

Implementation Stage Quality Assurance Report

Form Status: Approved

Overall Rating:	Highly Satisfactory
Decision:	Continue as planned: The project is of sufficient quality to continue as planned. All management actions must be addressed in a timely manner.
Portfolio/Project Number:	00091297
Portfolio/Project Title:	Securing livelihoods Himalayas
Portfolio/Project Date:	2017-01-01 / 2024-03-30

Strategic

Quality Rating: Exemplary

1. Is the project pro-actively identifying changes to the external environment and incorporating them into the project strategy?

- 3: *The project team has identified relevant changes in the external environment that may present new opportunities or threats to the project's ability to achieve its objectives and the assumptions have been tested to determine if the project's strategy is still valid. There is evidence that the project board has considered the implications, and documented any changes needed to the project in response. (all must be true)*
- 2: The project team has identified relevant changes in the external environment that may present new opportunities or threats to the project's ability to achieve its objectives. There is some evidence that the project board discussed this, but relevant changes may not have been fully integrated in the project. (both must be true)
- 1: The project team may have considered relevant changes in the external environment since implementation began, but there is no evidence that the project team has considered changes to the project as a result.

Evidence:

Evidence

The project team is working on a landscape-based approach to address the increasingly complex and widespread environmental, social and political challenges that transcend traditional management boundaries, especially in the context of Himalayan hinterland regions that constitute the project area.

A rapid appraisal has been conducted at the initiation of the project for all the project landscapes by the state project teams in collaboration with the respective state governments to identify specific theme areas for each landscape as guided by the project document with detailed appraisal in process through the studies and projects that have been commissioned in all states.

The global pandemic (COVID 19) impacted India in 2020. In response to the crisis, the country was under complete lockdown which has created risk to lives and livelihoods of the communities in the landscape. The situation became worse due to the second wave of the COVID-19 from March – June, 2021. The crisis led to sudden surge in an unprecedented public health crisis. During this time the restrictions imposed in the country including the project state. During this time the project implementation hampered as the landscape also witnessed huge number of cases. In response to the crisis, situational assessment of impact of COVID 19 on the project landscape has been done by the project team. Based on the findings, the strategies and Annual Work Plans revised after due consultations and approval of the National Project Steering Committee and State Project Steering Committees.

Considering the challenges posed by COVID 19, the project initiated mainstreaming One Health Approach. The emphasis is on capacity building of officials of Forest and wildlife, Animal Husbandry, Public Health and community based organisations to combat spread of zoonotic diseases.

The project has also identified emerging paradigms in the development sector including increased emphasis on private sector collaboration where partnerships are being explored in developing product value chains at the grassroots and creation of market-based financial instruments like venture capital among others.

List of Uploaded Documents

#	File Name	Modified By	Modified On
1	SECUREHimalayaProjectDocument_9263_201 (https://intranet.undp.org/apps/ProjectQA/QAFormDocuments/SECUREHimalayaProjectDocument_9263_201.pdf)	ruchika.tripathi@undp.org	8/5/2021 12:08:00 PM

2. Is the project aligned with the UNDP Strategic Plan?

- 3: The project responds at least one of the development settings³ as specified in the Strategic Plan (SP) and adopts at least one Signature Solution⁴ and the project's RRF includes at all the relevant SP output indicators. (all must be true)
- 2: The project responds to one of the three areas of development work¹ as specified in the Strategic Plan. The project's RRF includes at least one SP output indicator, if relevant. (both must be true)
- 1: While the project may respond to a partner's identified need, this need falls outside the UNDP Strategic Plan. Also select this option if none of the relevant SP indicators are included in the RRF.

Evidence:

Project aligns with following outputs of UNDP Strategic Plan:
Output 1.3: Solutions developed at national and sub-national levels for sustainable management of natural resources, ecosystem services, chemicals and waste.
Output 2.5: Legal and regulatory frameworks, policies and institutions enabled to ensure the conservation, sustainable use, and access and benefit sharing of natural resources, biodiversity and ecosystems, in line with international conventions and national legislation.

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No documents available.			

