced and increasingly contribute to supporting the livelihoods of people who depend on ecosystems and ecosystem services in the Lancang-Mekong region improved"**.

The contribution towards achieving this ultimate impact will be ensured through addressing the core problem identified in the problem analysis, which indicates that, government, private sector and other stakeholders in the Lancang-Mekong region manage ecosystems and landscapes without fully taking into account interconnectedness, impacts and dependencies of their operations on ecosystems and ecosystem services. The project interventions are designed to address this core problem, by focusing on enhancing the relevant stakeholders' knowledge on ecosystem health and best practices on ecosystem management in the region, promoting cross-sectoral and transboundary cooperation on ecosystem management, and providing practical experience in applying integrated ecosystem management tools and approaches in the selected countries in the region and facilitating regional level knowledge sharing and dialogues.

These initial efforts made under the project are expected to then contribute towards **the intermediate state, which states, "Integrated, and cross-sectoral collaborative approach mainstreamed, applied and scaled-up in the management of key ecosystems and landscapes in the Lancang-Mekong region"**.

The Theory of Change indicates the drivers and assumptions that have been identified as essential to the achievement of the project outcome, intermediate state and an ultimate impact.

**Key drivers** identified are:

1) High-level political will for transboundary collaboration and an integrated ecosystem management approach among countries in the Lancang-Mekong region, which is clear from the priorities identified under the Five-year Plan of Action on Lancang-Mekong Cooperation

(2018-2022) that prioritizes ecosystem management as one of the key areas of focus; 2) Increased momentum for an integrated ecosystem management and Nature-based Solutions in the global processes, as highlighted in the ongoing process for the development of the Post-2020 Global Biodiversity Framework under the Convention on Biological Diversity, as well as the deliberations and decisions made by the United Nations United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change where the importance of Nature-based Solutions has been prominently highlighted; 3) Increased considerations of sustainability in policy and investment decisions by the Governments and other stakeholders from key economic sectors, such as agriculture, tourism and infrastructure development; and 4) Integrated awareness of interconnectedness and dependencies of key economic sectors on ecosystems and ecosystem services.

There are three **key assumptions** that are expected to contribute to the realization of the project outcome, intermediate state and ultimate impact, which include the following: 1) An integrated ecosystem management and Nature-based Solutions continue to be high on the international agenda with continued commitment by regional and national actors in the Lancang-Mekong region; 2) An integrated ecosystem management and Nature-based Solutions are recognized as key tools for achieving international development goals such as SDGs; and 3) Participating countries in the region are willing to invest in integrated ecosystem management tools and approaches. Although these assumptions are out of the project's control, they are all important factors for the successful achievement of project outcome and ultimate impact.

Achieving ultimate, long-term impact of enhancing health and productivity of key ecosystems in the Lancang-Mekong region, leading to the improved livelihoods of people who depend on ecosystems and ecosystem services requires a scaled-up efforts in applying cross-sectoral, integrated ecosystem management approaches. The project intervention, as outlined in the Theory of Change represents an opportunity to initiate these efforts, by raising awareness, enhancing knowledge and capacity of countries in the region in applying integrated ecosystem management approaches, and demonstration of their effectiveness in supporting and improving people's livelihoods, with opportunities to facilitate knowledge sharing among the countries in the region.

The project contributes significantly to promoting the South-South Cooperation, particularly with its strong focus on the dissemination of knowledge and information generated through the project across countries in the Lancang-Mekong region, as well as through supporting high-level dialogues, which provide opportunity for the countries in the region to share their knowledge and experiences, and identify areas for future cooperation.

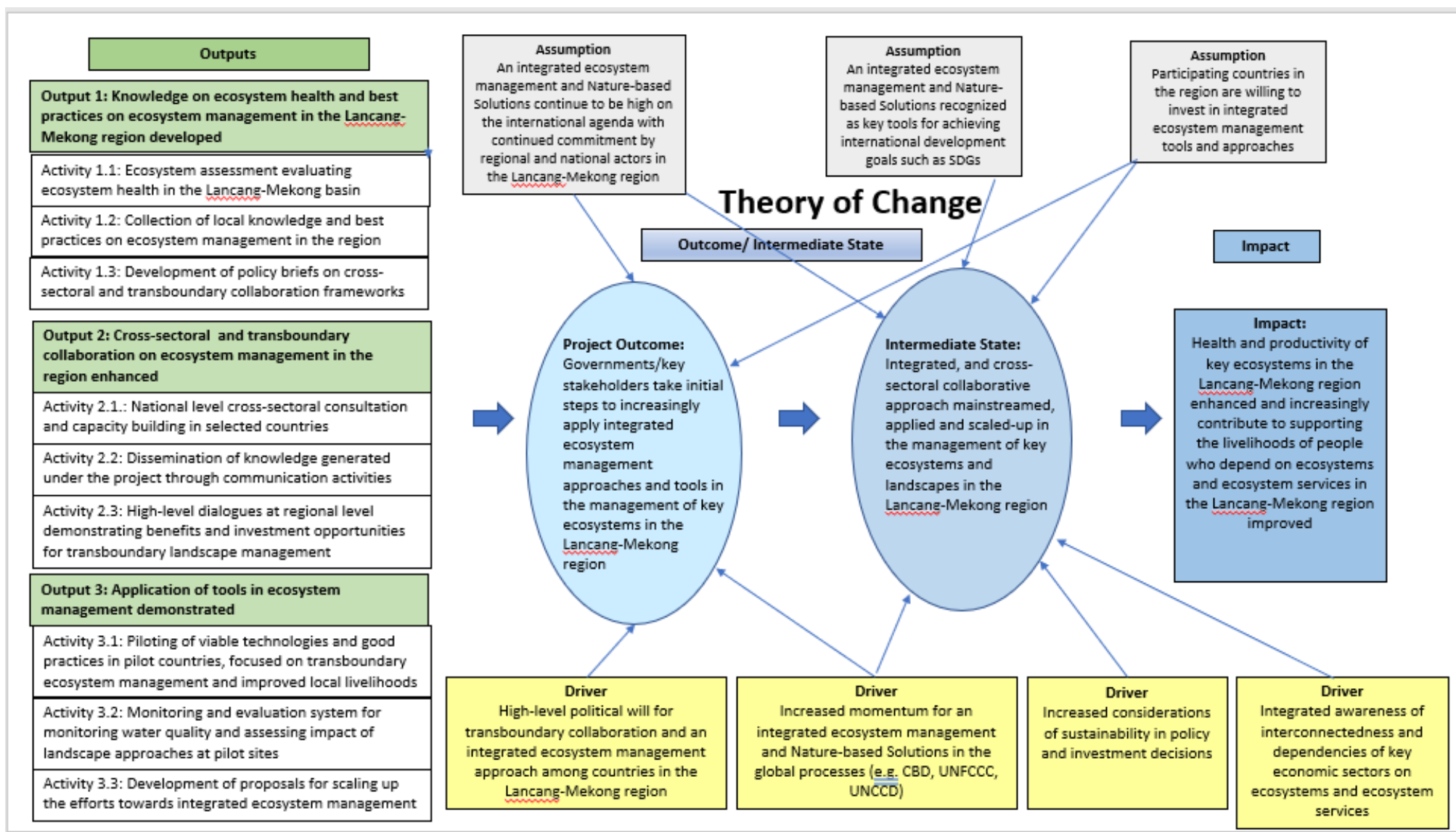
These project interventions and specific outputs are expected to contribute towards immediate **project outcome**, which states that, "**Governments/key stakeholders take initial steps to increasingly apply integrated ecosystem management approaches and tools in the management of key ecosystems in the Lancang-Mekong region**". These initial steps can be evidenced in agreements reached by stakeholders on the application of specific integrated ecosystem management approaches and tools in additional project sites, based on the pilots demonstrated through the project and the knowledge shared. Opportunities will be provided also for the experiences and lessons learned from pilot activities to be shared with other countries in the Lancang-Mekong region, and a new project proposal will be developed to support the further scaling up efforts after the completion of the project.

The results and resource framework outlines the linkages to the UNEP Strategic Plan, POW and lists the outcome and output **indicators** defined for the Ecosystems project, including **baselines and targets**.

- The project's results resource framework can be found in **Annex 5 1**



Figure 5: Theory of Change



## 4. Management Arrangements

### Project Team

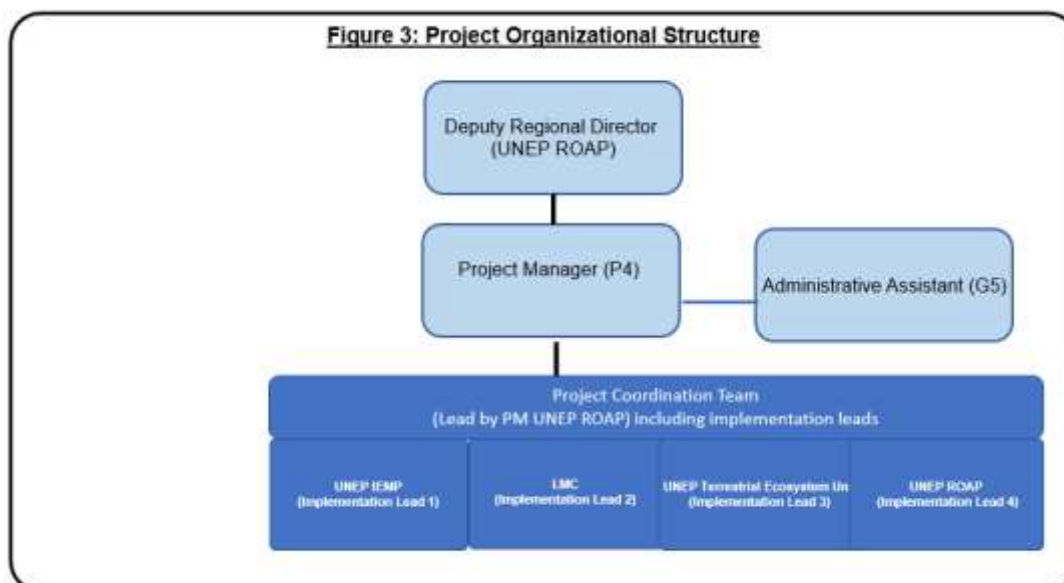
A dedicated Project Team within the UNEP Regional Office for Asia and the Pacific (ROAP) is accountable to the day to day management of the project and the delivery of the approved project document. The Project Team at ROAP consists of the Project Manager (P4), Administrative Assistant (G5) and technical consultants.

