



STRENGTHENING QINGHAI WOMEN FARMERS' INCOME SECURITY AND RESILIENCE IN A CHANGING CLIMATE

End Of Project Evaluation – Final Report
(July 2018 – April 2021)
September 2021



Members of the Guanglin Cooperative at Minhe County
showing off their produce (UN Women / Qiu Bi)

Learn more about the project in the video:
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UN WOMEN
September 2021

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ACRONYMS AND ABBREVIATIONS

AWP	Annual Work Plan
CC	Climate Change
CAS	Chinese Academy of Sciences
EQ	Evaluation Questions
FAO	Food and Agriculture Organization
FFS	Farmer Field School
FGD	Focus Group Discussion
GEWE	Gender Equality and Women’s Empowerment
IFAD	International Fund for Agricultural Development
IGSNRR	Institute of Geographic Sciences and Natural Resources Research
KI	Key Informant
KII	Key Informant Interviews
MLE	Monitoring, Learning and Evaluation
NGO	Non-Governmental Organisation
PMO	Project Management Office
QWFIS	“Strengthening Qinghai Women Farmers’ Income Security and Resilience in a Changing Climate” Project
QLMAPRP	Qinghai Liupan Mountain Area Poverty Reduction Project
RG	Reference Group
RP	Responsible Party
SP	Strategic Plan
TOC	Theory of Change
TOR	Terms of Reference
UNEG	United Nations Evaluation Group
UNEP-IEMP	United Nations Environmental Programme- International Ecosystem Management Partnership
WEE	Women’s Economic Empowerment



Members of the Guanglin Cooperative at Minhe County shipping off their produce (UN Women / Qiu Bi)

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

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Background

Over the past three decades, China has achieved impressive economic growth and lifted millions of people out of poverty and hunger. However, rapid economic transformation has left some segments of population behind as they have not been able to fully benefit from growth in the same way as some other fast-growing sectors, such as manufacturing and services. Extreme poverty concentrated in the rural areas, particularly in the western provinces of China, where the ecological environment is fragile and vulnerable to climate change. These provinces are also located in mountainous areas, where market linkages, infrastructure and services are still underdeveloped. Rural livelihoods in the western provinces largely depend on the agricultural sector, which is susceptible to the negative impacts of global warming and climate-induced disasters, such as droughts, floods, and earthquakes.

Women farmers are a particularly vulnerable segment of the population in the rural areas of China. They comprise approximately 70% of the agricultural labour force in China.³ This is because, in most cases, rural male laborers have migrated to urban areas to work. Women play a critical role in supporting food and nutrition, improving rural livelihoods, and generating income and overall wellbeing, whilst also performing most of the unpaid care work.

Qinghai Province, located in the west of China is one of the poorest provinces in the country. It suffers from land degradation that can lead to reduction of agricultural productivity, decreased resilience to droughts and floods, including degradation of water resources and the damaging of infrastructure and irrigation schemes, which contribute to the perpetuation of poverty and

3 <http://www.scio.gov.cn/zfbps/ndhf/2015/Document/1449896/1449896.htm> (in Chinese)

deterioration of livelihoods among the rural poor, especially women.

The “Strengthening Qinghai Women Farmers’ Income Security and Resilience in a Changing Climate” (QWFIS) project was designed to respond to these key challenges and harness the current global and national momentum and support for women farmers’ poverty reduction in the face of climate change. The project is part of an ongoing collaboration between UN Women and IFAD country offices in China. IFAD implemented the *Qinghai Liupan Mountain Area Poverty Reduction Project* (2015- 2020)⁴. The UN Women project built on and complemented IFAD’s project.

Day-to-day project implementation was led by a team from Institute of Geographic Sciences and Natural Resources Research (IGSNRR) at Chinese Academy of Sciences (CAS), which is also the team of United Nations Environmental Programme - International Ecosystem Management Partnership (UNEP-IEMP), as Responsible Party (RP), with UN Women China Office’s oversight. The duration of the project is three years (July 2018 - June 2021), and the indicative budget is USD \$950,000 of which USD \$800,000 were contributed by the Chanel Foundation and USD \$150,000 came from UN Women core funding.

Evaluation Objectives

The main purpose of the evaluation was to measure

4 The IFAD project is organized around four components: 1) climate resilient irrigation infrastructure and integrated land resource management to meet the demand of the rural poor for productive assets; 2) market-oriented agriculture mainly focusing on development of cash crops, economic tree crops, livestock and enhancement of market access through development of farmer cooperatives; 3) off-farm livelihood support; and 4) project management and coordination.

the progress of the project against its target results with the resources allocated. Specifically, the final evaluation assessed progress towards project outputs and outcomes as specified in the Project Document and Performance Monitoring Framework. The evaluation also provides learnings into how much UN Women's efforts contributed to women's economic empowerment and rural women's development in China. The findings and recommendations will be used to inform the coming UN Women China office Women's Economic Empowerment strategy development, especially in the Climate Change (CC) portfolio, one of the key areas of UN Women China.

Evaluation Methodology

The evaluation was carried out with a utilization-focused and contribution analysis approaches; also followed the key human rights and gender equality principles of transparency and participation, ensuring consultation with stakeholder groups involved in the execution of the project and included women, individuals and groups, who are vulnerable and/or discriminated.

Both primary and secondary data sources were used. A total of 95 project stakeholders (75 women and 20 men) were interviewed. The national consultant conducted a field trip to the 3 project counties (Minhe, Huangyuan, and Huzhu) in Qinghai province in August 2021. A total of 91 persons (72 women and 19 men) were interviewed in - person. Twenty – six semi-structured interviews (9 women and 17 men) were held with project management offices at the provincial and local levels and project partners such as enterprises and Women's Federation representatives. In addition, six FGDs were organised in 5 villages (65 persons including 63 women [including 4 disabled women] and 2 men). During the same period, the international consultant conducted four semi-structured interviews (1 man and 3 women) remotely with the following KIs: two representatives of the project Responsible Party, the project programme at UN Women China office,

and the project contact person at IFAD.

The evaluation is guided by the UN Evaluation Group's (UNEG) Norms and Standards for Evaluation in the UN System and UN Women's Evaluation Guidelines.

Findings

Relevance

The evaluators find 'relevance' to be highly satisfactory, given the overall consistency of the project design with the needs of the beneficiaries and its continued alignment with UN Women's and national policies and development priorities. The intervention and modalities were appropriate through the evolving circumstances of implementation; the implied internal logic remained coherent with the poverty profile and ongoing agricultural transformation in the country. The design remained relevant until project completion, with some operational changes, which were more adaptations to the external context without compromising the project rationale, values, and principles.

Findings:

- » Finding 1. The project was designed based on studies and evidence collected directly in the project areas. This rendered the project not only relevant, but also closely aligned with local women needs.
- » Finding 2. The project was relevant to rural women's needs to generate independent income. It responded to one of the most stringent needs expressed by the women themselves and one of the major obstacles to women's economic empowerment.
- » Finding 3. The project is relevant to China's priority to eliminate absolute poverty by the end of 2020.
- » Finding 4. The loan service from IFAD project component was readjusted due to overlap with existing governmental initiatives. This did not necessarily affect UN Women's project relevance, but might have reduced women's possible chance of accessing loan service.

Effectiveness

The evaluators find ‘effectiveness’ to be satisfactory. The outputs were delivered, and targets met and/or exceeded. The project’s interventions led to the expected outcome of *‘more women farmers in Qinghai Province have increased income security and are more resilient in a changing climate.’* The key factors that facilitated the achievement of project’s results include the national enabling policy and legislative environment to support the implementation of climate-smart agriculture and gender-sensitive policy and regulations to enhance access to finance and productive resources, including land’s rights, tenure, and ownership. This is an area of high political sensitivity, therefore the project identified key areas of work that it could engage in (e.g. advocacy) and interventions at the local level (i.e. more flexibility and less political sensitivity). Covid 19 pandemic and resulting lockdown and restrictions on movement of people and gatherings are the main factors that impacted project implementation. It caused some delay but did not prevent the achievement of project targets and results.

Findings:

- » Finding 5. The project delivered on the expected results and achieved all outputs as per the Results Framework.
- » Finding 6. The project enhanced service providers’ capacities to serve rural women better, which contributed to increasing women’s access to resources and services.
- » Finding 7. COVID-19 slowed down project implementation temporarily but did not affect overall effectiveness.

Efficiency

The evaluation finds efficiency to be ‘satisfactory’ based on the stakeholder analysis (see following sections), as well as the distribution of responsibilities among responsible and participating parties. Overall, the project implementation was timely and efficient, no major delays or disturbances were reported. The

main opportunity for cost – efficiency was in the joint collaboration between UN Women and IFAD, including the use of the same PMOs, staff and logistical arrangements for project activities (e.g., training facilities, material, etc.) The main barrier was linked to differences in reporting rules and procedures employed by the UN (UN Women and IFAD) and governmental entities (PMOs and RP). This was overcome by training of project staff and by finding common ground on the operations and management. The M&E system used to monitor project performance was adequate. The main challenge lies in the choice of indicators for capacity – development programmes, which often focus on inputs / outputs and do not reflect the main outcome fully, which is learning, especially the ability to apply knowledge in the long-term.

Findings:

- » Finding 8. The choice of the project Responsible Party was justified and ensured close coordination.
- » Finding 9. The project’s main cost-efficiency opportunity was leveraging human and financial resources, as well as project management structures with IFAD.
- » Finding 10. The main barriers to efficiency relate to different expectations (central level vs provincial level). The project delivered mainly ‘soft’ measures as ‘hard’ investments were already provided by the government. The project created added value by providing learning and knowledge sharing opportunities.
- » Finding 11. The M&E system allowed UN Women to track progress, identify potential problems and make necessary adjustments to the project. The extent of learning and knowledge use in the long – term remain elusive.

Contribution to Impact

The evaluators find that the project’s contribution to impact is ‘satisfactory’ based on the qualitative and quantitative evidence reviewed. Some 69,444 women farmers directly benefited from training on leadership and gender awareness; livelihood and skills building, including on agricultural practices;

and e-commerce and micro-finance. Overall, 458 service providers have been trained on gender awareness through interactive participatory trainings. The average annual income of women farmers in the agricultural cooperative supported by the project increased by over RMB 10,000 (1550 USD). In the context of the government's programme to eradicate the absolute poverty by 2020, the project's interventions were channelled to reach or serve 48% of the registered poor living the project area; its contribution margin to the direct beneficiaries was estimated to be significant, as the project invested mainly in building the target groups' productive and income-generating assets and capacities, which provided a higher leverage effect on rural livelihood improvement.

Findings:

- » Finding 12. The project enhanced women's confidence and control over their income, their decision-making power within families and community. This was a positive unexpected project result.
- » Finding 13. The project enhanced women's organizations, networks and leadership capacities. This is an expected positive project result contributing to women's empowerment and resilience outcome.
- » Finding 14. Women gained access to markets and moved up the agricultural value chain. This is an expected positive project result contributing to women's economic empowerment and financial resilience outcome.
- » Finding 15. The project enhanced women's resilience to climate change. Although not easily quantifiable and measurable, this is an expected positive project result.

Contribution towards Sustainability

The evaluators find that the sustainability of project results will depend on the political will, environment, tools and skills in place and a virtuous cycle of demand created so that provincial authorities continue to employ such approaches. This is a long-term process under the best of circumstances. There are several elements that

could contribute towards project's sustainability. Firstly, the project was designed in line with the government poverty reduction policy for sustainable livelihoods. Secondly, the project has an exit strategy that is institutionalized through key government partners as well as the network of women's farmer organizations. Thirdly, the fact that implementation of project activities was managed by RP, which is a permanent government institution, supports the likelihood that the project interventions would be institutionalized into long-term practice and continue to sustain and promote the results of this project beyond its completion.

Findings:

- » Finding 16. Sustainability of project achievements will depend on women's capacities to continue generating independent income and continue mutual support through women's organisations and networks. This will depend on the political will, environment, tools and skills in place and a virtuous cycle of demand created so that both service providers and women continue to employ capacities built and knowledge transferred.
- » Finding 17. Provincial and county authorities are likely to use project sites as demonstration models. This points to replicability in other villages and provinces.

Gender Equality and Human Rights

The evaluators find 'gender equality and human rights' dimension of the project to be satisfactory. The project has been implemented with adequate attention to women participation in and benefit from project activities and their empowerment. The project M&E system monitored sex-disaggregated information in this regard. The project also involved Women Federations throughout implementation to enhance their capacity. Special attention was given to promote women's off-farm income generation skills to achieve economic empowerment, which in turn contributed to better control of assets and decision making at home. Several types of project activities such as irrigation improvement, animal sheds and greenhouses have led to reduced workload and hardship for women.

Findings:

- » Finding 18. The project adopted a women farmer-centred participatory approach to poverty reduction, addressing barriers in the selected counties to increase women's economic empowerment and resilience in a changing climate.

Coherence with UN Women policies and interventions of other actors, especially the UN

The evaluation finds that the project is coherent with UN Women policies. UN Women is at the centre of the gender equality architecture of the UN system and has a triple mandate that integrates normative support, co-ordination and programmatic functions. The project also contributed to UNDAF Outcome 1, *“more people, particularly the vulnerable and disadvantaged, enjoy improved conditions and increased opportunities for economic, social, and cultural development, through working in parallel, adopting the respective comparative advantages”*, working jointly with IFAD.

Findings:

- » Finding 19. The project is coherent with UN Women mission and strategically positioned UN Women China at the centre of development efforts to economically empowering women in the context of climate change.

Conclusions

Overall, the evaluation concluded that UN Women has established itself as a credible and respected voice and partner in China. The QWFIS project undoubtedly informed UN Women's work on gender in the country in general, and the work on helping rural women working in agriculture who find themselves disproportionately vulnerable to environmental challenges in particular. The project contributed to combatting this inequality and poverty among women farmers by equipping them with social and economic resilience skills. It also helped advance UN SDG Agenda by contributing to Goal 5 on Gender Equality, Goal 8 on Decent

Work and Economic Growth and Goal 13 on Climate Change Action.

Some of the key achievements of the project are:

- » 69,444 women farmers have directly benefited from training on leadership and gender awareness; livelihood and skills building, including on agricultural practices; and e-commerce and micro-finance.
- » 458 service providers have been trained on gender awareness through interactive participatory trainings. These mostly comprise government officials from poverty alleviation sectors, financial sectors, women's federations, and agricultural extensions.
- » 6 women's networks and community cooperatives have been built or strengthened, including one women-led agricultural cooperative, to increase their collectivization, advocacy and leadership, and their participation in poverty alleviation and entrepreneurship.
- » The average annual income of women farmers in the agricultural cooperative supported by the project has increased by over RMB 10,000.

Some of the unexpected positive results of the project included strengthened women's ability to maintain sustainable income even during COVID-19 hit. Women's leadership skills developed through the project was also demonstrated through their contribution in the fight against the COVID-19. As farmers, these women play a critical role in food security in the aftermath of COVID-19. Bringing their voices and leadership at the forefront of the recovery phase was very important.

Some of the challenges noted by the evaluation include sustainability of knowledge gained and of project results overall. Sustainability will depend on political will, environment, tools and skills in place and a virtuous cycle of demand created so that provincial authorities continue to employ such approaches. Whether or not the created knowledge and skills will continue to be applied in the long-term (conducting to systemic change) also remains unclear. This is a long-term process under the best of circumstances.

Lessons Learnt

The evaluation confirms that overall, the project generated good practices which could be replicated in other projects and in other countries that have similar interventions. Based on these, as well as on other evaluation findings presented in the previous sections, the evaluation would like to highlight the following lessons that have been learned through the experience of the project under review.

What worked well / enabling factors:

1. It is a viable strategy for UN Women to partner up with reputable national institutions for project delivery. In this case, UN Women China was able to partner up with RP, build on its strengths and provide technical support, including project management staff awareness and capacities, thus achieving complementarity and scaling.
2. Institutional partnership with IFAD as an efficient way of mutual leverage between UN agencies, especially in gender empowerment and enhanced women equality. Note that such parallel project collaboration constitutes a new step and a replicable model of inter-agency partnership for UN China, which is highly in line with the objective of the ongoing UN reform, especially under the UN Sustainable Development Cooperation Framework in joint programming. Such cooperation has been successful in effectively exploring the comparative advantages of respective agencies, mutually leveraging the expertise in financing and investments, agriculture and rural development, gender empowerment and enhanced women participation; it presents a flexible applicability as early as at project design, or in the middle of a project implementation.
3. Capacity–developing initiatives in the area of gender and climate change awareness (as any other capacity – developing initiatives) are reputedly slow-paced and long-term endeavours as they try to develop behavioural and attitude change. In this context, enabling factors for the project included gaining government’s trust and using leverage through mechanisms such as baseline study and

research in Qinghai province. Other enabling factors include continuous policy dialogue and technical assistance at multiple levels (province, county, village) and to multiple stakeholders (government officials, private sector, rural women) and using the right support mix (classroom and practical training, study visits). The capacity – developing approaches espoused by the project were particularly appreciated by rural women, as testified during interviews. Many of them never got a chance to go out of their local areas and to see how other women were generating income and managed their businesses. This opportunity changed their minds on matters that they could not “fully believe” before, and enhanced their confidence and aspiration, as well as broadened their perspectives.

4. The project structure allowed for information to circulate in a timely and useful manner between all levels involved thanks to the PMOs, the focal points at RP and IFAD. This network of staff both inside UN Women China and outside ensured that there was regular contact and flow of information towards the main offices in Beijing and vice versa. Project stakeholders described collaboration with UN Women office at all levels as “very positive” including communication, information sharing, availability and responsiveness of staff.
5. The project architecture, which was based on permanent physical presence in the project villages and counties, has increased UN Women visibility and relevance, as well as ability to meet the needs of stakeholders (government service providers, Women’s Federations, cooperatives and enterprises, and rural women overall) thus making it a stronger partner to work with. As several KIs noted during interviews, *“it would have been a lot more difficult to interact with UN Women and the project if they were not based full – time in the counties”*.