Relevant

Quality Rating: **Highly Satisfactory**

3. Are the project's targeted groups being systematically engaged, with a priority focus on the discriminated and marginalized, to ensure the project remains relevant for them?

- 3: Systematic and structured feedback has been collected over the past two years from a representative sample of beneficiaries, with a priority focus on the discriminated and marginalized, as part of the project's monitoring system. Representatives from the targeted groups are active members of the project's governance mechanism (i.e., the project board or equivalent) and there is credible evidence that their feedback informs project decision making. (all must be true)
- 2: *Targeted groups have been engaged in implementation and monitoring, with a priority focus on the discriminated and marginalized. Beneficiary feedback, which may be anecdotal, has been collected over the past year to ensure the project is addressing local priorities. This information has been used to inform project decision making. (all must be true)*
- 1: Some beneficiary feedback may have been collected over the past year, but this information has not been used to inform project decision making. This option is also selected if no beneficiary feedback has been collected.
- Not Applicable

Evidence:

Project beneficiaries/local communities at the district and village levels in the 4 states (5 landscapes) have been engaged in implementation and monitoring with the following key areas of interaction:

1. Participatory biodiversity monitoring and patrolling of wild habitats.
2. Formation and strengthening of Biodiversity Management Committees with active participation of women and tribal communities for sustainable management of natural resources
3. Preparation of Peoples Biodiversity Registers and livelihood plans
4. Comprehensive training and capacity building of community stakeholders conducted integrating natural resource management and sustainable livelihoods (particular focus on Professional Nature Guides, Citizen Scientists, Taxonomists and Vets and value chain development on natural fibre based livelihoods)
5. Strategies to combat Human Wildlife Conflict (engagement of village volunteer force)
6. Information about various government schemes and projects and feedback on the same.

Proceedings of all community meetings have been duly minuted and recorded.

On the basis of feedback from local communities, activities pertaining to augmentation and strengthening of existing infrastructure have also been initiated like building an improved prototype for Biogas Plant.

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4. Is the project generating knowledge and lessons learned (i.e., what has worked and what has not) and has this knowledge informed management decisions to ensure the continued relevance of the project towards its stated objectives, the quality of its outputs and the management of risk?

- 3: *Knowledge and lessons learned from internal or external sources (gained, for example, from Peer Assists, After Action Reviews or Lessons Learned Workshops) backed by credible evidence from evaluation, corporate policies/strategies, analysis and monitoring have been discussed in project board meetings and reflected in the minutes. There is clear evidence that changes were made to the project to ensure its continued relevance. (both must be true)*
- 2: Knowledge and lessons learned backed by relatively limited evidence, drawn mainly from within the project, have been considered by the project team. There is some evidence that changes were made to the project as a result to ensure its continued relevance. (both must be true)
- 1: There is limited or no evidence that knowledge and lessons learned have been collected by the project team. There is little or no evidence that this has informed project decision making.

Evidence:

1. Snow Leopard Population Assessment for India (SPAI) protocol prepared and launched by the Hon'ble Minister of Environment, Forest & Climate Change, during the 4th Steering Committee meeting of the Global Snow Leopard and Ecosystem Protection Programme (GSLEP), organized on October 23-24, 2019 by MoEF&CC. The project is supporting implementation of snow leopard population assessment in its landscapes.

2. Compendium on best practices in India, launched by the Hon'ble Minister, EF&CC, Sri Prakash Javadekar during 4th Steering Committee Meeting of GSLEP, 22-23 October 2019.

3. Project insights and best practices shared with over 1,000 delegates through global partnerships for South-South Cooperation like Global Wildlife Program (GWP), Global Snow Leopard and Ecosystem Protection Program (GSLEP) as well as international UN conventions including the 14th Meeting of the Conference of the Parties to United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification (UNCCD COP14) and the 13th Meeting of the Conference of the Parties to Convention on the Conservation of Migratory Species of Wild Animals (CMS COP13)

4. The National and State Project Steering Committees have guided the Annual Work Plans to ensure convergence with existing projects and programmes in the landscapes. These plans reflect the diversity of issues in each landscape with the respective strategies for their redressal.