The role of the **Project Manager (P4)** as the Directly Responsible Individual (DRI) is to provide effective operational oversight and management of the project and ensure constant monitoring and analysis of the operating environment, timely readjustment of the operations, proactively highlighting issues to the DRD and Senior Management and provide advice and risk assessments and mitigation efforts. The Project Manager is responsible for ensuring the timely implementation and delivery of the project

The Project Manager supervises the Administrative Assistant and liaises with the Finance Management Officer as well as the Focal Area Leads on the project deliverables and operations of the project.

The **Administrative Assistant (G5)** is responsible for all financial, administrative and human resources coordination of the project, under the leadership of the Project Manager. The Administrative Assistant assists with preparation and day-to-day administration of legal instruments; reviews relevant documents including budgets for completeness and compliance with relevant rules and procedures; drafts correspondence and disseminates information to partners; manages logistics and procurement related to meetings and travel; supports budget revisions; and provides general office assistance. The Administrative Assistance is supported by the Finance and Admin Unit of AP office on Finance, Admin and HR matters.

**Figure 6: Organizational Structure**



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- A detailed description of the management and governance arrangements, including partners, can be found in **Annex 2**.



## 5. Project Cost and Financing

Output	Activities	Budget USD	Year 1 (2021)	Year2 (2022)	Lead Office	Support office
<b>Output 1</b>  <b>TOTAL Budget USD 160,000</b>	1.1 Ecosystem assessment conducted in both the upper and lower parts of the Lancang-Mekong basin evaluating threats to ecosystem health in the region, highlighting dependencies of priority economic sectors on key ecosystem services, as well as ecosystem service-dependent livelihoods, especially for transboundary biodiversity corridors	70,000	49,900	20,100	UNEP-IEMP	ROAP TEU
	1.2 Collection of local knowledge and good practices in the region on ecosystem management, ecosystem-based sustainable livelihoods, transboundary management, per different vulnerable ecosystems and compilation of toolkits for transboundary landscape areas management, highlighting the potential for public and private sector's investments in integrated ecosystem management	55,000	39,400	15,600	UNEP-IEMP	ROAP
	1.3 Development of policy briefs on cross-sectoral and transboundary collaboration frameworks	35,000	14,500	20,500	LMEC	ROAP TEU
<b>Output 2</b>  <b>Total budget: USD 181,000</b>	2.1 National level cross-sectoral consultations and capacity building for local stakeholders on integrated ecosystem management	37,500	21,500	16,000	UNEP-IEMP (for Cambodia)	ROAP TEU
		37,500	17,200	20,300	LMEC (for China)	
		65,000	32,500	32,500	ROAP	

	2. 2 Dissemination of knowledge generated under the project through different communication channels at local, national and regional levels with strong media engagement	11,000	0	11,000	UNEP-IEMP	UNEP-IEMP TEU
	2.3 High-level dialogues at regional level demonstrating the multiple benefits and investment opportunities for transboundary landscape management/integrated ecosystem management	30,000	0	30,000	LMEC	ROAP TEU LMEC
<b>Output 3</b> <b>Total budget:</b> <b>USD 473,956</b>	3.1 National consultation and identification of intervention sites in pilot countries	8,500	8,500	0	UNEP-IEMP	UNEP-IEMP LMEC
		8,500	750	7,750	LMEC	
	3.2 Piloting of viable technologies and good practices at 2 sites in Cambodia and China, focusing on transboundary ecosystem management and local livelihoods improvement	165,000	102,500	62,500	UNEP-IEMP (for Cambodia)	UNEP-IEMP LMEC ROAP TEU
		160,000	86,250	73,750	LMEC (for China)	
	3.3 Monitoring and evaluation system for monitoring and assessing impact of landscape approaches	82,000	47,000	35,000	TEU	ROAP UNEP-IEMP
3.4 Support to the development of selected proposals to mobilize additional funding from donors, such as GEF to implement future initiatives to scale up the efforts towards integrated	49,956	25,000	24,956	ROAP	TEU UNEP-IEMP	
<b>Closure workshop</b>	Closure workshop	25,000	0	25,000	LMEC	UNEP-IEMP
	Project evaluation 4.5%	45,000	0	45,000	ROAP	UNEP-IEMP LMEC TEU
	Project Support Cost	115,044	57,850	57,194		

	<b>TOTAL BUDGET</b>	<b>1,000,000</b>	<b>502,850</b>	<b>497,150</b>		
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## 6. Implementation Issues

The project faced challenges in implementing activities, due to the following reasons:

- Operational challenges due to Covid-19: Due to operational challenges imposed by the Covid-19 pandemic, some of the activities have been delayed, particularly the finalization of work plans for pilot sites and consultations activities. Most of the meetings have been held virtually, and the project activities relied a lot on the support from local experts and consultants. Due to these restrictions, there has been limited opportunity for project partners and experts to visit pilot sites and have face-to-face interaction with national partners.
- Delays in signing cooperation agreement with a national partner: Delays were experienced in the finalization of the agreement between UNEP-IEMP and the Government of Cambodia due to internal procedures and requirements within the Government of Cambodia. These delays have affected the timelines for implementing activities at the national level. However, the project team has developed a scenario analysis highlighting risk mitigation measures taken under the project, and has closely monitor the progress, which enable the project to deliver activities within the originally agreed duration of the project.

### **Section 2. OBJECTIVE AND SCOPE OF THE REVIEW**

#### Objective of the Review

- In line with the UNEP Evaluation Policy<sup>8</sup> and the UNEP Programme Manual<sup>9</sup>, the Terminal Review (TR) is undertaken at operational completion of the project to assess project performance (in terms of relevance, effectiveness and efficiency), and determine outcomes and impacts (actual and potential) stemming from the project, including their sustainability. The Review has two primary purposes: (i) to provide evidence of results to meet accountability requirements, and (ii) to promote operational improvement, learning and knowledge sharing through results and lessons learned among UNEP and main project partners. Therefore, the Review will identify lessons of operational relevance for future project formulation and implementation, especially for future phases of the project, where applicable.

#### Key Review principles

<sup>8</sup> <https://www.unenvironment.org/about-un-environment/evaluation-office/policies-and-strategies>

<sup>9</sup> <https://wecollaborate.unep.org>

- Review findings and judgements will be based on sound evidence and analysis, clearly documented in the Review Report. Information will be triangulated (i.e. verified from different sources) as far as possible, and when verification is not possible, the single source will be mentioned (whilst anonymity is still protected). Analysis leading to evaluative judgements should always be clearly spelled out.
- **The “Why?” Question.** As this is a Terminal Review and similar interventions are envisaged for the future, particular attention will be given to learning from the experience. Therefore, the “why?” question should be at the front of the consultant(s)’ minds all through the review exercise and is supported by the use of a theory of change approach. This means that the consultant(s) need to go beyond the assessment of “what” the project performance was and make a serious effort to provide a deeper understanding of “why” the performance was as it was (i.e. what contributed to the achievement of the project’s results). This should provide the basis for the lessons that can be drawn from the project.
- **Attribution, Contribution and Credible Association:** In order to attribute any outcomes and impacts to a project intervention, one needs to consider the difference between what has happened with, and what would have happened without, the project (i.e. take account of changes over time and between contexts in order to isolate the effects of an intervention). This requires appropriate baseline data and the identification of a relevant counterfactual, both of which are frequently not available for reviews. Establishing the contribution made by a project in a complex change process relies heavily on prior intentionality (e.g. approved project design documentation, logical framework) and the articulation of causality (e.g. narrative and/or illustration of the Theory of Change). Robust evidence that a project was delivered as designed and that the expected causal pathways developed supports claims of contribution and this is strengthened where an alternative theory of change can be excluded. A credible association between the implementation of a project and observed positive effects can be made where a strong causal narrative, although not explicitly articulated, can be inferred by the chronological sequence of events, active involvement of key actors and engagement in critical processes.
- **Communicating Review Results.** A key aim of the Review is to encourage reflection and learning by UNEP staff and key project stakeholders. The consultant should consider how reflection and learning can be promoted, both through the review process and in the communication of review findings and key lessons. Clear and concise writing is required on all review deliverables. Draft and final versions of the main review report will be shared with key stakeholders by the SP Coordinator. There may, however, be several intended audiences, each with different interests and needs regarding the report. The consultant will plan with the SP Coordinator which audiences to target and the easiest and clearest way to communicate the key review findings and lessons to them. This may include some or all of the following; a webinar, conference calls with relevant stakeholders, the preparation of a review brief or interactive presentation.





## Key Strategic Questions

In addition to the review criteria outlined in Section 10 below, the Review will address the **strategic questions**<sup>10</sup> listed below (no more than 3 questions are recommended). These are questions of interest to UNEP and to which the project is believed to be able to make a substantive contribution:

### (a) Strategic questions

- (i) How well has the project utilised local and national capacity in demonstrating effective approaches for integrated ecosystem management approaches at pilot sites in Cambodia and China, and how effectively have the lessons learned under the project been summarized to be shared with other countries in the Lancang Mekong countries?
  - (ii) How well has the project been able to showcase the successful application of integrated ecosystem management approaches adopted under the project to inform future actions of other countries in the Lancang Mekong region?
- (b) COVID impact: What changes were made to adapt to the effects of COVID-19 and how did COVID-19 impact the project?