What could be improved / obstacles:

1. As has been demonstrated by the efforts to develop gender capacity to date, making progress takes time. In the context of capacity

development, which seeks to change behaviour, institutional culture and capacity, such processes require more time than the project has. All stakeholders interviewed expressed hope that support would continue beyond the current end date of the project. This is clearly a highly relevant area for any future UN Women interventions in China.

2. This challenge is reflected in the project results and reporting framework, which is constrained to opt for indicators that capture progress on highly dimensional phenomena (e.g. “capacity” or “knowledge”) by collapsing them into single dimensions (e.g. “number of trainings” or “number of participants”). An additional challenge lies in gauging the quality of training provided and trying to establish whether or not trainings were conducted in a way that was conducive to learning. The evaluation found that indicators tend to capture immediate impact generated shortly after completion of capacity – development activities (mainly relying on self-assessment) but less so the extent of learning or how long it is going to last. In some instances, form can trump function, and low-capacity organizations and individuals may camouflage: pretending to meet requirements instead of actually meeting them. Thus, the quality of capacities built and knowledge transferred makes short term improvements without necessarily leading to systemic change. This seems to be one of the project challenges in particular with regard to sustainability of results.
3. The project dedicated resources to the production and sharing of knowledge. However, this evaluation could not clearly conclude to what extent those practices will continue after the project completion. This evaluation finds that although quality research, lessons learned and promising practices were identified, challenges remain in turning this knowledge into long lasting rather than ad – hoc practices. For example, it remains unclear to what extent governmental service providers will turn knowledge received during the project into institutional guidance to be followed permanently.

Recommendations:

These recommendations are based on evaluation findings and stem from the views and opinions collected during interviews. The recommendations were validated by key users (i.e. UN Women, IFAD and CAS) during the validation workshop. These recommendations may also be useful to UN Women China in formulating their coming Women’s Economic Empowerment Strategy development, especially in the Climate Change portfolio, one of the key areas of UN Women China:

- » **Recommendation 1.** UN Women China should continue efforts to sustain growing interest from various stakeholders and to attract new partners and sources of funding to drive the agenda of women empowerment and climate change forward. The QWFIS project provides UN Women with more evidence to showcase progress and share key messages and lessons learnt. This opportunity should be used to engage with other provinces, counties and villages in the country, continue partnership with IFAD and RP and explore new partnerships with other UN Agencies (e.g., FAO). (Findings 1, 2, 12, 13, 14, 15, 19)
- » **Recommendation 2.** The project approach and strategy provide a good framework to identify challenges rural women face and to design activities in response to those challenges. UN Women China is encouraged to continue this type of projects during the next strategic period, in order to foster ownership of the reform processes it launched together with the Chinese authorities and to see through the changes it initiated. One option would be to keep the current counties in order to build continuity and monitor moving forward and add more counties from other provinces following a needs identification and selection process similar to the one conducted for this project. (Findings 16, 17, 18)
 - **Action point:** Develop a project building on QWFIS experience taking further the agenda of women’s empowerment as a key element to successfully addressing climate change, enhancing agrobiodiversity, transforming food systems and increasing

family incomes. The timing is appropriate as the Chinese government released the 14th Five Year Plan, which is an opportunity to put forward project promoting climate justice in China (e.g. transition to green economy, gender transformative, climate smart agriculture and sustainable food systems; enhancing and leveraging the capacity of women and girls to build resilience to climate and disaster-related risks).

» **Recommendation 3.** UN Women China is encouraged to keep up the good work in terms of project governance and management. The current practices allow for a timely and useful information, ensure transparency of actions, and give UN Women China the proper channels for accountability towards stakeholders, partners and donors. The regular meetings and project site visits were appreciated by all stakeholders. However, the evaluation also noted that local stakeholders may have had diverging expectations regarding project interventions (e.g. expected the project to provide ‘hard’ investments whereas that was never in the scope of the project). The recommendation is to clarify expectations from the get-go and re-confirm these during project meetings. (Findings 5, 8, 9, 10)

- **Action point:** Consider setting up a project steering committee, which would convene regularly (e.g. twice a year) to provide strategic guidance to project implementation but also give the opportunity to all project partners to clarify expectations arising from implementing activities in the field.

» **Recommendation 4.** The project has set up a good M&E process and tools. It allows gathering information on a regular basis thus enabling adequate monitoring. However, UN Women China is encouraged to think how to include more indicators that gauge unquantifiable aspects such as ‘capacity built and used’, ‘knowledge acquired and used’, and indicators of change to track the extent to which an intervention is producing the changes anticipated in the results chain. UN Women China is encouraged to recruit a M&E

specialist, who would work with the provincial levels and the RP to streamline the approach. The expected project results and outcomes are complex processes involving many moving parts. A list of quantitative indicators (no matter how well formulated) is never going to gauge such complex processes and will always tend to collapse multiple aspects into simple-to-track numerical indicators. Therefore, the recommendation is to consider a twin-track approach to monitoring and reporting. (Findings 11, 16).

- **Action point:** consider a twin-track approach to monitoring and reporting. This connects monitoring the quantitative results and contributions of the Results Framework (Track 1) to monitoring the overall long-term outcomes (Track 2), which are often qualitative or narrative-based. Track 1 will be monitored through the indicators in the Results Framework, while Track 2 will be monitored through the application of the Most Significant Change (MSC)⁵ methodology. The MSC approach involves generating and analysing personal accounts of change and deciding which of these accounts is the most significant – and why. MSC is not just about collecting and reporting stories but about having processes to learn from these stories. MSC can be very helpful in explaining HOW change comes about (processes and causal mechanisms) and WHEN (in what situations and contexts). It can therefore be useful to support the development of project theory (theory of change, logic models). As such, Track 2 will capture stories of progress and results – that is, qualitative demonstrations of the impact that the project is having on the ground, to ensure a holistic picture of progress is received over time. These stories could be collected via the project Facebook page or website, creating an open call for members, trainees, and visitors to submit narrative examples of how the project had an impact.

5 https://www.betterevaluation.org/en/plan/approach/most_significant_change



A member of the Guanglin Agricultural Cooperative at Minhe County (UN Women / Qiu Bi)

1

INTRODUCTION

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background and Context of the Project

Over the past three decades, China has achieved impressive economic growth and lifted millions of people out of poverty and hunger. However, this has not necessarily translated into sustainable and equitable development outcomes. The rapid economic transformation has left some segments of population behind as they have not been able to fully benefit from growth in the same way as some other fast-growing sectors, such as manufacturing and services. In 2017, China's total employment in agriculture was 133.5 million or 17.5% of total employment⁶. Extreme poverty concentrated in the rural areas, particularly in the western provinces of China, where the ecological environment is fragile and vulnerable to climate change. These provinces are also located in mountainous areas, where market linkages, infrastructure and services are still underdeveloped. Rural livelihoods in the western provinces largely depend on the agricultural sector, which is susceptible to the negative impacts of global warming and climate-induced disasters, such as droughts, floods, and earthquakes.

Women comprise some 60% of the agricultural labour force in China,⁷ because more rural male laborers have migrated to urban areas for work. Women play a critical role in supporting food and nutrition, and generating income and overall wellbeing, whilst also performing most of the unpaid care work. However, the income disparity between women and men in rural areas of China has widened. According to findings from the nation-wide Chinese Women Social Status Survey conducted by the All-China Women's Federation

and the National Bureau of Statistics every 10 years, the percentage of rural women's income in comparison to rural men's incomes has widen from 79% in 1990, to 69.6% in 2000, to just 56% in 2010 meaning the income disparity is growing.⁸ The reality of the growing income disparity for rural women, coupled with the fact that they also bear the burden of agricultural labour and unpaid care work.

Women are more vulnerable and at risks of falling deeper into extreme poverty, compared with men, given existing socio-economic barriers terms of access to financial and productive resource and unequitable decision-making power within the household. In addition, they constitute a relatively larger segment of population in the rural areas of China. This is partly due to male labour migration to the cities. Women farmers continue to face several challenges, including capacity gaps (e.g. knowledge and skill to advance agricultural productivity, marketing and financial literacy, among others) and limited access to agricultural technology, resources and services, and limited voice and participation in decision-making at the household and community levels. Women smallholder farmers do not have profitable market access and lack collective bargaining power/network to produce high value-added agricultural products. These existing challenges faced by women farmers have now been exacerbated by emerging challenges in the context of climate change and climate-induced natural disasters. Furthermore, government and services providers tend to have limited understanding of the gender dimensions of poverty and climate change impacts on women farmers. Therefore, the provision of financial and agricultural extension services and trainings tends to be gender-blind and does not ensure equitable access to productive

6 ILO, ILOSTAT database

7 <http://politics.people.com.cn/n/2015/0309/c70731-26661075.html>

8 <http://www.globaltimes.cn/content/1037269.shtml>

resources and decision-making processes for women smallholder farmers.

The income security and livelihoods in the rural areas largely depend on the ecosystem. Women, are heavily dependent on natural assets such as forests and farmland for their livelihood in rural areas. Degradation of these resources and their ecosystems induced by climate change and climate-related disaster has a direct and devastating impact on their livelihoods. Poor women farmers disproportionately bear the burden of climate change. During droughts, floods, and earthquakes, for example, the burden of additional work often falls on women and further adds to their unpaid care burden. Lack of appropriate infrastructure, technologies, and financial services, further restricts their ability to adapt to shifting agricultural constraints and opportunities in a changing climate.

National poverty intervention measures have, so far, not incorporated the gender perspective. Until now, China's agricultural policies, investments, and trainings have not considered differences in the resources available to men and women, their roles, labour burdens, and the constraints they face. In the absence of concerted efforts to address the gender gap in agriculture in the context of a changing climate, women farmers are at risk of being trapped in a downward spiral. Conversely, key initiatives that address this gap such as increased access to productive and climate-resilient resources, greater financial inclusion, and opportunities for women farmers to move up the value chain, are also essential in women's economic empowerment and accelerating the adoption of climate-resilient agricultural practices.

Qinghai Province was ranked 21st out of 31 provinces in terms of gross regional product per capita (RMB 36,510), and 27th in terms of per capita disposable income (RMB 12,948) in 2013⁹. Qinghai is facing the degradation of land resources, a loss in the resilience of the ecosystem to droughts and floods, and degradation of water resources, all of

which contribute to the perpetuation of poverty and the deterioration of livelihoods among the rural poor, especially women.

Qinghai suffers from land degradation that can lead to reduction of agricultural productivity, decreased resilience to droughts and floods, including degradation of water resources and the damaging of infrastructure and irrigation schemes, which contribute to the perpetuation of poverty and deterioration of livelihoods among the rural poor, especially women. The Liupan Mountainous Area in the eastern part of Qinghai Province is one of the 14 priority areas for poverty reduction as identified in the China Poverty Reduction Outline 2011 – 2020, in which UN partnerships with Chinese provincial and county administrations are strongly encouraged.

According to data from the International Fund for Agriculture Development (IFAD) and Qinghai Liupan Mountain Area Poverty Reduction project document¹⁰, women represent 48.5% of the total provincial population. In Qinghai, the Women's Federation estimates that approximately 70-80% of agricultural laborers are women, who also account for more than half of the poor owing to:

- 1. Low education levels:** 61% of female members in sample households were literate, compared to 80% for men.
- 2. Lack of income generation skills:** women are the main labour force in agriculture and in rural communities, while most male laborers migrate for work. Rural women in Qinghai province still mainly use subsistence-oriented skills for cropping, livestock, and even handicrafts such as embroidery, sewing, etc.
- 3. Lack of access to information:** more than 90% of rural women in Qinghai Province obtained outside information from television and seldom acquired information from other sources such as print publications or the internet.
- 4. Limited decision-making power, less access to technology, trainings, and credits** due to

9 2014 Statistic Year Book, National Bureau of Statistics

10 Design Completion Report of IFAD Qinghai Liupan Mountain Area Poverty Reduction Project, February 2015

traditional gender stereotypes and the division of labour, even though most agricultural laborers are women.

- 5. Difficulties in accessing markets** due to fragmented and small-scale production with low value-addition, weak bargaining power resulting from small production volume and unstable quality of products, and lack of access to more profitable value chains.

The State Council Leading Group Office of Poverty Alleviation and Development declared a National Poverty Reduction Outline in 2016 to eliminate absolute poverty in China by 2020¹¹ (reiterated in the 19th Community Party Congress in October 2017, and at the 13th National People's Congress in March 2018).¹² Statistical findings conclude that there are 24.85 million women living in poverty in China (accounting for 46.5% of the total poor population).¹³

Aside from the national goal to eliminate absolute poverty, the government has also brought the environmental protection and addressing climate change to the top of its national agenda with commitments to improving both these areas, along with mention of the need for all round women's development and gender equality, all of which are considered to be fundamental state policies as mentioned in the 13th Five-Year Plan on National Economic and Social Development,¹⁴ in the 3rd

Plenary Session of the 18th Central Committee of the Communist Party,¹⁵ and reiterated in the October 2017 19th Community Party Congress, namely section 8.4 of the key document which emphasizes the need for poverty reduction through collaborative efforts between government, society, and the market.¹⁶ National promises further include reforms to address growing inequalities, especially among vulnerable and underserved populations including rural communities, women, and ethnic minorities, and the need to implement regulations and controls over unbalanced growth impacts on vulnerable people and on the environment. The State Council's Poverty Alleviation Plan for the 13th Five-Year Plan Period (2016-2020) pointed out that China's main challenges for realizing the 2020 poverty reduction goals include environmental challenges and limited employment and livelihood channels for the poor population, among other challenges.¹⁷

The national political commitment to poverty alleviation includes a promise to increase employment and education for rural women. One of the government's strongest statements in its promise to address women's vulnerabilities lies in a section of the 13th National 5 Year Plan (2016 – 2020) devoted to women's development where it declares commitment to implementing the National Programme for Women's Development (2011-2020), especially in regard to ensuring women's equal rights to economic opportunities, education, employment, marital property, and

11 China will also continue the fight beyond 2020 to reduce relative poverty and help those at the bottom of society.

12 The National Congress of the Communist Party of China is a twice-a-decade political meeting to ponder and approve new policies for the next five years. The National People's Congress is the top legislative body of China, it had its annual gathering on March 7th

13 China's national "absolute poverty" line is per capita annual income of 2,300 yuan, a standard set in November 2011.

14 China's five-year plans started being developed during the Mao era and are blueprints for the country, containing the country's social, economic, and political goals. The 13th plan contains 33 targets which the government expects officials, companies, financial institutions and other stakeholders to work towards achieving.

15 The 18th Central Committee was elected by the 18th National Congress in 2012 (the Chinese government holds its party congress twice per decade); the plenary sessions are known for announcing "comprehensively deepening reforms" of unprecedented scale, governed by law, and which work towards constructing a "moderately prosperous society".

16 19th National Congress of the People's Republic of China (October, 2017), Section VIII. "Growing Better at Ensuring and Improving People's Wellbeing and Strengthening and Developing New Approaches to Social Governance", Subsection 4 "Winning the Battle Against Poverty". (p. 42) http://www.xinhuanet.com/english/download/Xi_Jinping's_report_at_19th_CPC_National_Congress.pdf

17 http://www.gov.cn/zhengce/content/2016-12/02/content_5142197.htm State Council Poverty Alleviation Plan For the 13th Five-Year Plan.

participation in social affairs. Furthermore, the government promises to increase the level of women's participation in policy-making and management, with an underlying commitment to women's poverty alleviation.¹⁸

In September 2016, the China's National Plan on Implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development was formulated by Chinese government.¹⁹ In the Plan, government has special emphasis on aspects including eliminating poverty and hunger, maintaining economic growth, improving social security and social services, safeguarding equity and justice, strengthening environmental protection, addressing climate change, as well as enhancing energy and resource efficiency.

Due to its remote location, Qinghai province only got nineteen cases of COVID-19 by October 2021²⁰ and is one of the provinces with the least cases. However, due to travel control measures, many tourists do not come to Qinghai province, which affected the tourism-related sectors. Some rural people lost businesses built around hosting tourists visiting rural areas, and women's handicrafts targeting the tourists also lost some of the market.

1.2 Project Description

The "Strengthening Qinghai Women Farmers' Income Security and Resilience in a Changing Climate" (QWFIS) project was designed to promote poverty reduction among women farmers by helping them become more economically resilient

in a changing climate through improving and increasing their accessibility to climate-resilient and productive assets, finance, tools, technologies, capacities, and opportunities for moving up the value chain. The project directly addresses both China's national poverty reduction goals as well as SDG global frameworks and principles for delivering gender equality and women's economic empowerment in selected poverty-stricken counties in Qinghai Province.

The research study *Gender Dimensions of Vulnerability to Climate Change in China*²¹ conducted by UN Women China and the Policy Research Centre for Environment and Economy in 2016 provided evidence that women farmers are most vulnerable to negative climate change impacts and that systemic biases and challenges continue to persist. Informed by these findings, the project addressed the key gender-based challenges identified by the research study:

- a. women farmers' restricted access to productive and climate-resilient resources (energy, water, pasture, forests, agricultural inputs, agricultural extension services, information, assets, tools, technologies, markets, skills),
- b. barriers to their access to financial products and services (credit, savings, financial literacy),
- c. exclusion from opportunities to move up the value chain, and
- d. limited capacities to build up climate resilience when compared with men within households and in rural communities.

The project has one outcome, three related outputs and activities:

Outcome:

More women farmers in Qinghai Province have increased income security and resilience in a changing climate.