5. In response to the loss of jobs and livelihoods during the COVID-19 crisis, a rapid situational assessment was conducted in the project landscape. Based on the findings, the strategies and Annual Work Plans revised after due consultations and approval of the National Project Steering Committee and State Project Steering Committees.

6. The project has also identified emerging paradigms in the development sector including increased emphasis on private sector collaboration where partnerships are being explored in developing product value chains at the grassroots and creation of market-based financial instruments like venture capital among others.

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5. Is the project sufficiently at scale, or is there potential to scale up in the future, to meaningfully contribute to development change?

- 3: *There is credible evidence that the project is reaching a sufficient number of beneficiaries (either directly through significant coverage of target groups, or indirectly, through policy change) to meaningfully contribute to development change.*
- 2: While the project is currently not at scale, there are explicit plans in place to scale up the project in the future (e.g. by extending its coverage or using project results to advocate for policy change).
- 1: The project is not at scale, and there are no plans currently to scale up the project in the future.

Evidence:

The project is implementing a range of interventions that have built capacities of local community, forest and frontline officers and other relevant departments that are directly linked with the project. These interventions are helping the project achieve its goals, objectives and have adapted well to the development change. They are relevant across a variety of sectors from animal husbandry, habitat restoration, handicrafts and curbing illegal trade in wildlife. The interventions have been successfully tested in the project landscapes and may be scaled up with co-finance commitment of the Government of India. Some of these interventions are mentioned below:

1. The Snow Leopard Population Enumeration protocol finalized by India in October 2019 will be subsequently scaled up for adoption by other 11 range countries.
2. Wildlife Database Centre and Management Information System established in Uttarakhand collects temporal data of Illegal Trade in Wildlife and Human Wildlife Conflict for analysis.
3. Participatory snow leopard monitoring being conducted in project landscapes. This has been achieved by training local youth in citizen science and taxonomy under the project.
4. Off-Farm Farmer Producer Organizations (OFPO) established in Uttarakhand and Sikkim towards income enhancement of local communities, with a focus on women empowerment
5. Greening practices of key contributors to habitat degradation by installing new and innovative high-altitude biogas Digesters in Ladakh
6. Fellowship provided to youth from the local community for community radio and video documentation to document issues of biodiversity conservation and spread awareness

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6. Are the project's measures (through outputs, activities, indicators) to address gender inequalities and empower women relevant and producing the intended effect? If not, evidence-based adjustments and changes have been made.

- 3: The project team has systematically gathered data and evidence through project monitoring on the relevance of the measures to address gender inequalities and empower women. Analysis of data and evidence were used to inform adjustments and changes, as appropriate. (both must be true)
- 2: *The project team has some data and evidence on the relevance of the measures to address gender inequalities and empower women. There is evidence that at least some adjustments were made, as appropriate. (both must be true)***
- 1: The project team has limited or no evidence on the relevance of measures to address gender inequalities and empowering women. No evidence of adjustments and/or changes made. This option should also be selected if the project has no measures to address gender inequalities and empower women relevant to the project results and activities.

Evidence:

The project includes training and capacity building of communities for sustainable management of natural resources and enhanced livelihoods. This will indirectly empower women by ensuring creation of livelihood augmenting skills as well as avenues to reduce drudgery of work. Knowledge will also be imparted on tertiary functions like financial inclusion to complement creation of livelihoods.

Women dominant livelihood and value chain activities are being explored for upscaling including areas like weaving and stitching of handloom, nettle and Yak wool-based products, ecotourism/home stays and associated local product development, organic vegetable growing, carpet and blanket weaving. Women collectives like SHGs are being created to ensure better market linkages and enterprise management.

Some of these initiatives include:

1. Women from project landscapes are actively participating in training and capacity building programmes on citizen science and zoonotic sciences to participate in monitoring of snow leopards, migratory birds, associated species and in conducting surveys to gather data for combatting spread of zoonotic diseases.