## Review Criteria

- All review criteria will be rated on a six-point scale. Sections A-I below, outline the scope of the review criteria. The set of review criteria are grouped in nine categories: (A) Strategic Relevance; (B) Quality of Project Design; (C) Nature of External Context; (D) Effectiveness, which comprises assessments of the availability of outputs, achievement of outcomes and likelihood of impact; (E) Financial Management; (F) Efficiency; (G) Monitoring and Reporting; (H) Sustainability; and (I) Factors Affecting Project Performance.
- Annex 1 of these Terms of Reference provides a table with a list of various tools, templates and guidelines that can help Review Consultant(s) to follow a thorough review process that meets all of UNEP's needs.

### **A. Strategic Relevance**

- The Review will assess the extent to which the activity is suited to the priorities and policies of the donors, implementing regions/countries and the target beneficiaries. The Review will include an assessment of the project's relevance in relation to UNEP's mandate and its alignment with UNEP's policies and strategies at the time of project approval. Under strategic relevance an assessment of the complementarity of the project

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<sup>10</sup> The strategic questions should not duplicate questions that will be addressed under the standard review criteria described in section 10.

with other interventions addressing the needs of the same target groups will be made. This criterion comprises four elements:

- i. ***Alignment to the UNEP's Medium-Term Strategy<sup>11</sup> (MTS), Programme of Work (POW) and Strategic Priorities***
  - The Review should assess the project's alignment with the MTS and POW under which the project was approved and include, in its narrative, reflections on the scale and scope of any contributions made to the planned results reflected in the relevant MTS and POW. UNEP strategic priorities include the Bali Strategic Plan for Technology Support and Capacity Building<sup>12</sup> (BSP) and South-South Cooperation (S-SC). The BSP relates to the capacity of governments to: comply with international agreements and obligations at the national level; promote, facilitate and finance environmentally sound technologies and to strengthen frameworks for developing coherent international environmental policies. S-SC is regarded as the exchange of resources, technology and knowledge between developing countries.
- ii. ***Alignment to Donor/Partner Strategic Priorities***
  - Donor strategic priorities will vary across interventions. The Review will assess the extent to which the project is suited to, or responding to, donor priorities. In some cases, alignment with donor priorities may be a fundamental part of project design and grant approval processes while in others, for example, instances of 'softly-earmarked' funding, such alignment may be more of an assumption that should be assessed.
- iii. ***Relevance to Global, Regional, Sub-regional and National Environmental Priorities***
  - The Review will assess the alignment of the project with global priorities such as the SDGs and Agenda 2030. The extent to which the intervention is suited, or responding to, the stated environmental concerns and needs of the countries, sub-regions or regions where it is being implemented will also be considered. Examples may include: UN Development Assistance Frameworks (UNDAF) or, national or sub-national development plans, poverty reduction strategies or Nationally Appropriate Mitigation Action (NAMA) plans or regional agreements etc. Within this section consideration will be given to whether the needs of all beneficiary groups are being met and reflects the current policy priority to leave no-one behind.
- iv. ***Complementarity with Relevant Existing Interventions/Coherence<sup>13</sup>***

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<sup>11</sup> UNEP's Medium Term Strategy (MTS) is a document that guides UNEP's programme planning over a four-year period. It identifies UNEP's thematic priorities, known as Sub-programmes (SP), and sets out the desired outcomes, known as Expected Accomplishments (EAs), of the Sub-programmes. <https://www.unenvironment.org/about-un-environment/evaluation-office/our-evaluation-approach/un-environment-documents>

<sup>12</sup> <http://www.unep.fr/ozonaction/about/bsp.htm>

<sup>13</sup> This sub-category is consistent with the new criterion of 'Coherence' introduced by the OECD-DAC in 2019.

- An assessment will be made of how well the project, either at design stage or during the project inception or mobilization<sup>14</sup>, took account of ongoing and planned initiatives (under the same sub-programme, other UNEP sub-programmes, or being implemented by other agencies within the same country, sector or institution) that address similar needs of the same target groups. The Review will consider if the project team, in collaboration with Regional Offices and Sub-Programme Coordinators, made efforts to ensure their own intervention was complementary to other interventions, optimized any synergies and avoided duplication of effort. Examples may include work within UNDAFs or One UN programming. Linkages with other interventions should be described and instances where UNEP's comparative advantage has been particularly well applied should be highlighted.

*Factors affecting this criterion may include:*

- Stakeholders' participation and cooperation
- Responsiveness to human rights and gender equity
- Country ownership and driven-ness

### **B. Quality of Project Design**

- The quality of project design is assessed using an agreed template during the review inception phase. Ratings are attributed to identified criteria and an overall Project Design Quality rating is established. The complete Project Design Quality template should be annexed in the Review Inception Report. Later, the overall Project Design Quality rating<sup>15</sup> should be entered in the final review ratings table (as item B) in the Main Review Report and a summary of the project's strengths and weaknesses at design stage should be included within the body of the Main Review Report.

*Factors affecting this criterion may include (at the design stage):*

- Stakeholders participation and cooperation
- Responsiveness to human rights and gender equity

### **C. Nature of External Context**

- At review inception stage a rating is established for the project's external operating context (considering the prevalence of conflict, natural disasters and political upheaval<sup>16</sup>). This rating is entered in the final review ratings table as item C. Where a project has been rated as facing either an Unfavourable or Highly Unfavourable external operating context, and/or a negative external event has occurred during project implementation, the ratings for Effectiveness, Efficiency and/or Sustainability may be increased

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<sup>14</sup> A project's inception or mobilization period is understood as the time between project approval and first disbursement. Complementarity during project implementation is considered under Efficiency, see below.

<sup>15</sup> In some instances, based on data collected during the review process, the assessment of the project's design quality may change from Inception Report to Main Review Report.

<sup>16</sup> Note that 'political upheaval' does not include regular national election cycles, but unanticipated unrest or prolonged disruption. The potential delays or changes in political support that are often associated with the regular national election cycle should be part of the project's design and addressed through adaptive management of the project team. From March 2020 this should include the effects of COVID-19.

at the discretion of the Review Consultant and SP Coordinator together. A justification for such an increase must be given.

#### **D. Effectiveness**

##### **i. Availability of Outputs<sup>17</sup>**

- The Review will assess the project's success in producing the programmed outputs and making them available to the intended beneficiaries as well as its success in achieving milestones as per the project design document (ProDoc). Any formal modifications/revisions made during project implementation will be considered part of the project design. Where the project outputs are inappropriately or inaccurately stated in the ProDoc, reformulations may be necessary in the reconstruction of the Theory of Change (TOC). In such cases a table should be provided showing the original and the reformulation of the outputs for transparency. The availability of outputs will be assessed in terms of both quantity and quality, and the assessment will consider their ownership by, and usefulness to, intended beneficiaries and the timeliness of their provision. It is noted that emphasis is placed on the performance of those outputs that are most important to achieve outcomes. The Review will briefly explain the reasons behind the success or shortcomings of the project in delivering its programmed outputs and meeting expected quality standards.

*Factors affecting this criterion may include:*

- Preparation and readiness
- Quality of project management and supervision<sup>18</sup>

##### **ii. Achievement of Project Outcomes<sup>19</sup>**

- The achievement of project outcomes is assessed as performance against the outcomes as defined in the reconstructed<sup>20</sup> Theory of Change. These are outcomes that are intended to be achieved by the end of the project timeframe and within the project's resource envelope. Emphasis is placed on the achievement of project outcomes that are most important for attaining intermediate states. As with outputs, a table can be used to show where substantive amendments to the formulation of project outcomes is necessary to allow for an assessment of performance. The Review should report evidence of attribution between UNEP's intervention and the project

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<sup>17</sup> Outputs are the availability (for intended beneficiaries/users) of new products and services and/or gains in knowledge, abilities and awareness of individuals or within institutions (UNEP, 2019)

<sup>18</sup> In some cases 'project management and supervision' will refer to the supervision and guidance provided by UNEP to implementing partners and national governments while in others, specifically for GEF funded projects, it will refer to the project management performance of the executing agency and the technical backstopping provided by UNEP.

<sup>19</sup> Outcomes are the use (i.e. uptake, adoption, application) of an output by intended beneficiaries, observed as changes in institutions or behavior, attitude or condition (UNEP, 2019)

<sup>20</sup> UNEP staff are currently required to submit a Theory of Change with all submitted project designs. The level of 'reconstruction' needed during an review will depend on the quality of this initial TOC, the time that has lapsed between project design and implementation (which may be related to securing and disbursing funds) and the level of any changes made to the project design. In the case of projects pre-dating 2013 the intervention logic is often represented in a logical framework and a TOC will need to be constructed in the inception stage of the review.

outcomes. In cases of normative work or where several actors are collaborating to achieve common outcomes, evidence of the nature and magnitude of UNEP's 'substantive contribution' should be included and/or 'credible association' established between project efforts and the project outcomes realised.

*Factors affecting this criterion may include:*

- Quality of project management and supervision
- Stakeholders' participation and cooperation
- Responsiveness to human rights and gender equity
- Communication and public awareness

### **iii. Likelihood of Impact**

- Based on the articulation of long-lasting effects in the reconstructed TOC (i.e. from project outcomes, via intermediate states, to impact), the Review will assess the likelihood of the intended, positive impacts becoming a reality. Project objectives or goals should be incorporated in the TOC, possibly as intermediate states or long-lasting impacts. The Evaluation Office's approach to the use of TOC in project reviews is outlined in a guidance note and is supported by an excel-based flow chart, 'Likelihood of Impact Assessment Decision Tree'. Essentially the approach follows a 'likelihood tree' from project outcomes to impacts, taking account of whether the assumptions and drivers identified in the reconstructed TOC held. Any unintended positive effects should also be identified and their causal linkages to the intended impact described.
- The Review will also consider the likelihood that the intervention may lead, or contribute to, unintended negative effects (e.g. will vulnerable groups such as those living with disabilities and/or women and children, be disproportionately affected by the project?). Some of these potential negative effects may have been identified in the project design as risks or as part of the analysis of Environmental and Social Safeguards.
- The Review will consider the extent to which the project has played a catalytic role<sup>21</sup> or has promoted scaling up and/or replication as part of its Theory of Change (either explicitly as in a project with a demonstration component or implicitly as expressed in the drivers required to move to outcome levels) and as factors that are likely to contribute to greater or long-lasting impact.