The outcome aims at supporting women smallholder

18 The 13th Five Year Plan for Economic and Social Development of the People's Republic of China, Chapter 66, Safeguarding the Basic Rights and Interests of Women., Section 1, All-Round Women's Development, accessed on July 17, 2017, <http://en.ndrc.gov.cn/newsrelease/201612/P020161207645765233498.pdf>

19 <http://www.fmprc.gov.cn/web/zyxw/t1405173.shtml> China's National Plan on Implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, Sept. 2016

20 Data from State and Provincial, City Hygiene and Health Commission, China, dated 22/10/2021.

21 <http://asiapacific.unwomen.org/en/digital-library/publications/2016/12/gender-dimensions-of-vulnerability-to-climate-change-in-china>

farmers in deployment of their agricultural productivity, considering their needs and local farming system, and promoting their access to resources in the selected counties. From a poverty reduction perspective, it is an urgent need for government to consider formulation policies to enhance coping mechanisms, such as social protection/social safety net to help poor, especially women farmers to manage income risks/vulnerabilities in order to prevent women farmers from falling back into extreme poverty in the event of climate-related disasters e.g. drought flood etc. that affect their agricultural productivity and income security.

Output 1:

Government and services providers, particularly at the local level, have enhanced capacity to support women farmers to access climate-smart agricultural extension, information, tools and technologies.

Specific activities supported under this output include:

- » Design and organize gender awareness training sessions, based on findings from the baseline survey targeting government officials and grassroots extension workers and technicians to better address specific challenges faced by women farmers.
- » Design and conduct gender training of financial service providers (loan officers, private sector, and intermediaries) to design plan for better offering financial support services to women farmers.
- » Organize gender mainstreaming training sessions for government officials in the poverty alleviation system including government line department and women's federation, at county level to enhance understandings and equip skills of the government officials to provide better service delivery and to improve ability for technical review for future policy formulation.
- » Organize a consultation meeting by inviting experts to improve the end line study with project achievements, lessons learned

and policy recommendations for women's economic empowerment and resilience in a changing climate.

- » Organize national conference on promoting women's economic empowerment and resilience in a changing climate, engaging national and local policy decision-makers in areas of poverty alleviation, agriculture, and women's federation; international community; academia; and the media.

Output 2:

Women farmers have increased access to financial and productive resources and are able to utilize agricultural services to increase their productivity.

Specific activities supported under this output include:

- » Facilitate the formation of Farmer Field School (FFSs) and Women's Associations with selected women leaders/facilitators and registered women smallholders.
- » With the selected women smallholders as FFS convergence point/facilitators, technology transfer to other women farmers will be carried out during a complete production cycle. Others will be encouraged to learn from each other and share experiences among themselves.
- » Facilitate dialogue and partnership between Women's Association, local governments, financial institutions, and women's federation to design and conduct training on financial knowledge and business skills, such as financial terminologies, loan procedures, and schemes.

Output 3:

Women farmers and network of women farmer organizations have increased capacity to move up the agricultural value chains.

Specific activities supported under this output include:

- » Conduct market research and assessment to analyse different market channels/modalities

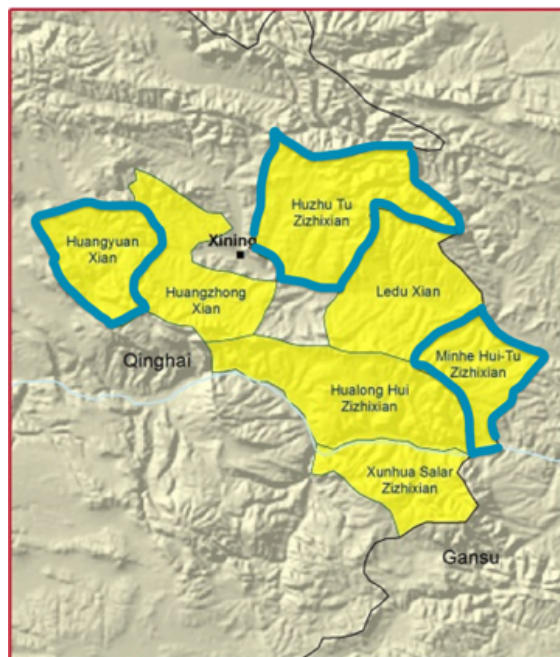
for women smallholders to access the markets.

- » Organize business and marketing skills training workshops for members of the Women's Associations based on findings from the market assessment.
- » Conduct TOT training for facilitators/leaders of Women's Associations as role models on skills related to organizational leadership and confidence-building, communication, information, and so on. Tailor-made training models and materials will be developed and used for training based on needs assessments to be conducted in the baseline survey.
- » Conduct community advocacy campaigns and raise women smallholders' awareness on collective power in access to information and markets.
- » Facilitate women smallholders to register with Women's Associations to promote e-commerce and localize the Buy from Women initiative in the context of Qinghai.

This project is part of an on-going collaboration between UN Women and IFAD country offices in China. IFAD implemented the *Qinghai Liupan Mountain Area Poverty Reduction Project (2015-2020)*²². The UN Women project built on and complemented IFAD's project. UN Women's project focused on three (Minhe, Huangyuan, and Huzhu) out of seven counties covered by the IFAD project (highlighted in blue on Map 1 below). All the seven counties are in Liupan Mountain Area and were designated as priority poverty counties with a high concentration of poor women farmers, who are the target group of both projects. Both the projects aim to reinforce each other in terms of results and impact for women beneficiaries.

22 The [IFAD project](#) is organized around four components: 1) climate resilient irrigation infrastructure and integrated land resource management to meet the demand of the rural poor for productive assets; 2) market-oriented agriculture mainly focusing on development of cash crops, economic tree crops, livestock and enhancement of market access through development of farmer cooperatives; 3) off-farm livelihood support; and 4) project management and coordination.

Map 1.
UN Women's and IFAD's Project Areas



The goal of the project is aligned fully with the UN Women's Global Strategic Plan (SP), Outcome 3, "Women have income security, decent work and economic autonomy". The project contributed to UN Women SP and 2018 UN Women China's Annual Work Plan (AWP), Outcome 2.2: "More women farmers in Qinghai Province have increased income security and are more resilient in a changing climate".

The duration of the project was three years (July 2018 - June 2021), and the indicative budget was USD \$950,000 of which USD \$800,000 were contributed by the Chanel Foundation²³ and USD \$150,000 came from UN Women core funding.

PROJECT STAKEHOLDERS AND IMPLEMENTING ARRANGEMENTS

Day-to-day project implementation was led by the Institute of Geographic Sciences and Natural Resources Research (IGSNRR) at Chinese Academy of Sciences (CAS), which is also the team of United Nations Environmental Programme - International Ecosystem Management Partnership (UNEP-IEMP), as Responsible Party (RP), with UN Women

China Office's oversight. IGSNRR is one of the few government organizations in China with extensive experience in cross-cutting areas central to this project (project implementation, research, analysis, and policy advisory regarding issues of women's poverty alleviation, rural economic livelihoods, agricultural advancement, natural resources and the environment). The RP, through the Qinghai Provincial Poverty Alleviation Bureau where the Provincial Project Management Office (PMO) of the IFAD project is based, coordinated, and conducted activities with local stakeholders, namely the County Poverty Alleviation Bureau, Women's Federation, the technical bureaus and other concerned financial institutions, village committees and women groups (see also sub-sections on project partners and beneficiaries below).

This project worked with the Women's Associations (Women Farmers' Cooperatives) that were nominally established under the IFAD Qinghai Project and developed them further by adapting the women-centred participatory Farmer Field School (FFS) methodology demonstrated by FAO and previously utilized by IGSNRR, the project RP. Through the institution of the Women's Associations, the women farmers in the pilot sites will be provided with capacity-building training to improve their decision-making ability, as well as their productive and market knowledge and skills. In addition, this project trained service providers (agricultural extension, finance and credit, etc.) and local officials to ensure women farmer's improved access to agricultural inputs and improved access to agricultural markets and decision-making, which the IFAD project has not done. Finally, the mechanism of the Women's Associations played a crucial role of enabling its members, through access to this community-level decision-making structure, to collectively aggregate their agricultural production into higher-value processing to achieve economy of scale and access more profitable markets.

The project leveraged IFAD's ongoing Qinghai Project through its well-established PMOs at provincial and county level and strong partnerships with the Qinghai Provincial Poverty Alleviation Bureau and Women's Federation and their county

level subsidiaries. UN Women and IFAD agreed to link and make complementary IFAD's project and this project, selecting three counties of the seven IFAD project counties. The non-selected counties were used as a control group for the project's baseline study.

Although IFAD project adopted a gender mainstreaming strategy, IFAD expressed the need to have UN Women project contribute to integrating gender and climate change activities into their work to ensure that the project better benefits women farmers. The IFAD Project provided infrastructure support including construction of cold storages, and capacity and market development training for smallholder members, with a special focus on cash crops and off-farm activities. The IFAD project supported farmers to gain access to markets through developing sustainable business linkages between smallholder producers and market players. UN Women focused on women only to address their needs, barriers, and opportunities in agricultural inputs, agricultural products' processing and marketing; as well as empowered women to establish their own organizations for collective actions and benefits. IFAD did not receive funding from UN Women or vice versa; the two organizations implemented separately but linked activities and implemented them within their distinct projects in the same counties of Qinghai.

IGSNRR has a long and successful working history with IFAD, and by collaborating with IFAD and utilizing both IFAD and IGSNRR's expertise and experience in project implementation, research, analysis, and policy advisory regarding issues of women's poverty alleviation, rural economic livelihoods, agricultural advancement, natural resources and the environment, IGSNRR took the lead in ensuring that the activities were implemented efficiently and effectively whilst working towards the project's results.

The IGSNRR as RP, on the basis of their technical, managerial, financial, administrative, and networking capacity, took overall responsibility to ensure the successful implementation of the proposed project, through smooth coordination and cooperation with the IFAD project and under the supervision of UN Women China.

PROJECT BENEFICIARIES

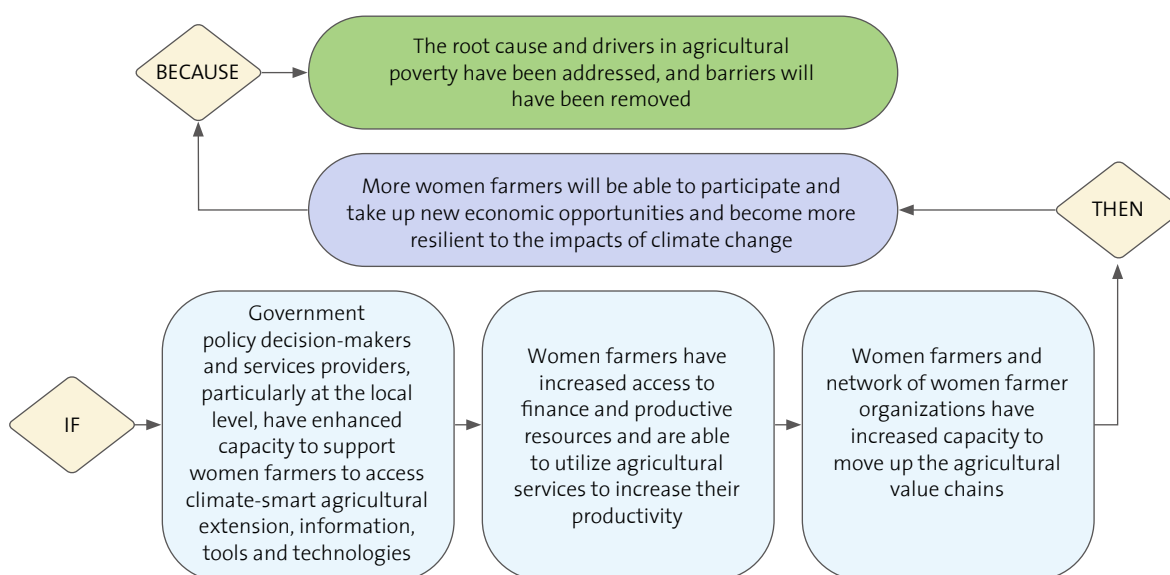
The project was implemented via training (knowledge, capacity and skills building), advocacy, and awareness initiatives directly involving both the direct beneficiaries of 69,444 women farmers in 3 selected counties. Additional several hundred other beneficiaries and participants included: government officials with responsibilities to support poverty reduction, economic resilience, and greater participation in decision-making among

women farmers; as well as private sector managers and leaders with potential to provide climate-resilient assets, tools, technologies, and services to women farmers; family members (particularly men but also the elderly and children if/when appropriate); and members of key community organizations (women's associations and farmer's associations). Members of these groups participated and benefited in varying ways.

The project is based on the **Theory of Change** (TOC) outlined in Figure 1.

Figure 1.

Project Theory of Change²⁴



The above TOC was reviewed during the evaluation phase and its assumptions were tested and confirmed:

- » whether the Chinese government continued to have a strong commitment to poverty reduction throughout the project implementation period;
- » whether women's access to productive resources, particularly agricultural extension services, and equal access to decision-making would help

increase their agricultural productivity and therefore their economic autonomy;

- » whether there was a strong interest from key stakeholders, including local governments among key service providers, women farmers and their networks/associations in Qinghai Province, to enhance women farmers' income security and climate resilience;
- » whether the project was able to coordinate key actors and policy decision-makers to collaborate and deliver on the outcome based on the assumption that this will contribute to address the national priority to reduce poverty;

24 Constructed by the evaluation team based on section 3.5 « Project Theory of Change », Project Document, page 17

- » whether the project's results would not be achievable without a close collaboration with IFAD (i.e. complementary and reinforcing between IFAD and UN Women project would better benefit women farmers);
- » whether key government and service providers continued to show commitment and ownership to enhance women's access to climate-smart agricultural extension, tools, and technologies;
- » whether women farmers wanted enhanced skills and capacity to access/better utilize agricultural services and wanted access to market and value chain (aggregation, processing, distribution, decision-making).
- » to document lessons learnt from the project implementation, and
- » to provide learnings and recommendations to guide the future economic empowerment programmes and the WEE and CC portfolio in the country.

EVALUATION SCOPE

THEMATIC SCOPE:

This evaluation assessed UN Women programme's contribution to rural women's economic empowerment in Qinghai province China.

TIME SCOPE:

The end-project evaluation assessed the project strategies and activities implemented by both UN Women China team and its Responsible Party (the Institute of Geographic Sciences and Natural Resources Research of Chinese Academy of Sciences) from July 2018 to Apr 2021.

GEOGRAPHIC SCOPE:

Overall, this project is implemented at 7 counties in Qinghai Province. -This final evaluation evaluated all project activities implemented in 3 counties: Minhe, Huangyuan, and Huzhu in Liupan Mountain Area.

The **primary users** for the end of project evaluation and resulting report includes the UN Women China and Asia Pacific Regional Office, and project implementing partners. The **secondary users** include provincial government, country and village authorities, women federations, and project beneficiaries.

1.3 Evaluation Purpose, Objectives and Scope

The main **purpose of the evaluation** was learning and accountability. The evaluators measured the progress of the project against its target results with the resources allocated. Specifically, the final evaluation assessed progress towards project outputs and outcomes as specified in the Project Document and Performance Monitoring Framework. The evaluation also provides learnings into how much UN Women's efforts contributed to women's economic empowerment and rural women's development in China. The findings and recommendations will be used to inform the coming UN Women China office Women's Economic Empowerment strategy development, especially in the Climate Change (CC) portfolio, one of the key areas of UN Women China.

The **specific objectives** of the evaluation were:

- » to assess project results, especially the above mentioned the outcome and output level results of the project in terms of effectiveness, replicability and sustainability,
- » to assess the relevance of the project,
- » to assess the integration of gender equality,

1.4 Evaluation Methodology

STAKEHOLDER INVOLVEMENT

Based on the key stakeholder groups noted in the ToR, the evaluation team developed a key

stakeholders list in cooperation with the UN Women management team, together with an indication of their affiliation and relevance for the evaluation and their contact information, which is provided in Appendix E. The list assisted the evaluation team in ensuring that appropriate groups were interviewed/consulted during data collection and engaged in dissemination and learning activities.

EVALUATION MANAGEMENT STRUCTURE

For this evaluation, following individuals/groups were included.

An evaluation team comprise of an international consultant and a national consultant was responsible for undertaking the evaluation. The international consultant was responsible for developing inception report, preparing questionnaires for data collection and analysis, interviewing UN Women team and implementing partners, presenting preliminary findings for validation at learning workshop and submission of the draft and final evaluation report. The national consultant was responsible for conducting interviews and focus group discussions during the field visit, compiling findings from the field, preparing the preliminary findings for validation at learning workshop and contributing to the draft and final evaluation report.

The evaluation was **managed** by UN Women China with support from UN Women regional office in Bangkok. In addition, the evaluation was guided by two Reference Groups (RG) constituted to support the evaluation at key moments of the process and to ensure quality as well as participation in the exercise:

1. The internal RG was composed of representatives from the UN Women country and regional office teams.
2. The external RG, which helped to ensure a balanced perspective on the evaluation, consisted of members of the IGSNRR at CAS (the project implementing partner) and IFAD.

Both RG members provided technical inputs, facilitated access to documents and informants, and ensured the high quality of the evaluation report as well as learning and knowledge generation. RG members also participated in the workshop and validated the preliminary evaluation findings and recommendations for the future.

EVALUATION APPROACH AND DESIGN

This evaluation was carried with a utilization-focused approach, which emphasizes that an evaluation should be judged by how useful it is. This approach guided by the evaluation questions posed, available and adequate baseline information, assessing monitoring mechanism and specified targets.