2. Increased capacity of Community Based Organizations that are led by women through participatory rural appraisals for the development of village level micro-plans, thereby reducing the gap of women's participation in decision making processes at the village level.

3. An all women Biodiversity Management Committee formed in Ladakh to promote women's participation in decision making and management of natural resources

4. A rapid assessment conducted with local comm

unities affected by COVID-19 pandemic highlighted the need to support women in project landscapes, whose incomes had been adversely affected by lockdown restrictions and decline in tourism. This resulted in interventions to support women who ran a handloom-based organization (in Uttarakhand) by conducting a buyer-seller meet, which led to an immediate sale of products. The project also supported them in branding, marketing and convergence with the National Bank for Agriculture and Rural Development, who will support this 162-member enterprise for the next 5 years. Further, this organization prepared home isolation medicine kits for those infected by COVID-19, thereby supporting the local government. Cloth bags were stitched out of waste fabric to replace plastic bags in the kits.

5. Training and capacity building workshops conducted with local communities, with an emphasis on involvement of women, across Himachal Pradesh (sheep wool) and Sikkim (Nettle fiber and upcycling waste) to strengthen sustainable collection, production and enhance incomes. This work will follow the development of women run enterprises to make them economically independent, thereby resulting in empowerment.

6. Machinery deployed in Himachal Pradesh to reduce women's drudgery in extracting hazelnuts and walnuts from their shell. This initiative strengthens the existing value chain of Walnut and Hazelnut, reduces the time (from 3 days to 3 hours) required to break their shells and enables an increase in women's income.

7. Exposure trips organized for women involved in cultivation and processing of Medicinal and Aromatic Plants in Uttarakhand to understand models of Marketing and value chain development, thereby building their capacities to start their own enterprise in sustainable management of medicinal plants, a rich natural resource in project landscapes.

The project targets benefiting around 1,300 women in the mid-term targets and 6,500 in the end-term targets, and the same has been factored in the assignments that are in their implementation phase.

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7. Are social and environmental impacts and risks being successfully managed and monitored?

- 3: *Social and environmental risks are tracked in the risk log. Appropriate assessments conducted where required (i.e., Environmental and Social Impact Assessment (ESIA) for Substantial and High risk projects and some level of social and environmental assessment for Moderate risk projects as identified through SESP). Relevant management plan(s) developed for identified risks through consultative process and implemented, resourced, and monitored. Risks effectively managed or mitigated. If there has been a substantive change to the project or change in context that affects risk levels, the SESP is updated to reflect these changes. (all must be true)*
- 2: Social and environmental risks are tracked in the risk log. Appropriate assessments conducted where required (i.e., Environmental and Social Impact Assessment (ESIA) for Substantial and High risk projects and some level of social and environmental assessment for Moderate risk projects as identified through SESP). Relevant management plan(s) developed, implemented and monitored for identified risks. OR project is categorized as Low risk through the SESP.
- 1: Social and environmental risks have not been tracked in the risk log. For projects categorized as High, Substantial, and Moderate Risk there is no evidence that social and environmental assessments have been completed and/or management plans or measures development, implemented or monitored. There have been substantive changes to the project or changes in the context but SESP has not been updated. (any may be true)

Evidence:

In response to the COVID-19 pandemic, the country was under complete lockdown, which had an adverse impact on the lives and livelihoods of the communities in the landscape. The situation became worse due to the second wave of the COVID-19 from March – June, 2021, hampering project implementation in the landscape. In response to this crisis, the following interventions were initiated:

1. Facilitating women artisans in preparation of home isolation kits to support district administration in COVID-19 response in Uttarakhand
2. Facilitating market linkages for the handloom products made by women artisans
3. Raising awareness among local communities to follow COVID 19 appropriate behavior
4. Awareness and sensitization to prevent vaccine hesitancy caused by misinformation, in collaboration with the Health Department and the electronic Vaccine Intelligence Network in India.

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8. Are grievance mechanisms available to project-affected people and are grievances (if any) addressed to ensure any perceived harm is effectively mitigated?