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<sup>21</sup> The terms catalytic effect, scaling up and replication are inter-related and generally refer to extending the coverage or magnitude of the effects of a project. Catalytic effect is associated with triggering additional actions that are not directly funded by the project – these effects can be both concrete or less tangible, can be intentionally caused by the project or implied in the design and reflected in the TOC drivers, or can be unintentional and can rely on funding from another source or have no financial requirements. Scaling up and Replication require more intentionality for projects, or individual components and approaches, to be reproduced in other similar contexts. Scaling up suggests a substantive increase in the number of new beneficiaries reached/involved and may require adapted delivery mechanisms while Replication suggests the repetition of an approach or component at a similar scale but among different beneficiaries. Even with highly technical work, where scaling up or replication involves working with a new community, some consideration of the new context should take place and adjustments made as necessary.

- Ultimately UNEP and all its partners aim to bring about benefits to the environment and human well-being. Few projects are likely to have impact statements that reflect such long-lasting or broad-based changes. However, the Review will assess the likelihood of the project to make a substantive contribution to the long-lasting changes represented by the Sustainable Development Goals, and/or the intermediate-level results reflected in UNEP's Expected Accomplishments and the strategic priorities of funding partner(s).

*Factors affecting this criterion may include:*

- Quality of Project Management and Supervision (including adaptive management)
- Stakeholders participation and cooperation
- Responsiveness to human rights and gender equity
- Country ownership and driven-ness
- Communication and public awareness

#### **E. Financial Management**

- Financial management will be assessed under three themes: adherence to UNEP's financial policies and procedures, completeness of financial information and communication between financial and project management staff. The Review will establish the actual spend across the life of the project of funds secured from all donors. This expenditure will be reported, where possible, at output/component level and will be compared with the approved budget. The Review will verify the application of proper financial management standards and adherence to UNEP's financial management policies. Any financial management issues that have affected the timely delivery of the project or the quality of its performance will be highlighted. The Review will record where standard financial documentation is missing, inaccurate, incomplete or unavailable in a timely manner. The Review will assess the level of communication between the Project Manager and the Fund Management Officer as it relates to the effective delivery of the planned project and the needs of a responsive, adaptive management approach.

*Factors affecting this criterion may include:*

- Preparation and readiness
- Quality of project management and supervision

#### **F. Efficiency**

- Under the efficiency criterion, the Review will assess the extent to which the project delivered maximum results from the given resources. This will include an assessment of the cost-effectiveness and timeliness of project execution.
- Focusing on the translation of inputs into outputs, cost-effectiveness is the extent to which an intervention has achieved, or is expected to achieve, its results at the lowest possible cost. Timeliness refers to whether planned activities were delivered according to expected timeframes as well as whether events were sequenced efficiently. The Review will also assess to

what extent any project extension could have been avoided through stronger project management and identify any negative impacts caused by project delays or extensions. The Review will describe any cost or time-saving measures put in place to maximise results within the secured budget and agreed project timeframe and consider whether the project was implemented in the most efficient way compared to alternative interventions or approaches.

- The Review will give special attention to efforts made by the project teams during project implementation to make use of/build upon pre-existing institutions, agreements and partnerships, data sources, synergies and complementarities<sup>22</sup> with other initiatives, programmes and projects etc. to increase project efficiency.
- The factors underpinning the need for any project extensions will also be explored and discussed. Consultants should note that as management or project support costs cannot be increased in cases of 'no cost extensions', such extensions represent an increase in unstated costs to UNEP and implementing parties.

*Factors affecting this criterion may include:*

- Preparation and readiness (e.g. timeliness)
- Quality of project management and supervision
- Stakeholders participation and cooperation

### **G. Monitoring and Reporting**

- The Review will assess monitoring and reporting across three sub-categories: monitoring design and budgeting, monitoring implementation and project reporting.

#### **i. Monitoring Design and Budgeting**

- Each project should be supported by a sound monitoring plan that is designed to track progress against SMART<sup>23</sup> results towards the achievement of the project's outputs and outcomes, including at a level disaggregated by gender, marginalisation or vulnerability, including those living with disabilities. In particular, the Review will assess the relevance and appropriateness of the project indicators as well as the methods used for tracking progress against them as part of conscious results-based management. The Review will assess the quality of the design of the monitoring plan as well as the funds allocated for its implementation. The adequacy of resources for Mid-Term and Terminal Evaluation/Review should be discussed, where applicable.

#### **ii. Monitoring of Project Implementation**

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<sup>22</sup> Complementarity with other interventions during project design, inception or mobilization is considered under Strategic Relevance above.

<sup>23</sup> SMART refers to results that are specific, measurable, achievable, relevant and time-oriented. Indicators help to make results measurable.

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

### **iii. Project Reporting**

- UNEP has a centralised Project Information Management System (PIMS) in which project managers upload six-monthly progress reports against agreed project milestones. This information will be provided to the Review Consultant(s) by the SP Coordinator. Some projects have additional requirements to report regularly to funding partners, which will be supplied by the project team. The Review will assess the extent to which both UNEP and donor reporting commitments have been fulfilled. Consideration will be given as to whether reporting has been carried out with respect to the effects of the initiative on disaggregated groups.

*Factors affecting this criterion may include:*

- Quality of project management and supervision
- Responsiveness to human rights and gender equity (e.g. disaggregated indicators and data)

## **H. Sustainability**

- Sustainability<sup>24</sup> is understood as the probability of the benefits derived from the achievement of project outcomes being maintained and developed after the close of the intervention. The Review will identify and assess the key conditions or factors that are likely to undermine or contribute to the endurance of achieved project outcomes (i.e. 'assumptions' and 'drivers'). Some factors of sustainability may be embedded in the project design and implementation approaches while others may be contextual circumstances or conditions that evolve over the life of the intervention. Where applicable an assessment of bio-physical factors that may affect the sustainability of direct outcomes may also be included.

### **i. Socio-political Sustainability**

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<sup>24</sup> As used here, 'sustainability' means the long-term maintenance of outcomes and consequent impacts, whether environmental or not. This is distinct from the concept of sustainability in the terms 'environmental sustainability' or 'sustainable development', which imply 'not living beyond our means' or 'not diminishing global environmental benefits' (GEF STAP Paper, 2019, Achieving More Enduring Outcomes from GEF Investment)



- The Review will assess the extent to which social or political factors support the continuation and further development of the benefits derived from project outcomes. It will consider the level of ownership, interest and commitment among government and other stakeholders to take the project achievements forwards. In particular the Review will consider whether individual capacity development efforts are likely to be sustained.

## **ii. Financial Sustainability**

- Some project outcomes, once achieved, do not require further financial inputs, e.g. the adoption of a revised policy. However, in order to derive a benefit from this outcome further management action may still be needed e.g. to undertake actions to enforce the policy. Other project outcomes may be dependent on a continuous flow of action that needs to be resourced for them to be maintained, e.g. continuation of a new natural resource management approach. The Review will assess the extent to which project outcomes are dependent on future funding for the benefits they bring to be sustained. Secured future funding is only relevant to financial sustainability where the project outcomes have been extended into a future project phase. Even where future funding has been secured, the question still remains as to whether the project outcomes are financially sustainable.

## **iii. Institutional Sustainability**

- The Review will assess the extent to which the sustainability of project outcomes (especially those relating to policies and laws) is dependent on issues relating to institutional frameworks and governance. It will consider whether institutional achievements such as governance structures and processes, policies, sub-regional agreements, legal and accountability frameworks etc. are robust enough to continue delivering the benefits associated with the project outcomes after project closure. In particular, the Review will consider whether institutional capacity development efforts are likely to be sustained.

*Factors affecting this criterion may include:*

- Stakeholders participation and cooperation
- Responsiveness to human rights and gender equity (e.g. where interventions are not inclusive, their sustainability may be undermined)
- Communication and public awareness
- Country ownership and driven-ness

### **I. Factors Affecting Project Performance and Cross-Cutting Issues**

*(These factors are rated in the ratings table but are discussed within the Main Review Report as cross-cutting themes as appropriate under the other review criteria, above. If these issues have not been addressed under the Review Criteria above, then independent summaries of their status within the reviewed project should be given in this section)*

#### **i. Preparation and Readiness**

- This criterion focuses on the inception or mobilisation stage of the project (i.e. the time between project approval and first disbursement). The Review will assess whether appropriate measures were taken to either address weaknesses in the project design or respond to changes that took place between project approval, the securing of funds and project mobilisation. In particular the Review will consider the nature and quality of engagement with stakeholder groups by the project team, the confirmation of partner capacity and development of partnership agreements as well as initial staffing and financing arrangements. (Project preparation is included in the template for the assessment of Project Design Quality).

**ii. Quality of Project Management and Supervision**

- In some cases 'project management and supervision' may refer to the supervision and guidance provided by UNEP to implementing partners and national governments while in others it may refer to the project management performance of an implementing partner and the technical backstopping and supervision provided by UNEP. The performance of parties playing different roles should be discussed and a rating provided for both types of supervision (UNEP/Implementing Agency; Partner/Executing Agency) and the overall rating for this sub-category established as a simple average of the two.
- The Review will assess the effectiveness of project management with regard to: providing leadership towards achieving the planned outcomes; managing team structures; maintaining productive partner relationships (including Steering Groups etc.); maintaining project relevance within changing external and strategic contexts; communication and collaboration with UNEP colleagues; risk management; use of problem-solving; project adaptation and overall project execution. Evidence of adaptive management should be highlighted.

**iii. Stakeholder Participation and Cooperation**

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

**iv. Responsiveness to Human Rights and Gender Equality**

- The Review will ascertain to what extent the project has applied the UN Common Understanding on the human rights-based approach (HRBA) and the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous People. Within this human rights context the Review will assess to what extent the intervention

adheres to UNEP's Policy and Strategy for Gender Equality and the Environment<sup>25</sup>.