This evaluation also used the Contribution Analysis approach, a theory-based iterative approach based on the Theory of Change, which aimed at making credible causal claims about interventions and their results. The advantage of the contribution analysis approach is that it does not seek to prove attribution, but rather it seeks to provide plausible evidence to reduce the uncertainty.²⁵

The evaluation process followed the key human rights and gender equality principles of transparency and participation, ensuring consultation with stakeholder groups involved in the execution of the project and suggest a plan for inclusion of women and individuals and groups (such as ethnic or religious minorities), who are vulnerable and/or discriminated within the rural farming women setting.

The evaluation further used mixed method data collection and analysis, employing the most appropriate qualitative and quantitative approaches, data types, and methods of data analysis. To ensure maximum validity and reliability of data, the evaluation team ensured triangulation of the various data sources.

25 Mayne, John. Contribution Analysis: Coming of Age? In *Evaluation* 18(3) (Sage, 2012)

EVALUATION CRITERIA

The following OECD – DAC criteria²⁶ were used during the evaluation: Relevance, Coherence, Effectiveness, Efficiency, Impact and Sustainability.

Table 1 below provides the assessment elements that guided the evaluation process.

Table 1.
Evaluation Criteria and Definitions

Criterion	Definition
Relevance	Assessing both in terms of alignment of project objectives with country needs and priorities, as well as project design features geared to the achievement of objectives.
Coherence	External coherence considers the consistency of the intervention with other actors' interventions in the same context. This includes complementarity, harmonisation and co-ordination with others, and the extent to which the intervention is adding value while avoiding duplication of effort.
Effectiveness	Measuring the extent to which the project's objectives were achieved considering their relative importance.
Efficiency	Indicating how economically resources/inputs were converted into results.
Impact	Referring to the changes that occurred or are expected to occur in the lives of the stakeholders (whether positive or negative, direct or indirect, intended or unintended) as a results of project interventions.
Sustainability	Indicating the likely continuation of project benefits beyond the phase of funding support. It also includes an assessment of the likelihood that actual and anticipated results will be resilient to risks beyond the project's life.

In addition, the evaluation also assessed gender equality and human rights as separate criterion.

main conclusions at the level of each evaluation criterion.

GRADING

The evaluation used UNDP's quality assessment rating scale (Table 1) to provide an overview of the

The rating scale is not designed for statistical purposes and the grades/values were attributed by the consultants based on the judgement/justification deduced from the analysis. The values are supported by the findings provided in relation to each evaluation criteria and questions.

²⁶ <https://www.oecd.org/dac/evaluation/revised-evaluation-criteria-dec-2019.pdf>

Table 2.

Evaluation Rating Scale²⁷

Code	Rubric for assigning		Value
HS	Highly satisfactory	All parameters were fully met and there were no shortcomings in the evaluation report	6
S	Satisfactory	All parameters were fully met with minor shortcomings in the evaluation report	5
MS	Mostly satisfactory	The parameters were partially met with some shortcomings in the evaluation report	4
MU	Mostly unsatisfactory	More than one parameter was unmet with significant shortcomings in the evaluation report	3
U	Unsatisfactory	Most parameters were not met and there were major shortcomings in the evaluation report	2
HU	Highly unsatisfactory	None of the parameters were met and there were severe shortcomings in the evaluation report	1

DATA SOURCES

There were five lines of evidence: (1) Desk review/secondary data, (2) In-depth interviews, (3) Focus groups, (4) Key informant interviews, and (5) Validation. All five lines of evidence generated data that permitted the team to assess UN Women’s responses and programming in relation to the UN evaluation criteria of relevance, efficiency, effectiveness, and sustainability.

Although the evaluation assessed outputs, the primary focus was on what was achieved at the outcome level. Data from all lines of evidence was triangulated and validated.

Before interviewing the stakeholders, the evaluation team pre-tested the questionnaire by consulting the evaluation reference group to determine whether the interviewees would be comfortable with the questionnaire and could understand the questions. The questionnaires were revised before data collection.

27 Source: UNDP Evaluation Guidelines, Independent Evaluation Office of UNDP, New York, Jan 2019 (accessed at: http://web.undp.org/evaluation/guideline/documents/PDF/UNDP_Evaluation_Guidelines.pdf)

The evaluation’s fieldwork provided independent data as well as analysed existing data to help understand lessons learned from implementation and the results achieved by the project over the three years project period.

SAMPLING

The evaluation covered key informants from all the project stakeholder groups and sought to ensure participation from all project villages. A detailed list of respondents and key informants is attached to the final evaluation report (Appendix E).

The evaluation team used non-probability sampling, or convenience sampling, that refers to a sampling method identifying respondents that are accessible during the evaluation. This method also included ‘snowball sampling’, an approach used for locating information-rich key informants. Using this approach, pre-identified key informants were contacted and asked whether they could recommend other potential key informants with the characteristics that the evaluation team was looking for in this final evaluation.

The evaluation team also divided the target

population (i.e. all groups project beneficiaries) into strata, and then applied this sampling technique within each stratum to ensure that there were enough participants to be able to draw conclusions. Stratification reduced the probability for sampling error because it ensured that all relevant portions of the target population were included in the sample.

The evaluation team used the following criteria to identify the subset of the population:

- » **Sectors:** The project has supported over the years a number of activities focusing on different sectors - agriculture, food entrepreneurship, embroidery, etc.
- » **Type:** Distinguish between central and local governmental officials / civil servants, women farmers, women cooperatives leaders, and private sector.
- » **Location:** The field visit covered three counties and 5 villages under QWFIS project.
- » **Vulnerable Groups:** The field visit included all the vulnerable groups, including poor women, elderly women, ethnic minority women, and disabled women. See Appendix E List of Consulted Stakeholders.
- » **Gender:** Ensure participation of both male and female respondents.

DATA COLLECTION

The following data collection methods were used:

1. **Desk review:** review of project documentation (Project Document, Results Monitoring Framework, village reports, etc.), knowledge products and related publications. The full list of reviewed documents can be found in Appendix B.
2. **Field visit and in-person interviews:** the national consultant conducted a field trip to the 3 project counties (Minhe, Huangyuan, and Huzhu) in Qinghai province during 2-6 August 2021. A total of 91 persons (72 women and 19 men) were interviewed in - person. Twenty – six semi-structured interviews (9 women and 17 men) were held with project management offices at the provincial and local levels and project partners such as enterprises and Women’s Federation representatives. In addition, six FGDs were organised in 5 villages (65 persons including 63 women [including 4 disabled women] and 2 men).
3. **Remote interviews:** during the same period, the international consultant conducted four semi-structured interviews (1 man and 3 women) remotely with the following KIs: two representatives of the Chinese Academy of Sciences, the project programme at UN Women China office, and the project contact person at IFAD. The full list of stakeholders interviewed during the field visit and remotely can be found in Appendix E.

Table 3.

Details of Data Collection Tools

Tools	Types of Respondents	Number / Description	Remarks
In-depth Interviews	UN Women China UN Women Regional Office IFAD Group	4 people (3 women and 1 man)	Used purposive sampling
Focus Group Discussion (FGD)	Women’s Groups Men’s Group	65 people (63 women and 2 men)	Used purposive sampling
Key Informant Interview (KII)	Provincial Project Management Office Staff County Project Management Office Staff Village First Secretaries	26 people (9 women and 17 men)	Used purposive sampling
TOTAL		95 (75 women and 20 men)	

1.5 Ethical Considerations

The consultants followed the UNEG Ethical Guidelines for Evaluation²⁸ were assured that they had been chosen to ensure a fair representation of views to ensure a balanced perspective.

Informed verbal and written consent were sought from stakeholders prior to interviews. To obtain consent, the consultants briefly explained the reasons and objectives of the evaluation, as well as the scope of the questions, and shared interview protocols in advance. Stakeholders had the right to refuse or to withdraw at any time. The consultants also ensured respondents' privacy and confidentiality in the way data were aggregated and kept. Conversations conducted with respondents were confidential, all information and data shared with the evaluators was not attributed to respondents and their names did not appear unless they specifically asked to be quoted or agree to be quoted. Please see Appendix D1 – D5 for interview protocols. Only the members of the Evaluation Reference Group had access to the data collected during this evaluation. UN Women Country and Regional Offices followed own internal rules and protocols for data storage. The consultants destroyed all data upon completion of the evaluation (the paper versions of data collected during interviews).

1.6 Limitations of the Evaluation Methodology

The evaluators identified the following limitations and used the following mitigation strategies:

1. This evaluation used a mixed method approach including quantitative and qualitative data. While the strength of using qualitative data collection methods is their depth, the limitation to these methods is the lack of breadth in the sample, as these methods are time consuming and involve a smaller sample size. In other words, although the findings are rich and nuanced, they are only generalizable to the population in the respondents' groups sampled, but not to the entire project beneficiary population (see also Limitation 3 below). The consultants minimized this limitation by targeting all the stakeholder groups participating in the project.
2. There is a possibility of respondent and reviewer specific biases based on subjective human interactions, including but not limited to recall bias (participants may have responded to questions posed by the consultants with answers that blend their experiences into a composite memory), response bias (participants may have been motivated to provide responses that would be considered desirable to the consultants), and gender or social bias (participants may have responded in a way that conforms to what they feel are appropriate gender or social norms). The consultants used data triangulation and purposive sampling to mitigate some of these potential biases.
3. Due to Covid-19, the international consultant was unable to travel to China. The national consultant had to follow national Covid-19 health protocols, which meant that the number of people who could be interviewed at the same time (e.g., as part of FGDs) was limited and that some meetings could not take place because of unexpected and last – minute changes in the availability of respondents. The mitigation strategy involved the national consultant undertaking the field trip and conducting in-person interviews and FGDs by herself bearing in mind the above-mentioned limitations. The international consultant conducted remote interviews with project partners at the national level. The consultants do not estimate that this had an impact on the quality of the evaluation. The national consultant is an experienced professional with over twenty-year experience, who has conducted over fifty similar assignments and is a professor in rural development.

28 United Nations Evaluation Group Ethical Guidelines (2020)

1.7 Justification for the evaluation methods used

In consultation with the internal RG, the consultants chose a sampling methodology that was based on purposive sampling²⁹ (as opposed to a random selection from the total number of stakeholders forming the project universe). This technique ensured that the sample population was representative of different types of project beneficiaries and their experiences, which is something that cannot be guaranteed using random sampling alone. The project beneficiaries included the vulnerable groups, such as the poverty women, elder women, the disabled women, and the minority women. Inclusive evaluation method is used, and please see Appendix E List of Consulted Stakeholders.

Since the UN Women project is complementary to the IFAD project (see Section 1.2 above) the total number of beneficiaries gauged at around 69,000 persons should be interpreted as the total number referring to both IFAD and UN Women interventions. The UN Women project mainly covered actions in 5 villages in 3 counties and gender awareness trainings delivered to government officials in the 7 counties, which totalled around 69,000 beneficiaries. Therefore, in consultation with UN Women country office, the

evaluators established an overall sample of around one hundred respondents. The consultants estimated that this sampling method was appropriate and allowed for a reasonable degree of saturation within the evaluation timeframe and resources (and in the context of Covid-19 pandemic and overall travel restrictions and quarantine). No other data collection methods were used (e.g., surveys) because such an exercise was deemed to be time and resource consuming (i.e., questionnaires would have to be distributed in Chinese in paper version, collected, translated and analysed), while unlikely to yield new information (that has not been already collected through interviews and FDGs).

The triangulation between different data types (e.g., including quantitative monitoring data), and between different data sources (e.g., authorities, enterprises, women federations, rural women) reduced the risk of bias in any one source or data type, and increased the likelihood of gathering the “what”, “why”, and “how” of project results.

29 Purposive sampling, also known as judgmental, selective, or subjective sampling, is a form of non-probability sampling in which researchers rely on their own judgment when choosing members of the population to participate in KIIs (as opposed to random sampling).



A digital literacy trainer at work in Minhe County (UN Women / Zhang Yanyan)

2

EVALUATION

FINDINGS

2. EVALUATION FINDINGS

2.1 Relevance

OECD/DAC defines relevance as “the extent to which the intervention objectives and design respond to beneficiaries’, global, country, and partner/institution needs, policies, and priorities, and continue to do so if circumstances change”³⁰.

Evaluation Questions:

1. To what extent did the project respond to the needs of the rural women in Qinghai province?
2. What have been some of the main opportunities for the project? How did the project build on them?
3. What have been some of the main challenges for the project? How did the project mitigate them?

The evaluators find ‘relevance’ to be highly satisfactory, given the overall consistency of the project design with the needs of the beneficiaries and its continued alignment with UN Women’s and national policies and development priorities. The intervention and modalities were appropriate through the evolving circumstances of implementation; the implied internal logic remained coherent with the poverty profile and ongoing agricultural transformation in the country. The design remained relevant until project completion, with some operational changes, which were more adaptations to the external context without compromising the project rationale, values, and principles.

Overall, the main opportunity for the project was

its timing. China was entering a critical stage for both ultimate eradication of rural absolute poverty and smart agricultural modernization. Opportunities came from the need for sustainably efficient models of poverty eradication, market-led and high-standard agricultural production. The enabling development policy environment was also in the project’s favour.

Like IFAD project, one of the key challenges for UN Women’s project was the notable change in the profile of agricultural labour due to ongoing agricultural transformation and the rural labour migration. This led to the increase in the number of labour-weak or labour-disadvantaged households in the project area. Meanwhile, the government’s full-scale programme of poverty alleviation put participating agencies (local authorities and vitalization bureaus) under time pressure to deliver thus making differentiated targeting challenging.

Finding 1.

The project was designed based on studies and evidence collected directly in the project areas. This rendered the project not only relevant, but also closely aligned with local women needs.

The project design, overall intervention logic and choice of beneficiaries were based on comprehensive research and recommendations stemming from previous interventions undertaken by UN Women and partners. From 2015 to 2016, UN Women together with the Policy Research Centre for Environment and Economy of the Chinese Ministry for Environmental Protection conducted Phase I of the Gender and Climate Change project, one of the first comprehensive research studies on Chinese people’s gendered vulnerabilities to climate change. The study included a survey of over 3,000 respondents in flood, drought, and typhoon-prone regions; research findings were posted online, and recommendations were shared in advocacy and

³⁰ “Better Criteria for Better Evaluation. Revised Evaluation Criteria Definitions and Principles for Use. OECD/DAC Network on Development Evaluation”, OECD (2019)

consultation sessions³¹. Results from these efforts informed the design of this project.

The findings and policy recommendations from Phase I and data collected through IFAD research³² highlighted the need for women farmers to have equal access to productive resources for climate-resilient agriculture and to have equal say in the design, decision-making and implementation of relevant plans and actions, as well as to be provided with regular training opportunities on agricultural techniques and professional skills to enhance their livelihoods. For government officials, the study recommended that they receive gender training to improve their capacity for gender-sensitive policy formulation and project implementation. In addition, the study recommended that future actions conduct gender and vulnerability assessments at the design stage and establish sex-disaggregated baselines, indicators, and targets. The study also made two key recommendations for UN Women: to enhance its cooperation with provincial-level authorities as the “best entry point” due to that level’s influence on both policy development and project implementation, and to implement pilot projects in cooperation with local authorities to impact provincial level policy formation.

The QWFIS project built on these recommendations and operationalized them through the project activities.

Finding 2.

The project was relevant to rural women’s needs to generate independent income. It responded to one of the most stringent needs expressed by the women themselves and one of the major obstacles to women’s economic empowerment.

Interviewed rural women considered that improving income generation was ‘extremely relevant’ to them. They were particularly interested in ‘independent’

income so that they could reduce their financial dependence on their spouses. Interviewed women shared two main obstacles they were facing at the start of the project:

1. While men migrated to cities to earn cash income, women had to stay home and take full responsibility for house chores, which are essentially unpaid jobs.
2. Women were engaged in subsistence agriculture due to lack of job opportunities and were stuck at the low end of the agricultural value chain due to lack of skills, which prevented them from improving product quality and accessing other, more urban markets, and thus higher income.

As a result of project interventions, interviewed women found that they learned both farming and non-farming skills and that they were able to make better products or deliver services which could be exchanged for more cash on the market. Interviewed women also noted that the project supported them in building relationships with market players such as enterprises through signing contracts or other modalities (e.g., mobile application), so that they could gain reliable access to markets for their products and/or services. Most interviewed women also mentioned their increased ability to “build organizations and networks,” allowing them to have more “bargaining power on the market.”

“I participated in the training course on cooking skills organised in the village. After the training, I opened a restaurant in the village, where I am the cook. Many of my customers said that the meals I cooked were very delicious, and my business is doing well! My restaurant can make 30,000 Yuan (4642 USD) of gross income per month. In the future, I plan to open agritainment <rural Bed and Breakfast type of accommodation>, to receive more tourists, and I also plan to raise more indigenous pigs to supply meat to the agritainment,” woman trainee in Baojia village in Huzhu County, 30+ years old.

The field visit confirmed the initial needs assessment, which stated that rural women in the project areas found it difficult to generate income mainly because of low education levels and lack of technical skills. Therefore, they were more likely than men to

31 SWOT Analysis: Gender Dimensions Study Findings and Recommendations, Annex 3 to Project Document

32 IFAD Statistics on Key Challenges Facing Women Farmers in Qinghai; Alignment with Outcome and Outputs for this Proposed Project, Annex 4 to Project Document

have limited opportunities to generate income.

Based on evidence collected through interviews and desk research, the evaluators concluded that the project's trainings on both farming and non-farming skills helped to increase women's chances of generating income. The trainings were organised following a gender-sensitive approach, which meant that they aligned better with women's time schedule, education levels, and physical strengths. Trainings included crop-planting, animal husbandry, embroidery, housekeeping, cooking, cleaning, live broadcasting (for marketing of local products online). Some examples of income increase include women who learned embroidery in Wushi Village in Huzhu County and who can now earn about 2400-2700 Yuan per month (between 370 USD - 420 USD). Women who learned farming skills in Guang Lin Agricultural Cooperative in Minhe County can now earn 20,000 Yuan per year (3100 USD). Before joining the cooperative, women can only make about 2,000

Yuan from farming (313 USD). Women who leaned housekeeping skills in Baojia Village in Huzhu County can now earn 400 Yuan (62 USD) per day, before they can only make 120 Yuan (19 USD) by working in the construction fields.