- 3: Project-affected people have been actively informed of UNDP's Corporate Accountability Mechanism (SRM/SECU) and how to access it. If the project is categorized as High, Substantial, or Moderate Risk through the SESP, a project-level grievance mechanism is in place and project affected people informed. If grievances have been received, they are effectively addressed in accordance with SRM Guidance. (all must be true)
- 2: Project-affected people have been informed of UNDP's Corporate Accountability Mechanism and how to access it. If the project is categorized as Substantial or High Risk through the SESP, a project-level grievance mechanism is in place and project affected people informed. If grievances have been received they are responded to but face challenges in arriving at a resolution.
- 1: Project-affected people not informed of UNDP's Corporate Accountability Mechanism. If grievances have been received they are not responded to. (any may be true)

Evidence:

The project has established landscape and state level management units, which are lead by the office of the state forest or wildlife department. Landscape level Social mobilizers have been engaged from within the project villages to work directly with local village communities, facilitate community mobilization and bridge any communication gaps between the department and local community. The Grievance redressal mechanism established at the landscape, state and National level. At the landscape level, posters have also been placed at strategic location in the project landscape to help communities to file complaint (if any).

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No documents available.			

Management & Monitoring

Quality Rating: Exemplary

9. Is the project's M&E Plan sufficient and adequately implemented?

- 3: *The project has a comprehensive and costed M&E plan. Baselines, targets and milestones are fully populated. Progress data against indicators in the project's RRF is being reported regularly using credible data sources and collected according to the frequency stated in the Plan, including sex disaggregated data as relevant. Any evaluations conducted, if relevant, fully meet decentralized evaluation standards, including gender UNEG standards. Lessons learned, including during evaluations and/or After Action Reviews, are used to take corrective actions when necessary. (all must be true)*
- 2: The project has a costed M&E Plan, and most baselines and targets are populated. Progress data against indicators in the project's RRF is collected on a regular basis, although there may be some slippage in following the frequency stated in the Plan and data sources are not always reliable. Any evaluations conducted, if relevant, meet most decentralized evaluation standards. Lessons learned have been captured but may not have been used to take corrective actions yet. (all must be true)
- 1: The project has an M&E Plan, but costs are not clearly planned and budgeted for, or are unrealistic. Progress data is not being regularly collected against the indicators in the project's RRF. Evaluations may not meet decentralized evaluation standards. Lessons learned are rarely captured and used. Select this option also if the project does not have an M&E plan.

Evidence:

Weekly Critical Results Pathway (CRP) have been prepared for the project team. In addition, annual and multi-year work plans are in operation. The state teams submit monthly progress reports to track implementation.

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No documents available.			

10. Is project's governance mechanism (i.e., the project board or equivalent) functioning as intended?

- 3: *The project's governance mechanism is operating well, and is a model for other projects. It has met in the agreed frequency stated in the project document and the minutes of the meetings are on file. There is regular (at least annual) progress reporting to the project board or equivalent on results, risks and opportunities. It is clear that the project board explicitly reviews and uses evidence, including progress data, knowledge, lessons and evaluations, as the basis for informing management decisions (e.g., change in strategy, approach, work plan.) (all must be true to select this option)*
- 2: The project's governance mechanism has met in the agreed frequency and the minutes of the meeting are on file. A project progress report has been submitted to the project board or equivalent at least once in the past year, covering results, risks and opportunities. (both must be true to select this option)
- 1: The project's governance mechanism has not met in the frequency stated in the project document over the past year and/or the project board or equivalent is not functioning as a decision-making body for the project as intended.

Evidence:

The project has a National Technical Committee (NTC) which feeds into the National Project Steering Committee (NPSC) at the National Level. These committees meet regularly to discuss project progress and suggest course corrections. The NPSC meetings held regularly to oversee implementation of the project and approve the Annual Work Plans.

The State Project Steering Committee guides the project at the state level. The committees have been constituted and meetings have been held regularly in each state. In addition, the meetings of landscape level committee chaired by District Administration have been held to bring relevant connect with all relevant government and community stakeholders at the ground level.

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11. Are risks to the project adequately monitored and managed?