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

#### **v. Environmental and Social Safeguards**

UNEP projects address environmental and social safeguards primarily through the process of environmental and social screening at the project approval stage, risk assessment and management (avoidance, or mitigation of potential environmental and social risks and impacts associated with project and programme activities. The Review will confirm whether UNEP requirements<sup>26</sup> were met to: review risk ratings on a regular basis; monitor project implementation for possible safeguard issues; respond (where relevant) to safeguard issues through risk avoidance, minimization, mitigation or offsetting and report on the implementation of safeguard management measures taken. UNEP requirements for proposed projects to be screened for any safeguarding issues; for sound environmental and social risk assessments to be conducted and initial risk ratings to be assigned, are reviewed above under Quality of Project Design).

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

#### **vi. Country Ownership and Driven-ness**

- The Review will assess the quality and degree of engagement of government / public sector agencies in the project. While there is some overlap between Country Ownership and Institutional Sustainability, this criterion focuses primarily on the forward momentum of the intended projects results, i.e. either: a) moving forwards from outputs to project outcomes or b) moving forward from project outcomes towards

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<sup>25</sup> The Evaluation Office notes that Gender Equality was first introduced in the UNEP Project Review Committee Checklist in 2010 and, therefore, provides a criterion rating on gender for projects approved from 2010 onwards. Equally, it is noted that policy documents, operational guidelines and other capacity building efforts have only been developed since then and have evolved over time. [https://wedocs.unep.org/bitstream/handle/20.500.11822/7655/-Gender\\_equality\\_and\\_the\\_environment\\_Policy\\_and\\_strategy-2015Gender\\_equality\\_and\\_the\\_environment\\_policy\\_and\\_strategy.pdf.pdf?sequence=3&isAllowed=y](https://wedocs.unep.org/bitstream/handle/20.500.11822/7655/-Gender_equality_and_the_environment_Policy_and_strategy-2015Gender_equality_and_the_environment_policy_and_strategy.pdf.pdf?sequence=3&isAllowed=y)

<sup>26</sup> For the review of project concepts and proposals, the Safeguard Risk Identification Form (SRIF) was introduced in 2019 and replaced the Environmental, Social and Economic Review note (ESERN), which had been in place since 2016. In GEF projects safeguards have been considered in project designs since 2011.

intermediate states. The Review will consider the involvement not only of those directly involved in project execution and those participating in technical or leadership groups, but also those official representatives whose cooperation is needed for change to be embedded in their respective institutions and offices (e.g. representatives from multiple sectors or relevant ministries beyond Ministry of Environment). This factor is concerned with the level of ownership generated by the project over outputs and outcomes and that is necessary for long term impact to be realised. Ownership should extend to all gender and marginalised groups.

**vii. Communication and Public Awareness**

- The Review will assess the effectiveness of: a) communication of learning and experience sharing between project partners and interested groups arising from the project during its life and b) public awareness activities that were undertaken during the implementation of the project to influence attitudes or shape behaviour among wider communities and civil society at large. The Review should consider whether existing communication channels and networks were used effectively, including meeting the differentiated needs of gendered or marginalised groups, and whether any feedback channels were established. Where knowledge sharing platforms have been established under a project the Review will comment on the sustainability of the communication channel under either socio-political, institutional or financial sustainability, as appropriate.

**Section 3. REVIEW APPROACH, METHODS AND DELIVERABLES**

- The Terminal Review will be an in-depth review using a participatory approach whereby key stakeholders are kept informed and consulted throughout the review process. Both quantitative and qualitative review methods will be used as appropriate to determine project achievements against the expected outputs, outcomes and impacts. It is highly recommended that the consultant(s) maintains close communication with the project team and promotes information exchange throughout the review implementation phase in order to increase their (and other stakeholder) ownership of the review findings. Where applicable, the consultant(s) should provide a geo-referenced map that demarcates the area covered by the project and, where possible, provide geo-reference photographs of key intervention sites (e.g. sites of habitat rehabilitation and protection, pollution treatment infrastructure, etc.)
- The findings of the Review will be based on the following:
  - (a) A desk review of:
    - Relevant background documentation, inter alia
    - Project design documents (implementation plan); Annual Work Plans and Budgets or equivalent, revisions to the project (Project Document Supplement), Partnership agreements, the logical framework and its budget;

- Project reports progress and financial reports, progress reports from collaborating partners, meeting minutes, relevant correspondence and any other monitoring materials etc.;
  - Project deliverables/products, e.g. publications and knowledge products
  - Partnership agreement
  - Donor update meeting minutes and Project Steering Committee meeting reports/recordings and relevant correspondence;
  - Project deliverables (e.g. publications, assessments etc):
  - Evaluations/Reviews of similar projects and previous phases.
- (b) Interviews (individual or in group) with:
- UNEP Project Manager (PM) and team members (i.e. all members of the project implementation group) and consultants closely involved in project development and implementation;
  - Bangkok project team:
  - Field visits: Not planned for the Terminal Review due to COVID19 restrictions. Should it be possible, field visits to project demonstration sites may be carried out.
  - Other data collection tools: If needed, to be decided by the Review Consultant at the inception phase

#### Review Deliverables and Review Procedures

- The Review Consultant will prepare:
  - **Inception Report:** (see Annex 1 for a list of all templates, tables and guidance notes) containing an assessment of project design quality, a draft reconstructed Theory of Change of the project, project stakeholder analysis, review framework and a tentative review schedule.
  - **Preliminary Findings Note:** typically in the form of a PowerPoint presentation, the sharing of preliminary findings is intended to support the participation of the project team, act as a means to ensure all information sources have been accessed and provide an opportunity to verify emerging findings.
  - **Draft and Final Review Report:** containing an executive summary that can act as a stand-alone document; detailed analysis of the review findings organised by review criteria and supported with evidence; lessons learned and recommendations and an annotated ratings table.
- **A Review Brief** (a 2-page overview of the evaluand and review findings) for wider dissemination through the UNEP website may be required. This will be discussed with the Regional SP Coordinator for Nature Action no later than during the finalization of the Inception Report.

- **Review of the Draft Review Report.** The Review Consultant will submit a draft report to the SP Coordinator and revise the draft in response to their comments and suggestions. The SP Coordinator will then forward the revised draft report to other project stakeholders, for their review and comments. Stakeholders may provide feedback on any errors of fact and may highlight the significance of such errors in any conclusions as well as providing feedback on the proposed recommendations and lessons. Any comments or responses to draft reports will be sent to the SP Coordinator for consolidation. The SP Coordinator will provide all comments to the Review Consultant for consideration in preparing the final report, along with guidance on areas of contradiction or issues requiring an institutional response.
- The final version of the Terminal Review report will be assessed for its quality by the UNEP Evaluation Office using a standard template and this assessment will be annexed to the final Terminal Review report.
- At the end of the review process, the SP Coordinator will prepare a **Recommendations Implementation Plan** in the format of a table, to be completed and updated at regular intervals, and circulate the **Lessons Learned**.

#### The Review Consultant

- The Review Consultant who will work under the overall responsibility of the SP Coordinator in consultation with the Deputy Director of the Regional Office for Asia and the Pacific, Finance and Administration Officer of the Regional Office, The consultant will liaise with the SP Coordinator on any procedural and methodological matters related to the Review. It is, however, the consultants' individual responsibility to arrange for their travel, visa, obtain documentary evidence, plan meetings with stakeholders (with assistance from the Executing Agency), organize online surveys, and any other logistical matters related to the assignment. The ROAP Administrative Unit, with support of the project team will, where possible, provide logistical support (introductions, meetings etc.) allowing the Review Consultants to conduct the review as efficiently and independently as possible.

The Review Consultant will be contracted over a period of 4 months [15 January 2023 to 15 May 2023] and should have the following:

- 10 years (post-graduate) work experience with international development assistance experience in relevant fields
- Extensive evaluation/technical experience is required, preferably including evaluating large, regional or global programmes and using a Theory of Change approach;
- A good/broad understanding of thematic areas such as environment, ecosystem management and/or biodiversity planning and management is desired.
- Process management skills such as facilitation skills and ability to negotiate with a wide range of stakeholders;

- Working knowledge of the UN system and specifically the work of UNEP is an added advantage
- Experience and knowledge of the Asia and the Pacific context, with strong focus on Lancang Mekong region is desired

The work will be home-based.

- The Review Consultant will be responsible, in close consultation with the SP Coordinator, for overall management of the Review and timely delivery of its outputs, described above in Section 11 Evaluation Deliverables, above. The Review Consultant will ensure that all evaluation criteria and questions are adequately covered.

### Schedule of the Review

- The table below presents the tentative schedule.

**Table 3. Tentative schedule for the Review**

Outputs	Deliverables	Delivery date
1. Inception Report (incl. work plan) developed	Inception Report	31/01/2023
2. Telephone interviews, compilation & review of secondary data, analysis of information and data	Regular contact with SP Coordinator on interviews, compilation and review of secondary data/reports, and analysis of information and data.	28/02/2023
3. Preliminary Findings Note developed	Summary presentation on preliminary findings (as powerpoint presentation)	31/03/2023
4. Data analysis – drafting the TR report. Make the draft report available to UNEP and wider group of stakeholders for review	Draft Terminal review report (ver.1)	10/04/2023
5. Incorporation of TR report review comments (to be provided by UNEP and project partners by 20 June) for submission of final report to UNEP	Final draft TR report (vs.2)	10/05/2023
6. Develop PPT summarizing the main findings and recommendations of the TR report	Draft final summary on findings and recommendations	15/05/2023

### Contractual Arrangements

- The Review Consultants will be selected and recruited by UNEP under an individual Special Service Agreement (SSA) on a “fees only” basis (see below). By signing the service contract with UNEP/UNON, the consultant certifies that they have not been associated with the design and implementation of the project in any way which may jeopardize their independence and impartiality towards project achievements and project partner performance. In addition, they will not have any future interests

(within six months after completion of the contract) with the project's executing or implementing units. All consultants are required to sign the Code of Conduct Agreement Form.