Many of the interviewed women told the consultant that embroidery was a 'convenient way of earning additional income' as they could do it during their free time, which meant that they could also take care of family and agricultural chores. This is particularly relevant to the project area, which has long winter seasons. Women can embroidery when there is no farm work and embroidery requires little physical strength, so that it is an inclusive activity also involving elderly women and women with disabilities. For example, the field visit to Bahan village in Huangyuan County found that four women with limited motor ability (i.e., unable to walk) were able to generate income thanks to embroidery.

"Before, I tried hard to learn housekeeping skills but could not find proper opportunities. I found a person to teach me housekeeping, but that person only taught me for three days how to clean windows. I heard about the UN Women training program in my village and I decided to participate. The training lasted for 25 days. The teachers taught us housekeeping in detail, and all women learned very conscientiously. I have been staying connected with the teachers. If I have questions, I will ask the teachers and the teachers always answer my questions. Now, I am a skilled housekeeper. I do housekeep for urban families in the county town. I can make 400 Yuan per day (62 USD), and 8000 Yuan (1238 USD) per month. I can work for about 10 months per year. In addition, whenever I get information about job opportunities such as cleaning a bigger house, I will take other women from my village with me to work together. Each woman can make about 400 Yuan per day (62 USD). Housekeeping is not that labour intensive compared to farming and we can work indoors, and the payment is much higher. To make money, some women take up work in construction, in harsh weather conditions, and only make about 120 Yuan per day (19 USD). In the future, I plan to open a housekeeping company, to allow more women from my village to work in this sector," woman trainee from Baojia village in Huzhu County, 30+ years old.

Finding 3.
The project is relevant to China's priority to eliminate absolute poverty by the end of 2020.

In 2010, the Chinese government issued the Outline of Poverty Alleviation and Development in China's Rural Areas (2011-2020)³³, which stated that

-China would build up a moderately prosperous society and eliminate absolute poverty by 2020. In 2015, Chinese government issued the Decision on Winning the Battle of Poverty Alleviation³⁴, implementing a targeted poverty alleviation strategy and drawing on the efforts of the whole society (including the international society) to win the battle against poverty.

33 http://www.scio.gov.cn/zfbps/ndhf/34120/Document/1494400/1494400_1.htm

34 <http://www.scio.gov.cn/32618/Document/1456438/1456438.htm>

The project supported the government’s ten-year (2011-2020) rural poverty reduction and development programs in the areas of (i) Integrating small holders into the agricultural commodity value chains; (ii) enhancing the capacity of the rural poor in household management of agricultural productivity through strengthened information and technical services; and (iii) promoting commercialization of agriculture with the production of high-valued and specialized products and secured market linkages. These activities were integrated into the design framework to help contribute to narrowing the regional disparities in rural development, while contributing to the effort of “Accurate Poverty Alleviation” and achieving the Government objective of building the “Xiaokang” (moderate prosperous) society.

Finding 4.

The loan service from IFAD project component was readjusted due to overlap with existing governmental initiatives. This did not necessarily affect UN Women’s project relevance, but might have reduced women’s possible chance of accessing loan service.

The IFAD project had to adjust its operational strategy and drop the component to provide financial services through guaranteed loans to otherwise unserved famers, including rural women. The reason was that the national government provided sufficient low-interest or interest free and collateral free loans under the national poverty reduction programme, which crowded out project leveraged commercial lending to farmers and SMEs. However, from the design of UN Women’s project, the IFAD’s innovative loan mechanism might have been an opportunity for rural women entrepreneurs to access additional loan service, as traditionally men who normally own the family assets and properties are the main beneficiaries of loan services. The cancellation of IFAD’s loan service component might have affected the access of rural women especially women in business to financial resources, but relevant data to fully confirm this assumption is not available.

2.2 Effectiveness

OECD/DAC defines effectiveness as “the extent to which the intervention achieved, or is expected to achieve, its objectives, and its results, including any differential results across groups”³⁵.

Evaluation Questions:

1. To what extent have the expected results and outputs been achieved, and what are the major contributions made by UN Women?
2. What resources have the project provided to women that they previously had difficulty accessing (e.g., capital, credit, land, technology, training, and markets)? To what extent were these resources useful?
3. Did the COVID-19 epidemic affect the achievement of project objectives? How did the project team mitigate it?

The evaluators find ‘effectiveness’ to be satisfactory. The outputs were delivered, and targets met and/or exceeded (see Table 1 below). The project’s interventions led to the expected outcome of ‘*more women farmers in Qinghai Province have increased income security and are more resilient in a changing climate.*’

The key factors that facilitated the achievement of project’s results include the national enabling policy and legislative environment to support the implementation of climate-smart agriculture and gender-sensitive policy and regulations to enhance access to finance and productive resources, including land’s rights, tenure, and ownership. This is an area of high political sensitivity, where an external party outside of the Chinese Communist Party has limited influence, given China’s single party system. Therefore, to be able to achieve the expected results and outputs, the project identified key areas of work that it could engage in such as advocacy with the participating government institutions (duty

35 [“Better Criteria for Better Evaluation. Revised Evaluation Criteria Definitions and Principles for Use. OECD/DAC Network on Development Evaluation”, OECD \(2019\)](#)

bearers) and practical interventions identified at the local level where there was more flexibility and less political sensitivity. Based on evidence reviewed, the evaluators find that this approach worked well and constitutes good practice.

Covid 19 pandemic and resulting lockdown and restrictions on movement of people and gatherings are the main factors that impacted project implementation. It brought certain impact to some planned activities and required an adjustment to project strategy (e.g. moving most capacity building activities online, reducing numbers of monitoring visits to the field). According to project staff and interviewed beneficiaries, the change in delivery methods did not prevent the achievement of project targets and results (as verified by data in Table 1 below).

Finding 5.

The project delivered on the expected results and achieved all outputs as per the Results Framework.

Based on project reports, the evaluation concluded that the project delivered on the expected results and achieved all target outputs. Table 1 shows the extent of achievement of project indicators and targets as identified in the Project Results Framework. The data sources in Table 1 come mainly from IFAD Qinghai Liupan Mountain Area Poverty Reduction Project Monitoring and Evaluation Data (August 2021) and IGSNRR self-evaluation report (July 2021). The consultants verified these results and outputs by reviewing project documents and by interviewing project management staff, project partners, and beneficiaries during the field trip.

Table 4.
Achievement of Indicators in the Project Results Framework

Outputs	Indicators	Targets Reached as of July 2021
<p>OUTPUT 1: Government and services providers, particularly at the local level, have enhanced capacity to support women farmers to access climate-smart agricultural extension, information, tools and technologies.</p>	<p><u>Indicator 1.1</u> % of agricultural extension workers participating in gender training who can apply their knowledge to support women farmers in their services. BASELINE: 0 TARGET: 75%</p>	<p>TARGET ACHIEVED: 85% of trainees among agricultural extensions said they could apply the knowledge from gender trainings and support women farmers in their daily work.</p>
	<p><u>Indicator 1.2</u> # of policy dialogue, initiatives and services provided by local government and/or service providers to support women farmers' income security and climate resilience, which have been influenced by the project. BASELINE: 0 TARGET: 2</p>	<p>TARGET ACHIEVED: 9 policy dialogues and Training of Trainer sessions with government officials and service providers.</p>

Outputs	Indicators	Targets Reached as of July 2021
<p>OUTPUT 2: Women farmers have increased access to financial and economic resources, and are able to utilize agricultural services to increase their productivity.</p>	<p>Indicator 2.1 # of women smallholder farmers assisted by the project to register with Farmer Field Schools and Women's Associations BASELINE: 0 TARGET: 2000</p>	<p>TARGET ACHIEVED: 69,444 women smallholder farmers, including members of Women's Associations participated in training via FFS³⁶.</p>
	<p>Indicator 2.2 Number of women who have increased access to finance, economic resources and are able to utilize agricultural services to increase their productivity through the established networks by the project. BASELINE: 0 TARGET: 2000</p>	<p>TARGET ACHIEVED: (80% of 69,444) 55,000 women farmers have directly benefited from livelihood and skills building, including by making use of agricultural trainings offered by project trained service providers.</p>
<p>OUTPUT 3: Women farmers and network of women farmer organizations have increased capacity to move up the agricultural value chains.</p>	<p>Indicator 3.1 Women farmers reported to have increased capacity to lead their network specifically to move up agricultural value chains. BASELINE: 0 TARGET: 2000</p>	<p>TARGET ACHIEVED: 70% of 69,444 (48,610) women farmers trained reported that they have increased capacity to move up agricultural value chains.</p>
	<p>Indicator 3.2 Number of market research/assessment to identify high potential markets/ opportunities for women farmers. BASELINE: 0 TARGET: 1</p>	<p>TARGET ACHIEVED: A baseline survey was conducted, and a market assessment was completed at the beginning of project.</p>
	<p>Indicator 3.3 # of women smallholder farmers assisted by the project to register with Farmer Field Schools and Women's Associations BASELINE: 0 TARGET: 2000</p>	<p>TARGET ACHIEVED: 69,444 women smallholder farmers, including members of Women's Associations participated in training via FFS.</p>
	<p>Indicator 3.4 # of Women's Farmer Field Schools and Women's Association established to promote collective actions BASELINE: 0 TARGET: 6</p>	<p>TARGET ACHIEVED: 6 women's businesses were established and/or enlarged and strengthened through project support.</p>

Data source: IFAD Qinghai Liupan Mountain Area Poverty Reduction Project Monitoring and Evaluation Data (August 2021) and IGSNRR self-evaluation report (July 2021).

36 The FFS are not formal schools but an organized training in the agricultural field.

Finding 6.

The project enhanced service providers' capacities to serve rural women better, which contributed to increasing women's access to resources and services.

One of the key barriers identified by women preventing them from generating income was the limited access to resources and services, such as agricultural extension, market access, information, etc. The project provided trainings to 458 local government officials, project management staff, and enterprises staff. The trainings addressed specific technical issues such as climate change, eco-agriculture, as well as gender awareness building

and gender mainstreaming approaches, so that service providers were able to better support rural women. The participating government agencies included the Bureau of Rural Revitalization (previously known as the Poverty Alleviation Office), the Bureau of Water Resources, the Bureau of Agriculture, the Agricultural Extension Station, and the Bureau of Livestock. The trainings were also delivered to other service providers, such as vocational training schools, women's federations, and embroidery enterprises. The interviewed service providers reported having gained more "in-depth understanding on gender issues" and being "more capable of enhancing women's access to resources and services."

"In the past, when we selected participants for agricultural extension projects among farmers' households, we did not pay any particular attention to women's needs. Rural women were not particularly willing to participate in our trainings either. It was difficult for us to organize a training for 100 trainees. After the training provided by UN Women, we enhanced our awareness on gender issues. We now pay more attention to women, consult women on what they need and what they want to do, and promote women's participation by agreeing on the timing of trainings as well as teaching methods. For example, we train women directly on the farm fields, an approach better suited to their needs since many women have low education levels and prefer hands-on trainings. As a result, women are more willing to participate. Now, we can organize trainings for as many as 900 trainees, applications would be filed within a couple of days only, and around 85% of our trainees are women. With this gender-conscious approach, I observed that an increasing number of women registered family farms or rural cooperatives," a member of staff from Agricultural Extension Station, Huangyuan County

According to IFAD M & E data, IFAD and QWFIS projects combined assisted a total of 69,444 women in accessing several types of resources, services, and trainings, accounting for 49.8% of the total beneficiaries. The poor households also

received in-kind inputs, including seeds, cubs, feeds, fertilizers. Around 60% of these beneficiaries are women. The QWFIS project also enhanced women's access to market and information through linking women to enterprises and other market players.

"Guanglin Cooperative in Minhe County is a women-led agricultural cooperative. The leaders of the cooperative are women, and most of its members are also women. The project supported us by helping with brand building, brand promotion, and overall training. Myself and another leader of the cooperative went to Beijing to participate in a training program organized by the project, and we visited Little Donkey Farm, a farm famous for Community Support Agriculture Model in Beijing. From the visit, we got to know that the price for pork meat would drop after Chinese Spring Festival. Soon after we came back from Beijing, we sold all the pigs in their cooperative at the price of 50 Yuan/kg. Later, the price gradually dropped to 18 Yuan/Kg. We were so thankful to the project for giving us access to the relevant information. We have been keeping communication with the Little Donkey Farm WeChat group <an online platform> and exchange market information on a regular basis. Since this WeChat group includes high-level government officials and famous agricultural enterprises, we can access a lot of useful information," female leader of Guanglin Cooperative, Minhe County, 50+ years old.

Finding 7.

COVID-19 slowed down project implementation temporarily but did not affect overall effectiveness.

COVID-19 presented an unexpected challenge and impacted not only the project itself, but also the surrounding world. UN Women China and project management offices in project counties had to re-evaluate safety precautions and reassess what deliverables could be accomplished under the circumstances and whether internal resources had to be reallocated.

As part of the COVID-19 response, local project decision-making had to change and did not follow typical day-to-day operations. At the beginning of the pandemic, local government officials were required to make decisions with incomplete or rapidly changing data (e.g., on the number of people affected, the quarantine and safety rules in place). Measures introduced by government counterparts also led to a general slowdown in the implementation of activities. For instance, imposed restrictions on movement, banning international (and domestic) travel and new requirements for sanitation and maintenance of social distance added complications to project implementation and continue to-date.

During the first half of 2020, all the offline activities in particular trainings had to be suspended temporarily to comply with governmental safety measures and reduce transmission of the virus. Although internal, non-essential, in-person meetings had to be placed on hold, remote meetings were still organized to engage project teams and stakeholders. Some online trainings were delivered to rural women by the RP, the effectiveness and impact were restricted by the rural women's availability of internet and time (among the domestic care work), as well as their educational levels.

As the situation became clearer and more stable in the second half of 2020, the project had time to readjust its operational strategy shifting most of trainings toward the service providers online too. The online trainings were mainly provided to government officials and service providers, who have good access to Internet and have higher

education levels. However, the trainings to rural women were delivered offline since the direct interactions and onsite demonstrations were more effective for rural women.

During the first half of 2021 (the last six months of project implementation), some activities could be organised in person while respecting safety measures (i.e., limited number of participants, etc.) Overall, the project did not have to reallocate resources or project team members and proceeded with the planned project activities trying to make up for delays.

2.3 Efficiency

OECD/DAC defines efficiency as “*the extent to which the intervention delivered, or is likely to deliver, results in an economic and timely way*”³⁷.

Evaluation Questions:

1. *How timely and efficient was the project's implementation?*
2. *What were the main opportunities for cost-efficiency? What were the main barriers and how were they overcome?*
3. *To what extent was the M&E system used to monitor project performance and make adjustments?*

The evaluation finds efficiency to be ‘satisfactory’ based on the stakeholder analysis (see following sections), as well as the distribution of responsibilities among responsible and participating parties. Overall, the project implementation was timely and efficient, no major delays or disturbances were reported. The main opportunity for cost – efficiency was in the joint collaboration between UN Women and IFAD, including the use of the same PMOs, staff and

37 [“Better Criteria for Better Evaluation. Revised Evaluation Criteria Definitions and Principles for Use. OECD/DAC Network on Development Evaluation”, OECD \(2019\)](#)

logistical arrangements for project activities (e.g., training facilities, material, etc.) The main barrier was linked to differences in reporting rules and procedures employed by the UN (UN Women and IFAD) and governmental entities (PMOs and RP). This was overcome by training of project staff and by finding common ground on the operations and management. The M&E system used to monitor project performance was adequate. The main challenge lies in the choice of indicators for capacity – development programmes, which often focus on inputs / outputs and do not reflect the main outcome fully, which is learning, especially the ability to apply knowledge in the long-term (see section below).

As the executing agency, UN Women China had the responsibility for oversight, reporting to the donor and management all aspects relating to project implementation. Sufficient resources were mobilized to implement and complete this project.

The UN Women China employed a Project Management Team, including a National Project Officer (NPO) and a Project Assistant (PA). Under the overall supervision of the Country Programme Manager, the NPO had the day-to-day responsibility for oversight, monitoring and achieving the expected project results. The PA supported overall administration of all project activities, including financial management.

The Responsible Party (RP) manages delivering expected results through implementing activities in close consultation with UN Women, IFAD, and the PMOs at provincial and county levels, and in coordination with local stakeholders, namely the Rural Revitalization Bureau, the Women's Federations, and other concerned government and village committees and groups.

Finding 8.

The choice of the project Responsible Party was justified and ensured close coordination.

Based on interviews with project staff and document review, the evaluation finds that the choice of RP was justified. The RP is the only government organization in China with extensive

experience in cross-cutting areas central to this project³⁸. RP is a government entity with national, regional, and global experience focusing on project implementation, research, analysis, and policy advisory on issues of rural economic livelihoods, agricultural advancement, natural resources and the environment, and policy decision support, all with particular emphasis on women in the agricultural economy and poverty alleviation. RP sits under the auspices of the Chinese Academy of Sciences, a state scientific research entity also taking on an advisory role to the government on issues of national importance. Based on feedback collected from interviews, RP displayed adequate technical, governance, management, financial and administrative capacities and was able to deliver expected results and contribute to the sustainability of results as identified in the project results framework. Given the nature of China's centrally planned and governed state architecture, it was important for the sake of efficiency and effectiveness that the responsible party of this project be a government affiliated institution. RP was in good standing as a government affiliated entity with strong networks and potential to influence positive change through policy and action. As evidence from the field suggests, the choice of RP was appropriate and justified and presented an opportunity for cost-efficiency.