- 3: *The project has actively monitored risks every quarter including consulting with key stakeholders, including security advisors, to identify continuing and emerging risks and to assess if the main assumptions remain valid. There is clear evidence that relevant management plans and mitigating measures are being fully implemented to address each key project risk, and have been updated to reflect the latest risk assessment. (all must be true)*
- 2: The project has monitored risks every year, as evidenced by an updated risk log. Some updates have been made to management plans and mitigation measures.
- 1: The risk log has not been updated as required. There may be some evidence that the project has monitored risks (including security risks or incidents) that may affect the project's achievement of results, but there is no explicit evidence that management actions have been taken to mitigate risks. In the case of a deteriorating security environment, no consultation has occurred with the UNDP Security Office on appropriate measures.

Evidence:

At the state and landscape level, regular progress update meetings are being conducted with stakeholders and implementing technical partner agencies. These meetings are convened by the respective state forest and wildlife departments, with representation from UNDP and the Ministry of Environment Forest and Climate Change.

Through this mechanism, project implementing partners have revised their implementation strategy to ensure project targets are still being achieved with the limitations of the COVID-19 pandemic. Recommendations from these meetings have been instrumental in reducing the impact of the pandemic on women and youth and their livelihoods.

The project steering committees meetings have been taking place at both national and state levels that meet on a regular basis to monitor action taken so far and guide project progress.

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No documents available.			

Efficient

Quality Rating: Exemplary

12. Adequate resources have been mobilized to achieve intended results. If not, management decisions were taken to adjust expected results in the project's results framework.

- Yes
- No

Evidence:

Resources have been allocated both from GEF funds and state governments have earmarked funds from relevant schemes and programmes towards co-financing.

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No documents available.			

13. Are project inputs procured and delivered on time to efficiently contribute to results?

- 3: *The project has an updated procurement plan. Implementation of the plan is on or ahead of schedule. The project quarterly reviews operational bottlenecks to procuring inputs in a timely manner and addresses them through appropriate management actions. (all must be true)*
- 2: The project has an updated procurement plan. The project annually reviews operational bottlenecks to procuring inputs in a timely manner and addresses them through appropriate management actions. (all must be true)
- 1: The project does not have an updated procurement plan. The project may or may not have reviewed operational bottlenecks to procuring inputs in a timely manner, however management actions have not been taken to address them.

Evidence:

States have submitted list of items and assignments for assistance from UNDP Country Office for advertising and contracting. The National Project Management Unit works closely with the UNDP procurement team to ensure that the products and services are contracted and delivered in a timely manner with proper documentation.

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14. Is there regular monitoring and recording of cost efficiencies taking into account the expected quality of results?

- 3: *There is evidence that the project regularly reviews costs against relevant comparators (e.g., other projects or country offices) or industry benchmarks to ensure the project maximizes results that can be delivered with given resources. The project actively coordinates with other relevant ongoing projects and initiatives (UNDP or other) to ensure complementarity and seek efficiencies wherever possible (e.g. joint activities.) (both must be true)*
- 2: The project monitors its own costs and gives anecdotal examples of cost efficiencies (e.g., spending less to get the same result,) but there is no systematic analysis of costs and no link to the expected quality of results delivered. The project coordinates activities with other projects to achieve cost efficiency gains.
- 1: There is little or no evidence that the project monitors its own costs and is considering ways to save money beyond following standard procurement rules.

Evidence:

Hiring of technical experts/consultants is done on a need basis with justified cost and due after consultations with other project teams and procurement unit. The same is reported in the quarterly progress reports. The payments are based on deliverables/ milestones to ensure quality outputs within stipulated timeframes.

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No documents available.			

Effective

Quality Rating: Exemplary

15. Is the project is on track to deliver its expected outputs?

- Yes
- No

Evidence:

The project was launched on 2 October 2017 by the Hon'ble Minister for Environment, Forest and Climate Change, Government of India. Post launch, national and state project management units were established and resources were hired for technical and administrative roles. National and State Project Steering Committees and Technical Committees were constituted with participation from subject matter experts and other government ministries and state departments.