- Fees will be paid on an instalment basis, paid on acceptance and approval by the SP Coordinator of expected key deliverables. The schedule of payment is as follows:
- Schedule of Payment:

Approval of received deliverables under Output 1	31/01/2023	10%
Approval of received deliverables under Outputs 2,3 and 4	10/04/2023	40%
Approval of received deliverables under Outputs 5,6 and 7	15/06/2023	50%

- Fees only contracts: Where applicable, air tickets will be purchased by UNEP and 75% of the Daily Subsistence Allowance for each authorised travel mission will be paid up front. Local in-country travel will only be reimbursed where agreed in advance with the SP Coordinator and on the production of acceptable receipts. Terminal expenses and residual DSA entitlements (25%) will be paid after mission completion.
- The consultant may be provided with access to UNEP's information management systems (e.g. PIMS, Anubis, SharePoint, etc.) and, if such access is granted, the consultants agree not to disclose information from that system to third parties beyond information required for, and included in, the Review Report.
- In case the consultant is not able to provide the deliverables in accordance with these guidelines, and in line with the expected quality standards by the SP Coordinator, payment may be withheld at the discretion of the Head of Branch/Unit until the consultants have improved the deliverables to meet UNEP's quality standards.
- If the consultant fails to submit a satisfactory final product to the SP Coordinator in a timely manner, i.e. before the end date of their contract, UNEP reserves the right to employ additional human resources to finalize the report, and to reduce the consultant's fees by an amount equal to the additional costs borne by the project team to bring the report up to standard or completion.



## ANNEX VIII. REVIEW FRAMEWORK

\*strategic review questions are highlighted in green

No	Review Questions	Indicators/Criteria	Sources of Information
<b>1</b>	<b>Strategic Relevance</b>		
i	Are the objectives and outcome of the project aligned with the UNEP Medium Term Strategy (MTS), Programme of Work (POW) and Strategic Priorities?	- Consistency of project objectives and outcome with UNEP and policies, priorities and work plans	- Project Document - Logical Framework - Review of project design (Annex B) - Theory of Change (TOC) - UNEP Policies, MTS and POW - Interviews with UNEP ROAP project manager and team
ii	Are the objectives and outcome of the project aligned with Donor / Partner Strategic Priorities?	- Consistency of project objectives and outcome with Donor / Partner Strategic Priorities	- Project Document - Logical Framework - Review of project design (Annex B) - TOC - Baseline data - Main partners' websites - Interviews
iii	Are the objectives and outcome of the project relevant to Global, Regional, Sub-regional and National Environmental Priorities?	- Consistency of project objectives and outcome with Global, Regional, Sub-regional and National Environmental Priorities	- Project Document
iv	How well does the project take into account existing or planned interventions that address similar needs of the same target groups?	- Complementarity with existing Interventions / Coherence	- Project Document
v	How inclusive was the project design phase?	- Stakeholder participation and cooperation in project development - Inclusion of gender and human rights aspects in the design of the project informed by analysis: - Gender analysis conducted - Human rights based approach included in project design)	- Project Document - Logical Framework - Review of project design (Annex B) - Interviews with UNEP PM and staff
<b>2</b>	<b>Effectiveness</b>		
i	Were output level results realized?	- Realization of output level indicators of each of the three Output level results of the project - Realization of milestones and their relation to reaching of output level results	- Project progress reports - Project monitoring data - Project studies produced - UNEP ROAP Project manager - Implementing Partners

			- Selected Government partners
ii	Was the project outcome achieved?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Realization of the Outcome level indicators of the project results framework</li> <li>- Knowledge generated through the project in relation to integrated ecosystem management approaches</li> <li>- Other take up of learnings through the project in the regional and country level decision-making processes</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Project progress reports</li> <li>- Project monitoring data</li> <li>- Project studies produced</li> <li>- UNEP ROAP Project manager</li> <li>- Implementing Partners</li> <li>- Selected Government partners</li> </ul>
iii	Is the project likely to have long lasting effects?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Likelihood of impact</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Project progress reports</li> <li>- Project monitoring data</li> <li>- Project studies produced</li> <li>- UNEP ROAP Project manager</li> <li>- Implementing Partners</li> <li>- Selected Government partners</li> </ul>
<b>3</b>	<b>Financial Management</b>		
i	Was the project's rate of spending consistent with what was planned at project design stage?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Consistency of rate of spending with project design – expenditures in line with budget and workplan</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Project progress reports</li> <li>- Project financial reports</li> <li>- Project financial data/financial statements if available</li> <li>- UNEP ROAP Project manager</li> <li>- Implementing Partners</li> </ul>
ii	Has the project complied with UNEP financial and auditing requirements?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Degree of compliance with UNEP Standards and any observations during project implementation</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Project audit reports – if available in time as audits reports are still being finalized</li> <li>- UNEP ROAP Project manager</li> </ul>
<b>4</b>	<b>Efficiency</b>		
i	Was the project implemented in a cost-effective manner?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Efficiency in project implementation in terms of the realization of outputs through the implementation of activities</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Project progress reports</li> <li>- Project monitoring data</li> <li>- Project financial data</li> <li>- UNEP ROAP Project manager</li> <li>- UNEP ROAP Financial manager</li> <li>- UNEP ROAP Administrative assistant</li> <li>- Implementing partners</li> </ul>
ii	Was the project implemented in a timely manner and were activities sequenced efficiently?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Timely implementation of milestones and realization of project outputs</li> <li>- Efficient sequencing of project activities within and across output areas</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Project progress reports</li> <li>- Project monitoring data</li> <li>- Project financial data</li> <li>- UNEP ROAP Project manager</li> </ul>

			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- UNEP ROAP Financial manager</li> <li>- UNEP ROAP Administrative assistant</li> <li>- Implementing partners</li> </ul>
<b>5</b>	<b>Monitoring and reporting</b>		
i	How well was the project implementation monitored?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Quality of project results framework and TOC</li> <li>- Monitoring system in place</li> <li>- Regularity of gathering of monitoring data</li> <li>- Use of monitoring data to inform results-based management</li> <li>- Inclusion of human rights and gender equality mainstreaming in M&amp;E system</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Project monitoring data</li> <li>- Project progress reports</li> <li>- Review of project design (Annex B)</li> <li>- UNEP Senior Management</li> <li>- UNEP ROAP Project manager</li> <li>- Implementing partners</li> </ul>
ii	Was project reporting adequate and timely?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Quality of project reports</li> <li>- Timeliness of project reports</li> <li>- Usage of information contained in project progress reports to inform project management</li> <li>- Inclusion of human rights and gender equality mainstreaming in project reporting</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Project monitoring data</li> <li>- Project progress reports</li> <li>- UNEP ROAP Project manager</li> <li>- Implementing partners</li> </ul>
<b>6</b>	<b>Sustainability</b>		
i	Is the level of ownership by the main stakeholders sufficient to allow for the project results to be sustained?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Degree of ownership felt by main stakeholder groups</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Project progress reports</li> <li>- Project monitoring data</li> <li>- UNEP ROAP Project manager</li> <li>- Implementing partners</li> <li>- Signed agreements with partners (collaboration and financing)</li> <li>- National level stakeholders including policy makers if available</li> </ul>
ii	How well has the project utilized local and national capacity in demonstrating effective approaches for integrated ecosystem management approaches at pilot sites in Cambodia and China, and how effectively have the lessons learned under the project been summarized to be shared with other countries in the Lancang Mekong countries?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Degree of use of local and national capacities</li> <li>- Documenting of lessons-learned</li> <li>- Dissemination of lessons learned</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Project progress reports</li> <li>- Project monitoring data</li> <li>- UNEP ROAP Project manager</li> <li>- Implementing partners</li> <li>- Website/communications material</li> </ul>
iii	Is the project outcome dependent on future funding to be beneficial beyond the life of the project?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Extent to which project outcome is dependent on future funding for the benefits they bring to be sustained</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Project progress reports</li> <li>- Project monitoring data</li> <li>- UNEP ROAP Project manager</li> <li>- Implementing partners</li> </ul>

			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- National level stakeholders including policy makers if available</li> </ul>
iv	Are institutional frameworks and governance necessary to ensure the sustainability of the project outcome?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Extent to which the sustainability of project outcomes is dependent on issues relating to institutional frameworks and governance</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Project progress reports</li> <li>- Project monitoring data</li> <li>- UNEP ROAP Project manager</li> <li>- Implementing partners</li> <li>- National level stakeholders including policy makers if available</li> </ul>
<b>7</b>	<b>Factors and Processes Affecting Project Performance and Cross-Cutting Issues</b>		
i	Where appropriate measures taken to address weaknesses in the project design or respond to changes between project approval and implementation?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Contextual analysis conducted to inform project design</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Review of project design (Annex B)</li> <li>- Project progress reports</li> <li>- Project monitoring data</li> <li>- UNEP ROAP Project manager</li> <li>- National level policy makers</li> </ul>
ii	What changes were made to adapt to the effects of COVID-19 and how did COVID-19 impact the project?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Changes made to adapt to COVID-19</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Project document</li> <li>- UNEP ROAP Project manager</li> <li>- Implementing partners</li> </ul>
iii	How effective was project management and supervision?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Project supervision arrangements and implementation</li> <li>- Project management arrangements and implementation</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Project document</li> <li>- UNEP ROAP Project manager</li> <li>- Implementing partners</li> </ul>
iv	How involved were stakeholders in project implementation/activities?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Participation of stakeholders and in particular vulnerable groups, including women, and local communities in project activities</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Project document</li> <li>- Project progress reports</li> <li>- Project monitoring data</li> <li>- UNEP ROAP Project manager</li> <li>- Implementing partners</li> </ul>
v	How responsive was the project to Human Rights and Gender Equity?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Responsiveness the human rights related issues, including participation and empowerment, accountability and transparency and non-discrimination</li> <li>- Responsiveness to gender equity</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Project document</li> <li>- Review of project design (Annex B)</li> <li>- Project progress reports</li> <li>- Project monitoring data</li> <li>- UNEP ROAP Project manager</li> <li>- Implementing partners</li> </ul>
vi	Did the project address Environmental and Social Safeguards?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Inclusion of environmental and social safeguards in the project document</li> <li>- Application of social environmental and social safeguards in the practice of project implementation</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Project document</li> <li>- Review of project design (Annex B)</li> <li>- Project progress reports</li> <li>- Project monitoring data</li> <li>- UNEP ROAP Project manager</li> </ul>