The role and responsibilities of RP included:

- » Submit annual workplans to UN Women China;
- » Submit quarterly forms detailing its financial expenditures, as well as regular progress reports describing the results of implementation;
- » Lead on preparation, logistics, facilitation, and implementation of the project;
- » Lead action-oriented research activities and analysis for evidence-based project intervention;

38 See Annex 6 to the Project Document for CPA Approval Documents including justification, capacity, meeting notes, details about CCAP as an organization and comprehensive coverage of CCAP responsibilities and contributions as RP for this project. CCAP changed the name as UNEP-IEMP during the project implementation period.

- » Conduct training and capacity building activities through engaging quality expertise;
- » Facilitate establishing and functioning Farmer Field Schools and Women’s Associations; and
- » Document and share knowledge products (survey reports, training manuals, action-oriented research reports, etc.), lessons learned, best practices and recommendations to government authorities in helping towards improvement and continued development of policy and programmatic efforts to address women smallholders’ poverty in the context of changing climate, economic empowerment, access to productive resources, and their need to take part in decision-making.

RP worked closely with the existing IFAD project implementation structures at the provincial and county levels to undertake specific project activities in the selected counties. Through the Provincial Rural Revitalization Bureau where the Provincial PMO of the IFAD project was based, RP selected project counties, undertook baseline and initial planning, coordinated and conducted activities with local stakeholders, namely the County Rural Revitalization Bureau, Women’s Federations, the technical bureaus and other concerned financial institutions, village committees and women groups.

The provincial Women’s Federation and county Women’s Federations, as the technical agency most relevant to the project subject area, were tasked by the RP to support and work closely with the county PMOs in project planning, coordination and conducting project activities. The operational costs for these coordinating entities were financed from the IFAD project. This ensured timeliness and complementarity of activities and contributed to cost-efficiency.

Finding 9.
The project’s main cost-efficiency opportunity was leveraging human and financial resources, as well as project management structures with IFAD.

The IFAD project in Qinghai was large in terms of investment and number of beneficiaries. Over

five years, it invested through a loan to local government USD 859.4 million, covered 7 project counties and served 139,414 beneficiaries. The UN Women project, though considerably smaller in budget and scope, was able to enhance the awareness and capacities of the IFAD project management staff to address women’s needs through technical support and capacity building in all seven counties. This enhanced IFAD project’s capacities to serve rural women better. As a result of this project, the IFAD project was able to help 69,444 women, accounting for 49.8% of the total number of beneficiaries. The leverage effect of the UN Women project is evident. The increase of gender awareness among local government officials and women leaders in return contributed to the joint project results on Gender Equality and Women’s Empowerment (GEWE), which demonstrated synergies built through the UN interagency partnership and collaboration.

The project made use of existing IFAD PMO instead of setting up different PMO, which may have consumed more administrative resources and increased the coordination cost. The IFAD PMO staff were already familiar with the management of international cooperation projects and were able to manage this project more effectively. In addition, this arrangement was more convenient to the IFAD staff too and they were able to apply what they had learned on gender equality approaches to multiply the effects of the project funds.

During the project implementation, the provincial PMO cooperated well with UN Women and RP. The provincial and county PMOs built up partnerships with other service deliverers, such as the agricultural bureaus, agricultural extension stations, women’s federations, enterprises, and vocational training schools. The project brought these institutions together to work for rural women.

The project also nurtured relationships with partner organizations outside the province, through training and study tour activities outside Qinghai province and through participation in international conferences and meetings organized by the project. Partner organisations were trained on strategies to promote gender mainstreaming.

Finding 10.

The main barriers to efficiency relate to different expectations (central level vs provincial level). The project delivered mainly ‘soft’ measures as ‘hard’ investments were already provided by the government. The project created added value by providing learning and knowledge sharing opportunities.

Overall, the provincial PMO reported being pleased with communication and cooperation with UN Women and RP. However, according to the provincial PMO, RP has a strong interest in research and dedicated considerable time to surveys including interviews and questionnaires. RP also designed a lot of ‘soft’ project activities such as trainings, study tours, and conferences. While overall satisfied with these project activities, the provincial PMO felt that local project management officials and rural women were also expecting more ‘hard’ interventions from the project, such as materials, in-kind and financial inputs, including agricultural equipment or facilities, infrastructure, and working capital. UN Women China clarified that although such expectations were not surprising and expected, ‘hard’ investments were beyond the scope of the project. National government had sufficient resources to supply required material and equipment and UN Women China never meant to substitute governmental investments but rather create added value by providing learning and knowledge sharing opportunities.

Finding 11.

The M&E system allowed UN Women to track progress, identify potential problems and make necessary adjustments to the project. The extent of learning and knowledge use in the long – term remain elusive.

In terms of monitoring and evaluation (M&E), the project included a 6-month inception phase to further refine the log frame and performance and monitoring framework of the project through a comprehensive baseline study. The baseline study identified specific gender gaps, challenges and structural barriers that prevented women smallholders in Liupan, Qinghai, from effectively

accessing and using technologies, tools, assets and financial intermediary services, as well as a stakeholder analysis through participatory observation, and interviews with IFAD PMO staff, local government, Women’s Federations, extension and financial service providers, and women farmers. As a result of the baseline study, the project intervention strategy, the Result and Resource Framework and the Performance Monitoring Framework were finetuned with S.M.A.R.T baseline, targets and indicators (see Table 1).

The M&E system allowed UN Women to track progress, identify potential problems and make necessary adjustments to the project. The NPO conducted regular monitoring visits to the project sites and produced mission reports that outlined key findings and recommendations for next steps. These reports complemented the regular reporting from RP and constitute good practice.

In addition to project monitoring, the NPO and PA undertook annual performance reviews of their work. The review process included both a review of the personnel’s roles in the project implementation as well as a discussion on skills development, in view of improving the project implementation and the personnel’s contributions. This is also good practice.

The RP provided quarterly based financial and narrative progress reports to UN Women China. Budget instalments were only delivered after the reports had been reviewed and approved by UN Women China Office.

The UN Women China Office reported periodically to the Asia Pacific Regional Office and headquarters on the project progress via online-based Results Monitoring System (RMS). Activity level progress were reported every three months. Outputs, outcome and goal level reporting occurred once a year.

The UN Women China Office also submitted reports, based on regular reports received from RP to the project donor according to the signed cost-sharing agreement.

The challenge with the current results and reporting framework (not just for this project, but for any capacity – development project) is the choice of the type of indicators that reflect progress of highly dimensional phenomena (e.g. “institutional

capacity” or “knowledge transfer”) without collapsing them into single dimensions (e.g. “number of trainings” or “number of participants”). An additional challenge lies in gauging the quality of training provided and trying to establish whether or not trainings were conducted in a way that was conducive to *learning*. 3 out of 8 indicators in the Project Results Framework attempt to capture learning and knowledge application: indicator 1.1 “% of agricultural extension workers participating in gender training who can apply their knowledge to support women farmers in their services”, indicator 2.2 “Number of women who have increased access to finance, economic resources and are able to utilize agricultural services to increase their productivity through the established networks by the project”, and indicator 3.1 “Women farmers reported to have increased capacity to lead their network specifically to move up agricultural value chains”. While the inclusion of these indicators constitutes good practice, the evaluators find that they capture immediate outcome generated shortly after completion of capacity – development activities (mainly relying on self-assessment) and are not capturing the extent of learning or how long it is going to last. Based on feedback received from both project staff and implementing partners, the evaluation notes that in some instances, form can trump function, and low-capacity organizations and individuals tend to camouflage, pretending to meet requirements instead of actually meeting them. Thus, the quality of capacities built, and knowledge transferred does not make improvements despite investment. This seems to be one of the project challenges in particular regarding sustainability of results.

2.4 Contribution to Impact

OECD/DAC defines impact as “*the extent to which the intervention has generated or is expected to generate significant positive or negative, intended or unintended, higher-level effects*”³⁹.

39 [“Better Criteria for Better Evaluation. Revised Evaluation Criteria Definitions and Principles for Use. OECD/DAC Network on Development Evaluation”, OECD \(2019\).](#)

Evaluation Questions:

1. *To what extent did the project help rural women improve their income and make their livelihoods better and more resilient to climate change?*
2. *Are there any unexpected project results, whether positive or negative?*

The evaluators find that the project’s contribution to impact is ‘satisfactory’ based on the qualitative and quantitative evidence reviewed. According to the latest tally (as of April 2021), 69,444 women farmers directly benefited from training on leadership and gender awareness; livelihood and skills building, including on agricultural practices; and e-commerce and micro-finance. Overall, 458 service providers have been trained on gender awareness through interactive participatory trainings. These service providers mostly include government officials from poverty alleviation sectors, financial sectors, women’s federations, and agricultural extensions. Six women’s networks and community cooperatives were built or strengthened, including one women-led agricultural cooperative, in view of increasing their collectivization, advocacy and leadership, and their participation in poverty alleviation and entrepreneurship. The average annual income of women farmers in the agricultural cooperative supported by the project increased by over RMB 10,000 (1550 USD). This data come from internal monitoring and has been independently verified by the evaluation team through cross-referencing with IFAD project monitoring data and field interviews.

In the context of the government’s programme to eradicate the absolute poverty by 2020, the project’s interventions were channelled to reach or serve 48% of the registered poor living the project area; its contribution margin to the direct beneficiaries was estimated to be significant, as the project invested mainly in building the target groups’ productive and income-generating assets and capacities, which provided a higher leverage effect on rural livelihood improvement.

More specifically, the project targeted economic

empowerment of women farmers and the realization of women's rights to productive resources. UN Women China has been working to address rural women's issues, climate change, and poverty alleviation through various projects, with several government and civil society partners for over ten years. The QWFIS project complements and contributes to these efforts.

The findings below outline the type of impact the project achieved as perceived by stakeholders and distilled by evaluators from project reports.

Finding 12.

The project enhanced women's confidence and control over their income, their decision-making power within families and community. This was a positive unexpected project result.

The main strategy of this project is to help women increase income through improved skills and increased access productive assets and technologies. The IFAD project management staff, after receiving training from QWFIS, enhanced the awareness and capacities to serve rural women. They

intentionally provided productive assets (such as free seeds, fertilizers, small animals) and technologies (through technical training and field demonstrations) to rural women, and increased women's productivity and income. The field interviews found that rural women were particularly happy and proud that they "could make money now" and that they "could spend the money how they wanted". Many women told the consultant that before their participation in the project, they needed to ask their husbands for money and have to "watch their husbands' faces <reactions>". If husbands denied their request, then women had no money to use. After the project interventions, women reported being able to earn money independently and have better control over the use of money. Some women reported being able to buy "clothes, bags, and make-up", things that were previously considered "unnecessary" by their husbands. Women also reported using the money on expenses for children and support the elderly members of their families, as well as buying "better food" to improve their family nutrition. Interviewed women also reported becoming "more confident" and "visible".

"In the past, women in the village were not confident. When the project started, the women did not believe that embroidery can help them earn money, so they were reluctant to join the training. The project took them on a three-day study tour, and they visited women doing embroidery in four counties. When they saw that other women could make money from embroidery, they believed it and became motivated to learn. Some disabled women and elderly women also participated in the training. After they could earn their first income, they became even more confident in their capacities. In July 2021, the county hosted a cultural festival, and the cultural products could compete for awards. Nine women embroidered a 10-meter-long scroll on the theme of rural revitalization. The festival only invited 1-2 representatives for each piece of work to participate, but all the 9 women including one disabled woman wanted to participate. With project support, all the nine women joined the festival and showed their product in confidence, and they won the first-class award among 45 pieces of products from nine townships. They were so excited!" FGD with women in Bahan village, Huangyuan County, age range between 30+ and 50+ years old

Possessing improved capacities to generate income, most of 63 women from six FGDs in 5 villages felt that they had more decision-making power in their families and community (the total women beneficiaries are 69,444). Most interviewed

women said that the fact that they were able to earn own money and did not need to ask husbands for money, enabled them to 'gain more respect from husbands'.

"In winter, men cannot migrate to work and so they do not have income, but women can still earn income through embroidery. Therefore, men have to ask money from women, which increased women's status in families. I used to speak with less confidence in families, now I speak with more power", woman involved in embroidery in Bahan Village of Huangyuan County, 30+ years old.

The trainings and the study tour outside their village opened women's perspectives, their capacities to speak in public, women become 'more visible' and active in community affairs. The local government officials also made notice of these positive changes. Several local government officials

told the consultant that they noted that women, who tended to be silent and shy in front of other people, especially during larger meetings, become 'braver' and were able 'to speak out their opinions' in village meetings.

"Before the project, I would always sit in silence during in village committee meetings, I did not dare to speak out my opinions, and just followed the decisions of village heads. But now I can speak during village meetings. When the village committee was deciding what to do with an abandoned primary school, I took two other women with me to propose that we convert it into a reading room and a kindergarten for children, so that women no long send the children to the kindergarten in another village, which takes time, and the road is not good. The village accepted our proposals, and thus saved women's time to send and pick up children in another village," the woman's federation leader in Bahan village, Huangyuan County, 30+ years old.

Finding 13.
The project enhanced women's organizations, networks and leadership capacities. This is an expected positive project result contributing to women's empowerment and resilience outcome.

All county and village women's federation leaders interviewed during the field visit noted that they enhanced their leadership and management capacities.

"Before the project, I didn't dare to speak out in project meetings. After the training, I feel comfortable to discuss and even argue project matters with provincial PMO officials. Women's Federation has the advantage of mobilizing women, but we do not have the advantage of finances. It is very effective that we cooperate with government agencies to implement women's programmes. I also got the chance to host the visit of the Head of UN Women Beijing Office, Ms. An Siqi. From her I learnt about women's situation in Nepal, which broadened my perspectives. In the past, I also organized women's training. When the training was over, the task was over. The project made me realize that it is also important to help women find employment after the training. Therefore, I identified a local embroidery company to not only deliver the training to women, but also place orders so that women can make money with the skills they learned. In the future, I plan to train women how to manage agritainment, I will also engage a company to train women and help women promote the businesses," county Women's Federation leader in Huangyuan, 40+ years old.

Rural women said that trainings and joint activities brought women together, they got to know each other and kept communication after completion of project activities. Women often exchange skills and information in WeChat groups. They also keep contact with women in other provinces, whom they met in trainings or study tours. Since women can earn money independently now, they sometimes have meals together, and even 'sing and dance' together. These networks do not only build up their 'sense of belonging', but also provide a 'support mechanism' for women, they can 'help each other' and 'work together towards a better life'. Some of

the village women's federations leaders became village committee leaders and one woman was elected as village head.

Finding 14.
Women gained access to markets and moved up the agricultural value chain. This is an expected positive project result contributing to women's economic empowerment and financial resilience outcome.

The consultant was able to interview 18 women from ethnic minority groups (Tu and Tibet groups) during

the field trip. In the past, women from ethnic minority groups embroidered at home for individual or family use, for example marriage ceremony clothes. However, they couldn't sell their products. The project helped these (and other) rural women conclude

contacts with enterprises. The enterprises studied market demands, designed embroidery blueprints, and passed orders to women. Women produced embroideries for companies, which in turn paid women for their work.

"Women from ethnic minorities in the village traditionally do Thangka embroidery for Buddhist Temples. It will take several women a long time to complete a piece of work, so the purchase price is relatively high. In recent years, temples started using Thangka drawings instead of embroideries to reduce costs. Therefore, women found it more difficult to sell their products. With project support, the county embroidery company designed the products targeting tourists, students, and office workers (e.g., bags and handcrafts) and placed orders with women. The women can produce these popular products and earn money again through embroidery. These women now have more order than they can handle!" FGD with women in Wushi Village of Huzhu County, age range from 30+ to 50+ years old.

The project also helped women develop their knowledge and skills, so that they can produce higher

quality products that sell at higher prices, therefore gradually moving up the agricultural value chain.



Members of the Guanglin Cooperative at Minhe County receiving their share of profits (UN Women / Qiu Bi)

"The founder of the cooperative, Ms Tie Lingmei, used to be a taxi driver in the county town and made good money. With the encouragement of Ms Li Yulan, the first communist party secretary in the village, she returned to the village and established this cooperative. The cooperative contracted the abandoned land from the villagers and did the land preparation. The farmers in the village used to plant low value maize and wheat, the cooperative started to plant sunflowers and vegetables to increase the income. Now, the cooperative has 53 members, 50 are women, and 26 members are from poor households. Each member can make about 20,000 Yuan (3094 USD). The cooperative also hired temporary workers, all of them are women, and each can make about 8000 Yuan per year," female representative from Guanglin Agriculture Cooperative in Minhe County, 40+ years old.

The project assisted women in building relationship with academic research institutes and universities in the province, which organised scientific experiments in the village cooperatives. They offered their land for free to scientists to conduct experiments in return for knowledge and trainings on agricultural techniques, etc. Women can watch and observe advanced technologies in practice, throughout the whole production cycle and the scientists can train and teach women directly on the farm fields. Women can also obtain the latest and highest quality seeds. Women had a chance to be exposed to the benefits of scientific approaches first-hand. They learnt that new seeds and new technologies can yield higher quality products, are more environmentally friendly, and can sell at higher prices in the market.

The project also supported five women technicians to study at the Yangling National Advanced Agriculture Demonstration Park in Xian City. This is the first time that women from cooperatives were given the chance to study new planting technologies at a high-level institute. They learned about planting, fertilizing, land preparation, and nurturing

seedlings. They applied what they had learned on their cooperative farmland, and they showed their fellow cooperative members that new technologies can increase production and reduce costs.