Multi-year and annual work plans have been developed in consultation with the states and activities; assignments and baseline studies have been commissioned as per the work plans. Certain delays have been experienced due to harsh weather conditions and a limiting working period owing to heavy snowfall and extended period of cold weather, which result in inaccessible landscapes, lack of resources and sub-zero temperatures. This has been compounded by the covid-19 pandemic.

However, these delays have been accounted for and on-ground activities have been expedited. Project delivery is on track and all activities under the work plans are designed to be completed within the stipulated time period.

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No documents available.			

16. Have there been regular reviews of the work plan to ensure that the project is on track to achieve the desired results, and to inform course corrections if needed?

- 3: Quarterly progress data has informed regular reviews of the project work plan to ensure that the activities implemented are most likely to achieve the desired results. There is evidence that data and lessons learned (including from evaluations and/or After Action Reviews) have been used to inform course corrections, as needed. Any necessary budget revisions have been made. (both must be true)
- 2: There has been at least one review of the work plan per year to assess if project activities are on track to achieving the desired development results (i.e., outputs.) There may or may not be evidence that data or lessons learned has been used to inform the review(s). Any necessary budget revisions have been made.
- 1: While the project team may have reviewed the work plan at least once over the past year to ensure outputs are delivered on time, no link has been made to the delivery of desired development results. Select this option also if no review of the work plan by management has taken place over the past year.

Evidence:

In addition to the National and State Project Steering Committee meetings, State Technical Committee Meetings have been held regularly in each state.

The National Project Management Unit (NPMU) has held three review meetings with all agencies in addition to which one-to-one review meetings have also been held with the agencies.

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No documents available.			

17. Are targeted groups being systematically identified and engaged, prioritizing the marginalized and excluded, to ensure results are achieved as expected?

- 3: *The project is targeting specific groups and/or geographic areas, identified by using credible data sources on their capacity needs, deprivation and/or exclusion from development opportunities relevant to the project's area of work. There is clear evidence that the targeted groups are being reached as intended. The project has engaged regularly with targeted groups over the past year to assess whether they are benefiting as expected and adjustments were made if necessary to refine targeting. (all must be true)*
- 2: The project is targeting specific groups and/or geographic areas, based on some evidence of their capacity needs, deprivation and/or exclusion from development opportunities relevant to the project's area of work. Some evidence is provided to confirm that project beneficiaries are members of the targeted groups. There has been some engagement with beneficiaries in the past year to assess whether they are benefiting as expected. (all must be true)
- 1: The project does not report on specific targeted groups. There is no evidence to confirm that project beneficiaries are deprived and/or excluded from development opportunities relevant to the project area of work. There may have been some engagement with beneficiaries to assess whether they are benefiting as expected, but it has been limited or has not occurred in the past year.
- Not Applicable

Evidence:

The project interventions have enabled tribal communities, women and youth to engage in activities that contribute to conservation, sustainable livelihoods and curbing illegal trade in wildlife. These interventions have trained and built the capacity of specific stakeholder groups like women and youth in skills that not only help achieve project targets but also ensure economic independence. Women have been introduced to activities like mountaineering, which was an area dominated by men. Youth have been trained in communications like video and audio documentation to see insights into socio-economic-ecological issues from the eyes of the local communities.

During the covid-19 pandemic, the project conducted a rapid socio-economic survey to address gaps and issues faced by the local communities in the landscapes. On-ground interventions like buyer-seller meets have been organized to address the issues faced by women-self help groups in the project landscape.

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No documents available.			

Sustainability & National Ownership

Quality Rating: Satisfactory

18. Are stakeholders and national partners fully engaged in the decision-making, implementation and monitoring of the project?