			- Implementing partners
vii	How engaged were governments/public sector agencies in the project?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Level of country ownership in each of the three output areas of the project</li> <li>- Country level adaptation of project implementation based on national requirement, needs and contexts</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Project document</li> <li>- Project progress reports</li> <li>- Project monitoring data</li> <li>- UNEP ROAP Project manager</li> <li>- Country focal points</li> <li>- Implementing partners</li> <li>- National level policy makers</li> </ul>
viii	How effectively were communication and public awareness conducted?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Communication means developed and level of adaptation to audiences, especially for vulnerable groups including women, and local communities</li> <li>- Awareness raised in the targeted groups reached with communication means</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Project document</li> <li>- Review of project design (Annex B)</li> <li>- Project progress reports</li> <li>- Project monitoring data</li> <li>- UNEP ROAP Project manager</li> <li>- Implementing partners</li> </ul>
ix	How well has the project been able to showcase the successful application of integrated ecosystem management approaches adopted under the project to inform future actions of other countries in the Lancang Mekong region?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Technical and communication material developed and disseminated by the project</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Project progress reports</li> <li>- Project monitoring data</li> <li>- UNEP ROAP Project manager</li> <li>- Implementing partners</li> <li>- Website/communications material</li> </ul>

**ANNEX IX. QUALITY ASSESSMENT OF THE REVIEW REPORT (PROVIDED BY THE UNEP EVALUATION OFFICE)**

**Quality Assessment of the Terminal Review Report**

Review Title: "Improving Ecosystem Management for Sustainable Livelihoods within the Framework of Lancang-Mekong Cooperation" PIMS ID 02101 (2021 – 2022)

Consultant: Dania Marzouki

All UNEP Reviews are subject to a quality assessment by the UNEP Evaluation Office. This is an assessment of the quality of the review product (i.e. Main Review Report).

Evaluation Manager to check the relevant guidance from core funding partners (e.g. GEF, GCF, Adaptation Fund) for variable interests. These are also noted in the Management-Led Terminal Review TOR template.

	UNEP Evaluation Office Comments	Final Review Report Rating
<b>Substantive Report Quality Criteria</b>		
<p><b>Quality of the Executive Summary:</b></p> <p>The Summary should be able to stand alone as an accurate summary of the main review product. It should include a concise overview of the review object; clear summary of the review objectives and scope; overall project performance rating of the project and key features of performance (strengths and weaknesses) against exceptional criteria (plus reference to where the review ratings table can be found within the report); summary of the main findings of the exercise, including a synthesis of main conclusions (which include a summary response to key strategic review questions), lessons learned and recommendations.</p>	<p>Final report:</p> <p>The Executive Summary is complete and provides a good summary of the main findings of the review. Propose addition to the beginning of Recommendations as recommendations are not actionable in their current state.</p>	5.5
<p><b>I. Introduction</b></p> <p>A brief introduction should be given identifying, where possible and relevant, the following: institutional context of the project (sub-programme, Division, regions/countries where implemented) and coverage of the review; date of PRC approval and project document signature); results frameworks to which it contributes (e.g. Expected Accomplishment in POW); project duration and start/end dates; number of project phases (where appropriate); implementing partners; total secured budget and whether the project has been reviewed/evaluated in the past (e.g. mid-term, part of a synthesis evaluation, evaluated by another agency etc.)</p> <p>Consider the extent to which the introduction includes a concise statement of the purpose of the review and the key intended audience for the findings?</p>	<p>Final report:</p> <p>The introduction covers most of the required material. However, without reference to the UNEP Sub-programme and Expected Accomplishments to which the project was expected to contribute, the link with UNEP's Programme of Work (its primary results framework) is missing. The reader is advised that this</p>	5

	link is recorded in Table 1 at the beginning of this report.	
<p><b>II. Review Methods</b></p> <p>A data collection section should include: a description of review methods and information sources used, including the number and type of respondents; justification for methods used (e.g. qualitative/quantitative; electronic/face-to-face); any selection criteria used to identify respondents, case studies or sites/countries visited; strategies used to increase stakeholder engagement and consultation; details of how data were verified (e.g. triangulation, review by stakeholders etc.). Efforts to include the voices of different groups, e.g. vulnerable, gender, marginalised etc) should be described.</p> <p>Methods to ensure that potentially excluded groups (excluded by gender, vulnerability or marginalisation) are reached and their experiences captured effectively, should be made explicit in this section.</p> <p>The methods used to analyse data (e.g. scoring; coding; thematic analysis etc.) should be described.</p> <p>It should also address review limitations such as: low or imbalanced response rates across different groups; gaps in documentation; extent to which findings can be either generalised to wider review questions or constraints on aggregation/disaggregation; any potential or apparent biases; language barriers and ways they were overcome.</p> <p>Ethics and human rights issues should be highlighted including: how anonymity and confidentiality were protected and strategies used to include the views of marginalised or potentially disadvantaged groups and/or divergent views. E.g. <i>‘Throughout the review process and in the compilation of the Final Review Report efforts have been made to represent the views of both mainstream and more marginalised groups. All efforts to provide respondents with anonymity have been made’</i></p>	<p>Final report:</p> <p>The Review is limited by the low number of respondents, 13 in total, and the fact that the respondents were all involved in the project implementation, including many UNEP staff members. While Annex II does provide a list of those interviewed, the Review Methods section would have benefited from a summary table of all those who could/should have been interviewed (i.e. total population with those sampled indicated). Para 55 notes that a wide variety of stakeholders were involved in the project but whose voices do not appear to be well represented by the Review.</p> <p>The Evaluation Office also notes that in para 139 the Reviewer records that no field visits by project team staff were possible during project implementation due to travel restrictions. This would suggest that a field mission</p>	<p>4</p>

	for the Review would have been critical.	
<p><b>III. The Project</b></p> <p>This section should include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Context</i>: Overview of the main issue that the project is trying to address, its root causes and consequences on the environment and human well-being (i.e. synopsis of the problem and situational analyses).</li> <li>• <i>Results Framework</i>: Summary of the project's results hierarchy as stated in the ProDoc (or as officially revised)</li> <li>• <i>Stakeholders</i>: Description of groups of targeted stakeholders organised according to relevant common characteristics</li> <li>• <i>Project implementation structure and partners</i>: A description of the implementation structure with diagram and a list of key project partners</li> <li>• <i>Changes in design during implementation</i>: Any key events that affected the project's scope or parameters should be described in brief in chronological order</li> <li>• <i>Project financing</i>: Completed tables of: (a) budget at design and expenditure by components (b) planned and actual sources of funding/co-financing</li> </ul>	<p>Final report:</p> <p>Section is complete. It presents a comprehensive analysis of all the elements and is well written.</p>	5.5
<p><b>IV. Theory of Change</b></p> <p>The reconstructed TOC at Review should be presented clearly in both diagrammatic and narrative forms. Clear articulation of each major causal pathway is expected, (starting from outputs to long term impact), including explanations of all drivers and assumptions as well as the expected roles of key actors.</p> <p>This section should include a description of how the <i>TOC at Review</i><sup>27</sup> was designed (who was involved etc.) and applied to the context of the project? Where different groups (e.g. vulnerable, gender, marginalised etc) are included in, or affected by the project in different ways, this should be reflected in the TOC.</p> <p>Where the project results as stated in the project design documents (or formal revisions of the project design) are not an accurate reflection of the project's intentions or do not follow UNEP's definitions of different results levels, project results may need to be re-phrased or reformulated. In such cases, a summary of the project's results hierarchy should be presented for: a) the results as stated in the approved/revised Prodoc logframe/TOC and b) as formulated in the TOC at Review. <i>The two results hierarchies should be presented as a two column table to show clearly that, although wording and placement may have changed, the results 'goal posts' have not been 'moved'</i>. This table may have initially been presented in the Inception Report and should appear somewhere in the Main Review report.</p>	<p>Final report:</p> <p>The TOC is presented as a diagram but the section would have benefited from the Reviewer articulating the causal pathways from outputs to potential impact. A discussion of how Drivers and Assumptions were expected to support the change process would have increased the utility of the TOC.</p>	3
<p><b>V. Key Findings</b></p> <p><b>A. Strategic relevance:</b></p> <p>This section should include an assessment of the project's relevance in relation to UNEP's mandate and its alignment with UNEP's policies and strategies at the time of project approval. An assessment of the complementarity of the project at design (or during</p>	<p>Final report:</p> <p>All elements are covered to a satisfactory level.</p>	5

<sup>27</sup> During the Inception Phase of the review process a *TOC at Design* is created based on the information contained in the approved project documents (these may include either logical framework or a TOC or narrative descriptions). During the review process this TOC is revised based on changes made during project intervention and becomes the *TOC at Review*.