Another example of positive change is around ecological agriculture. Cooperatives which participated in project trainings learnt that they were throwing away large amounts of by-products of vegetables each year. The cooperatives decided to farm pigs and chicken, who can consume vegetable by-products and whose manure in turn can be used to fertilize vegetables. During the field visit, the consultant could observe members of the eco-farm playing music for their vegetables, avoiding chemical pesticides and applying organic fertilizers. This allowed the cooperative to sell their vegetables to Xining and Lanzhou cities in the neighbouring province. The cooperative expanded to include farmland in 7 villages in 3 townships, which also created more job opportunities for local women. Their plans for the future include selling vegetables to Central Business District and embassy areas in Beijing, and to move up the value chain from marginalized villages to big cities.



Members of the Guanglin Cooperative at Minhe County showing off their produce (UN Women / Qiu Bi)

Finding 15.

The project enhanced women's resilience to climate change through both the adaptation and mitigation aspects.

A livestock farm supported by the project in Minhe County
(UN Women / Qifu Bi)



The main contribution of the project towards women's climate change resilience lies in the diversification of crops and livelihoods that it has achieved for the beneficiaries. Prior to project intervention, many smallholder women farmers in the targeted areas relied on climate-sensitive crops for subsistence agriculture or small-scale commercial farming with little knowledge of climate risks. The drastic increase in precipitation in Qinghai – a traditionally dry area - in recent decades, due to global warming, has rendered this livelihood model insecure. For example, sunflower farms have been destroyed within one night of severe rainfall. The project has helped counter this risk through introducing the beneficiaries to climate-resilient crop varieties and providing financing for livestock breeding, which are less affected by the economic uncertainty brought by the changing climate. With UN Women's project direct support, women farmers in the project areas are also gain climate smart agricultural skills through a series of training and knowledge exchange on ecological agriculture, organic farming and livestock raising.

On top of diversified crops and farming practices, the project helped women learn non-farm skills, such as embroidery and housekeeping, so that women can earn money out of farm work, which lessened the pressure on natural resources and dependence on agriculture. In addition, women's access to alternative sources of income lowers the financial risk they experience with deriving their livelihood solely from agriculture. . QWFIS project also provided training to service providers and rural women on advanced techniques in ecological agriculture, husbandry, and waste management. Rural women acquired more environment-friendly agricultural practices and gained awareness of the market demand for the high-quality organic agricultural products. These have contributed to the mitigation aspect of climate change action in the longer term.

In addition, climate-smart infrastructure interventions were carried out jointly by UN Women and IFAD under IFAD's Qinghai Liupan Mountain Area Poverty Reduction Project (QLMAPRP), whose beneficiaries

included the women beneficiaries of the QWFIS project. Whereas IFAD provided the financing and infrastructure expertise, UN Women provided gender mainstreaming inputs to make sure that women benefited equally from such developments and that their specific needs were addressed. The women beneficiaries of the QWFIS project benefited from climate-change smart interventions

including construction of greenhouses, livestock warm sheds which allow all-season care and fencing raising, introduction of open-field cash crops, irrigation schemes to improve water management, establishment of Water User Associations (WUA's) which included women as their members⁴⁰.

Office building of Guanglin Agricultural Cooperative (UN Women / Qiu Bi)



Guanglin Agriculture Cooperative was established in 2016, and contracted 100 hectare of waste land to plant sunflowers and potatoes. During the starting time, the cooperative always encountered the natural disasters, and their crops were focused on two species. After the QWFIS project started, the women of the cooperative participated in the training on recycled eco-agriculture, and got the chances to go to Beijing to visit the ecological farms. Then they started to develop eco-agriculture and diversified agriculture. They planted 12 different species of vegetables. Since the cooperative produces 8,000kg of abandoned vegetable leaves each year, they started to raise pigs and chicken so that they can feed the animals with the leaves. They also plant corns, and use the corn silage straw to feed the goats. They then use the animal manure to fertilize the land and apply the biological approaches to control the pests, reduced the applications of chemical fertilizers and pesticides, improved the soil condition and environment.

40 IFAD Qinghai Liupan Mountain Area Poverty Reduction Project (QLMAPRP) project completion report

2.5 Contribution towards Sustainability

OECD/DAC defines sustainability as “*The extent to which the net benefits of the intervention continue, or are likely to continue.*”⁴¹

Evaluation Questions:

1. *To what extent was the capacity of rural women in Qinghai province developed in order to ensure sustainability of efforts and benefits?*
2. *What factors contributed to the project implementation? Are they replicable?*
3. *After the completion of the project, to what extent will it be possible to maintain project’s results?*
4. *Does the project have an exit strategy?*

The evaluators find that the sustainability of project results will depend on the political will, environment, tools and skills in place and a virtuous cycle of demand created so that provincial authorities continue to employ such approaches. This is a long-term process under the best of circumstances.

There are several elements that could contribute towards project’s sustainability. Firstly, the project was designed in line with the government poverty reduction policy for sustainable livelihoods. To achieve sustainable long-term impacts, comprehensive and sustained efforts need to be taken by duty bearers and rights holders in China consistently over time. To support this, the project promoted a long-term strategic approach through its holistic focus on developing knowledge products, capacity, skills, collective engagement, communication, and cooperation among all stakeholders to encourage foundational understanding, know-how, and to ensure continuity, expansion, and scaling up of best practices beyond the piloted project timeframe.

41 [“Better Criteria for Better Evaluation. Revised Evaluation Criteria Definitions and Principles for Use. OECD/DAC Network on Development Evaluation”, OECD \(2019\).](#)

Secondly, the project has an exit strategy that is institutionalized through key government partners as well as the network of women’s farmer organizations. UN Women China considers that women farmers, the key beneficiaries, will be able to continue leveraging their networks and collective actions to increase access to and use of agricultural and business knowledge. With improved skills to produce products that are viable and respond to market demands and environmental considerations, women farmers and their networks will be able to continue increasing their income security and resilience after the end of project activities.

Thirdly, the fact that implementation of project activities was managed by RP, which is a permanent government institution, supports the likelihood that the project interventions would be institutionalize into long-term practice and continue to sustain and promote the results of this project beyond its completion. RP has many years of experience in all aspects of the project outcome and outputs areas, especially as a government think-tank around agricultural development, climate change, gender and rural development, as well as poverty reduction. Through the implementation of this project, RP further developed its institutional capacity and will be able to sustain continued interventions, training, engaging more stakeholders, influencing improvement in relevant policies on women farmers’ poverty reduction and income security and are more resilient in a changing climate.

Finding 16.

Sustainability of project achievements will depend on women’s capacities to continue generating independent income and continue mutual support through women’s organisations and networks. This will depend on the political will, environment, tools and skills in place and a virtuous cycle of demand created so that both service providers and women continue to employ capacities built and knowledge transferred.

The project adopted training of trainer approach and provided trainings to 458 local government officials from different departments, project

management staff, enterprises staff, and other partners. The trainings addressed specific technical issues such as climate change, eco-agriculture, as well as gender awareness building and gender mainstreaming approaches. Thus, the service providers enhanced their awareness and capacities and are able to better support rural women, especially in their routine jobs beyond the project. The training of trainers from local areas approach is effective in sustaining the project effects in the long run.

The project developed training manuals, knowledge products, and toolkits, including women's leadership, ecological agriculture, animal feeding, digital finance, marketing skills, and gender equality, which can be used continuously by local service providers and rural women.

This project improved women technical skills on farming and non-farming sectors, and thus enhanced women's productivity. They can generate and increase income by applying these skills. It is expected that women rely on these capacities to continue generating income. However, the extent to which such efforts will be sustained over time is difficult to predict will depend on the political will, environment, tools and skills in place and a virtuous cycle of demand created so that provincial authorities continue to employ such approaches.

The project enhanced women's self-esteem and the courage to express themselves in public, it also enhanced the leadership skills and management capacities of women's leaders, and enhanced women's networks. It is expected that women rely on these capacities to participate in decision-making at village, county, and provincial levels. It is also expected that women will continue being able to mobilize and organize themselves for collective actions and have more bargaining power in the market, and in decision-making in community affairs. These women's organizations and networks can continue to support women after the project completed.

Finding 17.

Provincial and county authorities are likely to use project sites as demonstration models. This points to replicability in other villages and provinces.

Provincial and county officials told the consultant that they would continue to support the project sites, which proved to be 'good models for poverty reduction and helping women'. Therefore, local authorities are interested to continue supporting the sites, as they are likely to bring positive returns on investments and can also continue being positive models for other provinces. For example, two project villages, Qiaotou village in Minhe County and Bahan village in Huangyuan County, have been selected as models for rural revitalization, which is the national priority in the next stage of rural development in China after the completion of the goal for elimination of the absolute poverty. Each village will get further investment from local government. Huzhu county will also continue supporting embroidery as one of the priority areas in its cultural programme.

The first secretaries of the Communist Party in Qiaotou Village of Minhe County and Bahan Village of Huangyuan County won the National Advanced Individuals for Poverty Alleviation awards. In February 2021, they participated in the National Poverty Alleviation Commendation ceremony hosted at the Great Hall of the People in Beijing. Both thanked UN Women's project for the support provided in these two villages towards poverty reduction. Led by the first secretary, Qiaotou Village establishes the Guanglin Agriculture Cooperative. The leader of Guanglin⁴² participated in multiple trainings and conferences, including a visit to the innovative farm in Beijing, which gave her 'many good ideas on how to improve the cooperative'. They got the ideas to develop ecological and recycled agriculture, which not only reduced the operation cost and improved the environment, but also moved up to a higher value chain, so that they could expand the cooperative and hire more women. UN Women project also supported Guanglin Cooperative with small machines for processing agricultural products and provided working funds. Guanglin Cooperative also won the national award for Women-led Poverty Reduction Demonstration Pilot issued by All China Women's Federation and was awarded 50,000 yuan (7768 USD) in August of 2020.

42 She is featured on the cover photo of the report.

2.6 Gender Equality and Human Rights

Evaluation Questions:

1. *To what extent has the project contributed to gender equality and women's empowerment? Has the project made a difference in terms of policies and mechanisms?*
2. *To what extent has the project engaged marginalized communities and belonging to vulnerable groups in planning and monitoring of project interventions?*

The evaluators find 'gender equality and human rights' dimension of the project to be satisfactory. The project has been implemented with adequate attention to women participation in and benefit from project activities and their empowerment. The project M&E system monitored sex-disaggregated information in this regard. The project also involved Women Federations throughout implementation to enhance their capacity. Special attention was given to promote women's off-farm income generation skills to achieve economic empowerment, which in turn contributed to better control of assets and decision making at home. Several types of project activities such as irrigation improvement, animal sheds and greenhouses have led to reduced workload and hardship for women.

Finding 18.

The project adopted a women farmer-centred participatory approach to poverty reduction, addressing barriers in the selected counties to increase women's economic empowerment and resilience in a changing climate.

The evaluation found that this project (along with other projects implemented by UN Women) adopted a human rights-based approach by strengthening the voice of women and girls to remove structural barriers for gender equality and women's empowerment. The project responded to the expanded agenda of Beijing+20 and was guided by international human rights treaties.

More specifically, the evaluation found that this project built on UN Women China's previous interventions and lessons learned and applied partnership-based models of project design that are stakeholder-driven and are based on analysis and evidence to ensure relevance, effectiveness, sustainability and adherence with a human rights-based approach. The project adopted women farmer-centred participatory approach to poverty reduction, addressing the challenges and eliminating some of the key barriers in the selected poverty counties in Qinghai to ensure women are economically empowered for resilience in a changing climate.

Limitations on women's access to natural, social, physical, financial, and human capital have considerable impacts on their ability to generate income. This is exacerbated by traditional, cultural and social norms, and structural barriers (economic, financial, legal, political, social). In practical terms, the project addressed the following barriers on gender dimensions of vulnerability to climate change:

1. Women's perception that they spend more time doing labour due to climate change than men. Women's labour input is more affected by climate change than men's labour input.
2. There is a gendered division of household duties such as cleaning, cooking and care giving; the proportion of households where mostly the wife performs these duties far exceeds the households where mostly the men perform these duties.
3. Men are more engaged in off-farm employment than women, this results in gender gaps in incomes. More women than men earn less than 10,000 yuan per year.
4. The proportion of wives and daughters who have loan qualifications is considerably lower than that of husbands and sons.
5. Family duties prevent women from utilizing relevant training opportunities. More women than men never attended a training.
6. Women have less decision-making power than

men in daily family affairs. Fewer women can make independent decisions in their households.

7. Fewer women participate in local community meetings or congresses. Consequently, women might know less about public affairs and contribute less to decision-making processes.
8. Government officials hold gender-biased perceptions regarding labour division and regarding men and women's skills.
9. Women's associations and cooperatives play important roles in improving the status of women and in the elimination of gender discrimination.
10. When attending villager's congresses, where local-level decisions on climate change adaptation and mitigation are made, fewer women speak, while most women only observe/ listen (but do not speak).

Consequently, the project adopted the following strategies:

1. **The project provided technical support and evidence-based interventions and knowledge creation, including assessment and analysis for key stakeholders.** The project conducted action-oriented research engaging all stakeholders, especially the project beneficiary group of women farmers, to identify and assess root causes of negative attitudes and practices regarding women farmers' use of technologies, tools, and assets; financial services; and value chains and markets. Drawing from the findings, the project team formulated actions for advocacy, awareness initiatives, trainings, and media campaigns targeting key stakeholders.
2. **The project supported capacity building and skill development for women farmers and their networks as well as government and service providers, particularly at the local levels.** The project engaged government and service providers to support women farmers and increase their access to economic resources, including finance, land and other assets. However, given the reality and political sensitivity around land ownership in China, the project identified a space in which it

was possible and realistic to influence change and engaged with the Chinese government, focusing on providing technical support and capacity building in less politically sensitive areas such as accessible agricultural extension and financial services for women farmers.

A series of interventions were conducted for capacity building and skills development for women farmers, gender training for government and service providers, based on the local situation and needs of women farmers, to ensure equal access to productive resources and assets, such as agricultural inputs and extension services; climate and weather information and tools; and technologies that would also reduce women labour burden, in order to remove financial barriers to allow women to better manage a changing climate by investing in climate-resilient agriculture.

3. **The project engaged in advocacy, convening and supporting collaboration between key stakeholders, including government, service provider, women farmers, network of women farmers' organizations and associations, decision makers, particularly at the local level to influence change.** The project built on UN Women China's comparative advantage in promoting gender mainstreaming into IFAD project and addressing gender gaps/women's needs to ensure full participation of women in implementation of both the IFAD project and this proposed project through engaging all key stakeholders, women farmers and their networks.
4. **The project strengthened collective engagement and positioning of women farmers and their networks, including women's farmer organizations and associations.** Women's associations have the power to collectively aggregate their agricultural production into higher-value processing to achieve economy of scale and access more profitable markets. The project assisted the formation of women networks and groups including Women's Associations through strengthening their skills of business management, leadership and governance. The project helped women farmers to avoid lower-end

production of simpler agricultural products that do not command much value in the market.

5. The project leveraged new technologies and online platform to widen market access for women farmers. Building on IFAD project and learn from local, national and international best practices and innovations, the project facilitated the participation of women in flexible, efficient and fair green value chain and agricultural processing and markets, such as e-commerce and localizing digital platform initiatives in the context of Qinghai.

The project adopted an inclusive targeting strategy, paying special attention to the specific needs of vulnerable groups including disabled, ethnic minorities and the elderly. The project was designed to target: (i) poor smallholder farmers with a potential for high value/locally featured products, and (ii) disadvantaged and vulnerable but economically capable poor (i.e., women, young, disabled, ethnic minorities, etc.). Specific focus was foreseen on targeting of women (over 60% estimated of the total direct beneficiaries), and ethnic groups, which represent a significant percentage of the total population in the project area.

The inclusiveness of the project targeting strategy was ensured by geographic targeting, selecting project townships and villages according to national and provincial areas for poverty reduction, the high poverty incidence, but also potential for organized production and marketing, and strong local commitment to achieve. Targeting at beneficiary level was done through direct targeting of the poor and vulnerable groups with tailored activities aiming to achieve an outreach of at least 80% of project beneficiaries coming from these groups. The project design tailored specific activities supporting the disadvantaged and the vulnerable for income and employment generation, building their technical skills and self-development capacity.

2.7 Coherence with UN Women policies and interventions of other actors, especially the UN

Evaluation Questions:

1. *To what extent is the project coherent internally with UN Women's policies and externally with the interventions of other actors?*
2. *How has this project strategically positioned UN Women in the development community?*

The evaluation finds that the project is coherent with UN Women policies. UN Women is at the centre of the gender equality architecture of the UN system and has a triple mandate that integrates normative support, co-ordination and programmatic functions⁴³. UN-Women's Strategic Plan 2018-2021⁴⁴ outlines the strategic direction, objectives and approaches to support efforts to achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls by 2030. The Strategic Plan considers lessons learned from the previous one covering 2014-2017. It builds on recommendations from the 20-year review and appraisal of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action, highlights UN-Women's contribution to the gender-responsive implementation of the Agenda 2030, and spells out how UN Women intends to leverage its comparative and collaborative advantages to accelerate the achievement of results for women and girls.

Finding 19.

The project is coherent with UN Women mission and strategically positioned UN Women China at the centre of development efforts to economically empowering women in the context of climate change.

43 As spelled out in General Assembly Resolution 64/289, the founding resolution of the organization.

44 UN Women Strategic Plan 2018 – 2021 accessed at <https://www.unwomen.org/en/digital-library/publications/2017/8/un-women-strategic-plan-2018-2021>

The project contributed to UNDAF Outcome 1, *“more people, particularly the vulnerable and disadvantaged, enjoy improved conditions and increased opportunities for economic, social, and cultural development, through working in parallel, adopting the respective comparative advantages”*, working jointly with IFAD⁴⁵.