- 3: Only national systems (i.e., procurement, monitoring, evaluation, etc.) are used to fully implement and monitor the project. All relevant stakeholders and partners are fully and actively engaged in the process, playing a lead role in project decision-making, implementation and monitoring. (both must be true)
- 2: *National systems (i.e., procurement, monitoring, evaluation, etc.) are used to implement and monitor the project, but other support (such as country office support or project systems) may also be used if necessary. All relevant stakeholders and partners are fully and actively engaged in the process, playing an active role in project decision-making, implementation and monitoring. (both must be true)*
- 1: There is relatively limited or no engagement with national stakeholders and partners in the decision-making, implementation and/or monitoring of the project.
- Not Applicable

Evidence:

In addition to the steering committee meetings, one to one consultations have been held with the Ministry, State Forest Departments and other relevant departments including agriculture, organic farming, skill development, rural development and tourism among others.

Meetings have also taken place with NGOs to apprise the project on current on-ground scenarios, private sector and corporates for developing value chains and market linkages.

UNDP Country Office ensures that the state forest departments are fully engaged in implementation, monitoring and plays active role in decision making.

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19. There is regular monitoring of changes in capacities and performance of institutions and systems relevant to the project, as needed. The [implementation arrangements](#)⁵ have been adjusted according to changes in partner capacities.

- 3: In the past two years, changes in capacities and performance of institutions and systems have been comprehensively assessed/monitored using clear indicators, rigorous methods of data collection and credible data sources including relevant HACT assurance activities. Implementation arrangements have been formally reviewed and adjusted, if needed, in agreement with partners according to changes in partner capacities. (both must be true)
- 2: *In the past two years, aspects of changes in capacities and performance of relevant national institutions and systems have been monitored by the project using indicators and reasonably credible data sources including relevant HACT assurance activities. Some adjustment has been made to implementation arrangements if needed to reflect changes in partner capacities. (both must be true)*
- 1: Some aspects of changes in capacities and performance of relevant national institutions and systems may have been monitored by the project, however changes to implementation arrangements have not been considered. Also select this option if changes in capacities and performance of relevant national institutions and systems have not been monitored by the project.
- Not Applicable

Evidence:

In the past two years, performance of agencies engaged in the project has been monitored programmatically. The spot checks has been conducted to review and monitor the financial systems practiced by the national institutions.

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20. The transition and phase-out arrangements are reviewed regularly and adjusted according to progress (including financial commitments and capacity).

- 3: The project's governance mechanism has reviewed the project's sustainability plan, including arrangements for transition and phase-out, to ensure the project is on track in meeting the requirements set out by the plan. The plan has been adjusted according to progress as needed. (both must be true)
- 2: *There has been a review of the project's sustainability plan, including arrangements for transition and phase-out, to ensure the project is on track in meeting the requirements set out by the plan.*
- 1: The project may have a sustainability plan, but there has not been a review of this strategy since it was developed. Also select this option if the project does not have a sustainability strategy.

Evidence:

New programmes and partnerships are in the process of development. The State Government of Uttarakhand has been planning to replicate the learning of the project in other landscape. The process for developing proposal for the same is under progress. The partnerships with NABARD, NAFED and SRLMs has been endured to build synergies. Market linkages through private sector collaborations will ensure sustainability of value chains created or augmented.

Periodic review of project plan is carried out under the guidance of the steering committees vis-à-vis the progress on-ground to make necessary adjustments

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QA Summary/Project Board Comments

The project is implementing landscape-based approach to conservation in remote high-altitude Himalayan regions and strike a balance between conservation and economic development for marginalized communities inhabiting these regions. In the initial years of implementation, there have been delays while the National and State Project Management mechanisms were being set up, after which the landscapes became inaccessible due to harsh weather. Despite the delays and disturbances caused by the COVID-19 pandemic, all activities under the project are on track and the project has also realigned its implementation strategy to address threats arising from the pandemic.

The project has made significant progress in meeting the conservation objectives, and also proactively addressed issues arising due to the lockdown including increased instances of human wildlife conflict. Through the One Health approach, the project is taking a holistic approach to mitigate rise and impact of zoonoses from wild areas.

In terms of delivery, the project has met its annual targets and technical assignments have been commissioned to undertake scientific monitoring and assessments as well as develop a livelihood strategy for the landscapes. Going ahead, accessibility of landscapes, movement restrictions due to Covid-19 pandemic and fund-flow mechanisms are two key risk areas for which revised plans are being developed by the states.