<p>inception/mobilisation<sup>28</sup>) with other interventions addressing the needs of the same target groups should be included. Consider the extent to which all four elements have been addressed:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>v. Alignment to the UNEP Medium Term Strategy (MTS), Programme of Work (POW) and Strategic Priorities</li> <li>vi. Alignment to Donor/Partner Strategic Priorities</li> <li>vii. Relevance to Regional, Sub-regional and National Environmental Priorities</li> <li>viii. Complementarity with Existing Interventions</li> </ul>		
<p><b>B. Quality of Project Design</b> To what extent are the strength and weaknesses of the project design effectively <u>summarized</u>?</p>	<p>Final report:  The section provides a clear and well written summary of the main strengths and weaknesses of project design.</p>	<p>5</p>
<p><b>C. Nature of the External Context</b> For projects where this is appropriate, key external features of the project's implementing context that may have been reasonably expected to limit the project's performance (e.g. conflict, natural disaster, political upheaval<sup>29</sup>) and how they have affected performance, should be described.</p>	<p>Final report:  The section is adequately addressed.</p>	<p>5</p>
<p><b>D. Effectiveness</b> <b>(i) Outputs and Project Outcomes:</b> How well does the report present a well-reasoned, complete and evidence-based assessment of the a) availability of outputs, and b) achievement of project outcomes? How convincing is the discussion of attribution and contribution, as well as the constraints to attributing effects to the intervention.  The effects of the intervention on differentiated groups, including those with specific needs due to gender, vulnerability or marginalisation, should be discussed explicitly.</p>	<p>Final report:  <b>Outputs:</b> The narrative states that targets were achieved or exceeded, without, however, indicating the indicators and their respective targets (apart from the targets of Output 3). Responses from the communities involved in the pilot activities are only reported from project reports and were not verified during the Review.  <b>Outcomes:</b> Para. 116 states that "All Project targets were either achieved or over-achieved". However, such targets and their</p>	<p>4</p>

<sup>28</sup> A project's inception or mobilization period is understood as the time between project approval and first disbursement. Complementarity during project implementation is considered under Efficiency, see below.

<sup>29</sup> Note that 'political upheaval' does not include regular national election cycles, but unanticipated unrest or prolonged disruption. The potential delays or changes in political support that are often associated with the regular national election cycle should be part of the project's design and addressed through adaptive management of the project team.

	<p>indicators are not clearly presented. A summary table at the beginning of the section illustrating the outcome and output indicators, their targets and degree of achievement would have been appreciated.</p>	
<p><b>(ii) Likelihood of Impact:</b> How well does the report present an integrated analysis, guided by the causal pathways represented by the TOC, of all evidence relating to likelihood of impact?</p> <p>How well are change processes explained and the roles of key actors, as well as drivers and assumptions, explicitly discussed?</p> <p>Any unintended negative effects of the project should be discussed under Effectiveness, especially negative effects on disadvantaged groups.</p>	<p>Final report:</p> <p>The likelihood of impact analysis could have been more detailed, especially taking into consideration whether the assumptions and drivers presented in the TOC are expected to hold.</p> <p>Moreover, the processes required and roles of key actors for the achievement of the Impact should have been discussed.</p>	<p>3</p>
<p><b>E. Financial Management</b></p> <p>This section should contain an integrated analysis of all dimensions evaluated under financial management and include a completed 'financial management' table.</p> <p>Consider how well the report addresses the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>adherence</i> to UNEP's financial policies and procedures</li> <li>• <i>completeness</i> of financial information, including the actual project costs (total and per activity) and actual co-financing used</li> <li>• <i>communication</i> between financial and project management staff</li> </ul>	<p>Final report:</p> <p>The reader is advised that Annex IV shows a breakdown of expenditure by Output. There is a discrepancy between the ratings assigned to the three financial management sub-criteria in Table 3 (Financial Management Table) and 4 (Summary of project findings and ratings Table), which affects the overall rating for Financial Management (Table 3 shows Highly</p>	<p>4.5</p>

	Satisfactory and Table 4 shows Satisfactory). The Evaluation Office validates the rating in Table 4.	
<p><b>F. Efficiency</b></p> <p>To what extent, and how well, does the report present a well-reasoned, complete and evidence-based assessment of efficiency under the primary categories of cost-effectiveness and timeliness including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Implications of delays and no cost extensions</li> <li>• Time-saving measures put in place to maximise results within the secured budget and agreed project timeframe</li> <li>• Discussion of making use during project implementation of/building on pre-existing institutions, agreements and partnerships, data sources, synergies and complementarities with other initiatives, programmes and projects etc.</li> <li>• The extent to which the management of the project minimised UNEP’s environmental footprint.</li> </ul>	<p>Final report:</p> <p>The section presents a brief assessment of the cost-effectiveness and timeliness of project execution. In para 113 the Reviewer notes that some activities were delivered later in the project than planned and that earlier delivery would have been more beneficial.</p>	4.5
<p><b>G. Monitoring and Reporting</b></p> <p>How well does the report assess:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Monitoring design and budgeting (<i>including SMART results with measurable indicators, resources for MTE/R etc.</i>)</li> <li>• Monitoring of project implementation (<i>including use of monitoring data for adaptive management</i>)</li> <li>• Project reporting (<i>e.g. PIMS and donor reports</i>)</li> </ul>	<p>Final report:</p> <p>More detailed assessments of the sub-criteria ‘Monitoring of project implementation’ and ‘Project reporting’ were necessary to support the Reviewer’s conclusion in para 139 that UNEP team ‘did a great job’ in monitoring the project. This is particularly in light of the Reviewer’s concerns over the nature of the project’s indicators, mentioned several times within the report, and the lack of any field visits. The Evaluation Office also notes its concern that the project’s indicators are not presented within the Review Report.</p>	3

<p><b>H. Sustainability</b> How well does the review identify and assess the key conditions or factors that are likely to undermine or contribute to the persistence of achieved project outcomes including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Socio-political Sustainability</li> <li>• Financial Sustainability</li> <li>• Institutional Sustainability (<i>including issues of partnerships</i>)</li> </ul>	<p>Final report:</p> <p>A more detailed analysis of Financial and Institutional Sustainability aspects would have been appreciated.</p> <p>In para 141, some indication of the nature of the project's sustainability plan, and whether it was fully implemented, would have been of value to the reader. Also, an indication of the nature of the 'compelling evidence' for the sustainability of activities at the pilot sites in Cambodia and China would have strengthened the claim.</p>	<p>4</p>
<p><b>I. Factors Affecting Performance</b> These factors are <u>not</u> discussed in stand-alone sections but are <b>integrated in criteria A-H as appropriate</b>. Note that these are described in the Evaluation Criteria Ratings Matrix. To what extent, and how well, does the review report cover the following cross-cutting themes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Preparation and readiness</li> <li>• Quality of project management and supervision<sup>30</sup></li> <li>• Stakeholder participation and co-operation</li> <li>• Responsiveness to human rights and gender equity</li> <li>• Environmental and social safeguards</li> <li>• Country ownership and driven-ness</li> <li>• Communication and public awareness</li> </ul>	<p>Final report:</p> <p>An assessment of factors affecting performance is presented as a stand-alone section within the report.</p> <p>It is unclear why the factor 'Country ownership and drivenness' is rated as N/A in Table 4.</p>	<p>4.5</p>
<p><b>VI. Conclusions and Recommendations</b></p> <p><b>Quality of the conclusions:</b> The key strategic questions should be clearly and succinctly addressed within the conclusions section.</p> <p>It is expected that the conclusions will highlight the main strengths and weaknesses of the project, and connect them in a compelling story line. Human rights and gender dimensions of the intervention (e.g. how these dimensions were considered, addressed or impacted on) should be discussed explicitly. Conclusions, as well as lessons and recommendations, should be consistent with the</p>	<p>Final report:</p> <p>The section presents a good summary of the main strengths and weaknesses of the project.</p>	<p>5</p>

<sup>30</sup> In some cases 'project management and supervision' will refer to the supervision and guidance provided by UNEP to implementing partners and national governments while in others, specifically for GEF funded projects, it will refer to the project management performance of the Executing Agency and the overall supervision/technical backstopping provided by UNEP, as the Implementing Agency. Comments and a rating should be provided for both types of supervision and the overall rating for this sub-category established as a simple average of the two.

evidence presented in the main body of the report.	Reference to Key Strategic Questions should have been made in the conclusions section.	
<b>ii) Quality and utility of the lessons:</b> Both positive and negative lessons are expected and duplication with recommendations should be avoided. Based on explicit review findings, lessons should be rooted in real project experiences or derived from problems encountered and mistakes made that should be avoided in the future. Lessons are intended to be adopted any time they are deemed to be relevant in the future and must have the potential for wider application (replication and generalization) and use and should briefly describe the context from which they are derived and those contexts in which they may be useful.	Final report:  The report presents three lessons, which are based on review findings and project experiences.	5
<b>iii) Quality and utility of the recommendations:</b> To what extent are the recommendations <u>proposals for specific action to be taken by identified people/position-holders to resolve concrete problems affecting the project or the sustainability of its results?</u> They should be feasible to implement within the timeframe and resources available (including local capacities) and specific in terms of who would do what and when.  At least one recommendation relating to strengthening the human rights and gender dimensions of UNEP interventions, should be given. Recommendations should represent a measurable performance target in order that the Evaluation Office can monitor and assess compliance with the recommendations.  In cases where the recommendation is addressed to a third party, compliance can only be monitored and assessed where a contractual/legal agreement remains in place. Without such an agreement, the recommendation should be formulated to say that UNEP project staff should pass on the recommendation to the relevant third party in an effective or substantive manner. The effective transmission by UNEP of the recommendation will then be monitored for compliance.  Where a new project phase is already under discussion or in preparation with the same third party, a recommendation can be made to address the issue in the next phase.	Final report:  The report presents four actionable recommendations, one of which refers to how to better address gender in project design and implementation.	5
<b>VII. Report Structure and Presentation Quality</b>		
<b>i) Structure and completeness of the report:</b> To what extent does the report follow the Evaluation Office guidelines? Are all requested Annexes included and complete, including a gender disaggregation total for respondents.	Final report:  The report is complete and follows the Evaluation Office guidelines. All the required Annexes are included in the report.	5.5
<b>ii) Quality of writing and formatting:</b> Consider whether the report is well written (clear English language and grammar) with language that is adequate in quality and tone for an official document? Do visual aids, such as maps and graphs	Final report:  The report is well written, with clear	5.5

convey key information? Does the report follow UNEP Evaluation Office formatting guidelines?	language and a professional tone.  The report follows UNEP Evaluation Office formatting guidelines.	
<b>OVERALL REPORT QUALITY RATING</b>		<b>4.6</b>

A number rating 1-6 is used for each criterion: Highly Satisfactory = 6, Satisfactory = 5, Moderately Satisfactory = 4, Moderately Unsatisfactory = 3, Unsatisfactory = 2, Highly Unsatisfactory = 1. The overall quality of the review report is calculated by taking the mean score of all rated quality criteria.