Within the UN system, UN Women is mandated to lead, promote and coordinate efforts to advance gender equality and women’s empowerment. It has a strong comparative advantage to strengthen effective UN actions at the global, regional and national levels to advocate for greater resources, guide and implement joint programmes and collaboration to leverage greater achievement on gender equality. Furthermore, UN Women has a strong expertise in mainstreaming and integrated gender into development policies and programmes, particularly in economic empowerment and climate resilience. UN Women China led a critical policy research in 2016⁴⁶, which provided the evidence and insights into the gender dimensions of poverty and vulnerabilities in the context of climate change in China. The key policy recommendations focus on improved access to productive resources, support to enhance capacity of women’s farmer to move up the value chain, which has been included as a key component of this project design through consultation with key partners, including the RP, IFAD and provincial and local partners in Qinghai Province.

UN Women’s comparative advantage brought a critical value addition to the current poverty reduction efforts led by IFAD to enhance the focus on the marginalized population in the rural areas, particularly women’s smallholder farmers. The QWFIS project contributed to a more integrated approach to mainstreaming gender and climate resilience into project activities. It also complemented IFAD’s poverty reduction project, which brought a large investment of US\$43 million in Qinghai Liupan Mountain Area.

Specifically, the QWFIS project strategically positioned the UN Women in China at the centre of development actions aimed at economically empowering women farmers and enabling them to have greater access to high-value markets. UN Women also contributed to strengthening collective actions of women farmers and their networks to address poverty reduction, enhance income security and resilience in a changing climate. Both the IFAD and UN Women projects complemented each other through joint efforts in the common project counties and reinforced each other in terms of results and impact for women beneficiaries.

45 [UNDAF 2016-2020](#)

46 <http://asiapacific.unwomen.org/en/digital-library/publications/2016/12/gender-dimensions-of-vulnerability-to-climate-change-in-china>



A member of the Guanglin Agricultural Cooperative at Minhe County (UN Women / Qiu Bi)

3

CONCLUSIONS

3. CONCLUSIONS

Overall, the evaluation concluded that UN Women has established itself as a credible and respected voice and partner in China. The QWFIS project undoubtedly informed UN Women’s work on gender in the country in general, and the work on helping rural women working in agriculture who find themselves disproportionately vulnerable to environmental challenges in particular. The project contributed to combatting this inequality and poverty among women farmers by equipping them with social and economic resilience skills. It also helped advance UN SDG Agenda by contributing to Goal 5 on Gender Equality, Goal 8 on Decent Work and Economic Growth and Goal 13 on Climate Change Action.

Some of the key achievements of the project are:

- » 69,444 women farmers have directly benefited from training on leadership and gender awareness; livelihood and skills building, including on agricultural practices; and e-commerce and micro-finance.
- » 458 service providers have been trained on gender awareness through interactive participatory trainings. These mostly comprise government officials from poverty alleviation sectors, financial sectors, women’s federations, and agricultural extensions.
- » 6 women’s networks and community cooperatives have been built or strengthened, including one women-led agricultural cooperative, to increase their collectivization, advocacy and leadership, and their participation in poverty alleviation and entrepreneurship.
- » The average annual income of women farmers in the agricultural cooperative supported by the project has increased by over RMB 10,000.

RELEVANCE

The evaluators find ‘relevance’ to be highly satisfactory, given the overall consistency of the project design with the needs of the beneficiaries and its continued alignment with UN Women’s and national policies and development priorities. The intervention and modalities were appropriate through the evolving circumstances of implementation; the implied internal logic remained coherent with the poverty profile and ongoing agricultural transformation in the country. The design remained relevant until project completion, with some operational changes, which were more adaptations to the external context without compromising the project rationale, values, and principles.

EFFECTIVENESS

The evaluators find ‘effectiveness’ to be satisfactory. The outputs were delivered, and targets met and/or exceeded. The project’s interventions led to the expected outcome of *‘more women farmers in Qinghai Province have increased income security and are more resilient in a changing climate.’* The key factors that facilitated the achievement of project’s results include the national enabling policy and legislative environment to support the implementation of climate-smart agriculture and gender-sensitive policy and regulations to enhance access to finance and productive resources, including land’s rights, tenure, and ownership. This is an area of high political sensitivity, therefore the project identified key areas of work that it could engage in (e.g. advocacy) and interventions at the local level (i.e. more flexibility and less political sensitivity). Covid 19 pandemic and resulting lockdown and restrictions on movement of people and gatherings are the main factors that impacted project implementation. It caused some delay but did not prevent the achievement of project targets and results.

EFFICIENCY

The evaluation finds efficiency to be ‘satisfactory’ based on the stakeholder analysis (see following sections), as well as the distribution of responsibilities among responsible and participating parties. Overall, the project implementation was timely and efficient, no major delays or disturbances were reported. The main opportunity for cost – efficiency was in the joint collaboration between UN Women and IFAD, including the use of the same PMOs, staff and logistical arrangements for project activities (e.g., training facilities, material, etc.) The main barrier was linked to differences in reporting rules and procedures employed by the UN (UN Women and IFAD) and governmental entities (PMOs and RP). This was overcome by training of project staff and by finding common ground on the operations and management. The M&E system used to monitor project performance was adequate. The main challenge lies in the choice of indicators for capacity – development programmes, which often focus on inputs / outputs and do not reflect the main outcome fully, which is learning, especially the ability to apply knowledge in the long-term.

CONTRIBUTION TO IMPACT

The evaluators find that the project’s contribution to impact is ‘satisfactory’ based on the qualitative and quantitative evidence reviewed. Some 69,444 women farmers directly benefited from training on leadership and gender awareness; livelihood and skills building, including on agricultural practices; and e-commerce and micro-finance. Overall, 458 service providers have been trained on gender awareness through interactive participatory trainings. The average annual income of women farmers in the agricultural cooperative supported by the project increased by over RMB 10,000 (1550 USD). In the context of the government’s programme to eradicate the absolute poverty by 2020, the project’s interventions were channelled to reach or serve 48% of the registered poor living the project area; its contribution margin to the direct beneficiaries was estimated to be significant, as the project invested mainly in building the target groups’ productive and income-generating assets

and capacities, which provided a higher leverage effect on rural livelihood improvement.

CONTRIBUTION TOWARDS SUSTAINABILITY

The evaluators find that the sustainability of project results will depend on the political will, environment, tools and skills in place and a virtuous cycle of demand created so that provincial authorities continue to employ such approaches. This is a long-term process under the best of circumstances. There are several elements that could contribute towards project’s sustainability. Firstly, the project was designed in line with the government poverty reduction policy for sustainable livelihoods. Secondly, the project has an exit strategy that is institutionalized through key government partners as well as the network of women’s farmer organizations. Thirdly, the fact that implementation of project activities was managed by RP, which is a permanent government institution, supports the likelihood that the project interventions would be institutionalize into long-term practice and continue to sustain and promote the results of this project beyond its completion.

GENDER EQUALITY AND HUMAN RIGHTS

The evaluators find ‘gender equality and human rights’ dimension of the project to be satisfactory. The project has been implemented with adequate attention to women participation in and benefit from project activities and their empowerment. The project M&E system monitored sex-disaggregated information in this regard. The project also involved Women Federations throughout implementation to enhance their capacity. Special attention was given to promote women’s off-farm income generation skills to achieve economic empowerment, which in turn contributed to better control of assets and decision making at home. Several types of project activities such as irrigation improvement, animal sheds and greenhouses have led to reduced workload and hardship for women.

COHERENCE WITH UN WOMEN POLICIES AND INTERVENTIONS OF OTHER ACTORS, ESPECIALLY THE UN



Women attending a training workshop in Minhe County (UN Women / Qiu Bi)

The evaluation finds that the project is coherent with UN Women policies. UN Women is at the centre of the gender equality architecture of the UN system and has a triple mandate that integrates normative support, co-ordination and programmatic functions. The project also contributed to UNDAF Outcome 1, “*more people, particularly the vulnerable and disadvantaged, enjoy improved conditions and increased opportunities for economic, social, and cultural development, through working in parallel, adopting the respective comparative advantages*”, working jointly with IFAD.

Some of the unexpected positive results of the project included strengthened women’s ability to maintain sustainable income even during COVID-19 hit. Women’s leadership skills developed through

the project was also demonstrated through their contribution in the fight against the COVID-19. As farmers, these women play a critical role in food security in the aftermath of COVID-19. Bringing their voices and leadership at the forefront of the recovery phase was very important.

Some of the challenges noted by the evaluation include sustainability of knowledge gained and of project results overall. Sustainability will depend on political will, environment, tools and skills in place and a virtuous cycle of demand created so that provincial authorities continue to employ such approaches. Whether or not the created knowledge and skills will continue to be applied in the long-term (conducting to systemic change) also remains unclear. This is a long-term process under the best of circumstances.



An artisan at an embroidery workshop at Huzhu county (UN Women / Qiu Bi)

4

LESSONS

LEARNED

4. LESSONS LEARNED

The evaluation confirms that overall, the project generated good practices which could be replicated in other projects and in other countries that have similar interventions. Based on these, as well as on other evaluation findings presented in the previous sections, the evaluation would like to highlight the following lessons that have been learned through the experience of the project under review.

The project enabling factors included partnerships with reputable national institutions for project delivery, institutional partnership with IFAD as an efficient way of mutual leverage between UN agencies, continuous policy dialogue and technical assistance at multiple levels (province, county, village) and to multiple stakeholders (government officials, private sector, rural women) and using the right support mix (classroom and practical training, study visits), efficient project architecture which allowed for information to circulate in a timely and useful manner, and the permanent physical presence in the project villages and counties increased UN Women visibility and relevance, as well as ability to meet the needs of stakeholders.

Project obstacles included the fact that capacity development, which seeks to change behaviour, institutional culture and capacity, such processes requires more time than the project had. This challenge is reflected in the project results and reporting framework, which was constrained to opt for indicators that capture progress shortly after completion of capacity – development activities (mainly relying on self-assessment) but less so the extent of learning or how long it was going to last. Thus, the quality of capacities built and knowledge transferred makes short term improvements without necessarily leading to systemic change. The project dedicated resources to the production and sharing of knowledge. However, although quality research, lessons learned and promising practices were identified, challenges remain in turning this knowledge into long lasting rather than ad – hoc practices.

WHAT WORKED WELL / ENABLING FACTORS:

1. It is a viable strategy for UN Women to partner up with reputable national institutions for project delivery. In this case, UN Women China was able to partner up with Institute of Geographic Sciences and Natural Resources Research at Chinese Academy of Sciences, which is also the team of United Nations Environmental Programme - International Ecosystem Management Partnership (UNEP-IEMP), build on its strengths and provide technical support, including project management staff awareness and capacities, thus achieving complementarity and scaling.
2. Institutional partnership with IFAD as an efficient way of mutual leverage between UN agencies, especially in gender empowerment and enhanced women equality. Note that such parallel project collaboration constitutes a new step and a replicable model of inter-agency partnership for UN China, which is highly in line with the objective of the ongoing UN reform, especially under the UN Sustainable Development Cooperation Framework in joint programming. Such cooperation has been successful in effectively exploring the comparative advantages of respective agencies, mutually leveraging the expertise in financing and investments, agriculture and rural development, gender empowerment and enhanced women participation; it presents a flexible applicability as early as at project design, or in the middle of a project implementation.
3. Capacity–developing initiatives in the area of gender and climate change awareness (as any other capacity – developing initiatives) are reputedly slow-paced and long-term endeavours as they try to develop behavioural and attitude change. In this context, enabling factors for the project included gaining government’s trust and

using leverage through mechanisms such as baseline study and research in Qinghai province. Other enabling factors include continuous policy dialogue and technical assistance at multiple levels (province, county, village) and to multiple stakeholders (government officials, private sector, rural women) and using the right support mix (classroom and practical training, study visits). The capacity – developing approaches espoused by the project were particularly appreciated by rural women, as testified during interviews. Many of them never got a chance to go out of their local areas and to see how other women were generating income and managed their businesses. This opportunity changed their minds on matters that they could not “fully believe” before, and enhanced their confidence and aspiration, as well as broadened their perspectives.

4. The project structure allowed for information to circulate in a timely and useful manner between all levels involved thanks to the PMOs, the focal points at RP and IFAD. This network of staff both inside UN Women China and outside ensured that there was regular contact and flow of information towards the main offices in Beijing and vice versa. Project stakeholders described collaboration with UN Women office at all levels as “very positive” including communication, information sharing, availability and responsiveness of staff.
5. The project architecture, which was based on permanent physical presence in the project villages and counties, has increased UN Women visibility and relevance, as well as ability to meet the needs of stakeholders (government service providers, Women’s Federations, cooperatives and enterprises, and rural women overall) thus making it a stronger partner to work with. As several KIs noted during interviews, *“it would have been a lot more difficult to interact with UN Women and the project if they were not based full – time in the counties”*.

WHAT COULD BE IMPROVED / OBSTACLES:

1. As has been demonstrated by the efforts to develop gender capacity to date, making

progress takes time. In the context of capacity development, which seeks to change behaviour, institutional culture and capacity, such processes require more time than the project has. All stakeholders interviewed expressed hope that support would continue beyond the current end date of the project. This is clearly a highly relevant area for any future UN Women interventions in China.

2. This challenge is reflected in the project results and reporting framework, which is constrained to opt for indicators that capture progress on highly dimensional phenomena (e.g. “capacity” or “knowledge”) by collapsing them into single dimensions (e.g. “number of trainings” or “number of participants”). An additional challenge lies in gauging the quality of training provided and trying to establish whether or not trainings were conducted in a way that was conducive to learning. The evaluation found that indicators tend to capture immediate impact generated shortly after completion of capacity – development activities (mainly relying on self-assessment) but less so the extent of learning or how long it is going to last. In some instances, form can trump function, and low-capacity organizations and individuals may camouflage: pretending to meet requirements instead of actually meeting them. Thus, the quality of capacities built and knowledge transferred makes short term improvements without necessarily leading to systemic change. This seems to be one of the project challenges in particular with regard to sustainability of results.
3. The project dedicated resources to the production and sharing of knowledge. However, this evaluation could not clearly conclude to what extent those practices will continue after the project completion. This evaluation finds that although quality research, lessons learned and promising practices were identified, challenges remain in turning this knowledge into long lasting rather than ad – hoc practices. For example, it remains unclear to what extent governmental service providers will turn knowledge received during the project into institutional guidance to be followed permanently.



A member of the Guanglin Agricultural Cooperative at Minhe County (UN Women / Qiu Bi)

5 RECOMMENDATIONS

5. RECOMMENDATIONS

These recommendations are based on evaluation findings and stem from the views and opinions collected during interviews. The recommendations were validated by key users (i.e. UN Women, IFAD and CAS) during the validation workshop. These recommendations may also be useful to UN Women China in formulating their coming Women's Economic Empowerment Strategy development, especially in the Climate Change portfolio, one of the key areas of UN Women China.

- » **Recommendation 1.** UN Women China should continue efforts to sustain growing interest from various stakeholders and to attract new partners and sources of funding to drive the agenda of women empowerment and climate change forward. The QWFIS project provides UN Women with more evidence to showcase progress and share key messages and lessons learnt. This opportunity should be used to engage with other provinces, counties and villages in the country, continue partnership with IFAD and RP and explore new partnerships with other UN Agencies (e.g., FAO). (Linked to Findings 1, 2, 12, 13, 14, 15, 19)
- » **Recommendation 2.** The project approach and strategy provide a good framework to identify challenges rural women face and to design activities in response to those challenges. UN Women China is encouraged to continue this type of projects during the next strategic period, in order to foster ownership of the reform processes it launched together with the Chinese authorities and to see through the changes it initiated. One option would be to keep the current counties in order to build continuity and monitor moving forward and add more counties from other provinces following a needs identification and selection process similar to the one conducted for this project. (Linked to Findings 16, 17, 18)
- **Action point:** Develop a project building on QWFIS experience taking further the agenda of women's empowerment as a key element to successfully addressing climate change, enhancing agrobiodiversity, transforming food systems and increasing family incomes. The timing is appropriate as the Chinese government released the 14th Five Year Plan, which is an opportunity to put forward project promoting climate justice in China (e.g. transition to green economy, gender transformative, climate smart agriculture and sustainable food systems; enhancing and leveraging the capacity of women and girls to build resilience to climate and disaster-related risks).
- » **Recommendation 3.** UN Women China is encouraged to keep up the good work in terms of project governance and management. The current practices allow for a timely and useful information, ensure transparency of actions, and give UN Women China the proper channels for accountability towards stakeholders, partners and donors. The regular meetings and project site visits were appreciated by all stakeholders. However, the evaluation also noted that local stakeholders may have had diverging expectations regarding project interventions (e.g. expected the project to provide 'hard' investments whereas that was never in the scope of the project). The recommendation is to clarify expectations from the get-go and re-confirm these during project meetings. (Findings 5, 8, 9, 10)
- **Action point:** Consider setting up a project steering committee, which would convene regularly (e.g. twice a year) to provide strategic guidance to project implementation but also give the opportunity to all project partners to clarify expectations arising from implementing activities in the field.



» **Recommendation 4.** The project has set up a good M&E process and tools. It allows gathering information on a regular basis thus enabling adequate monitoring. However, UN Women China is encouraged to think how to include more indicators that gauge unquantifiable aspects such as ‘capacity built and used’, ‘knowledge acquired and used’, and indicators of change to track the extent to which an intervention is producing the changes anticipated in the results chain. UN Women China is encouraged to recruit a M&E specialist, who would work with the provincial levels and the RP to streamline the approach. The expected project results and outcomes are complex processes involving many moving parts. A list of quantitative indicators (no matter how well formulated) is never going to gauge such complex processes and will always tend to collapse multiple aspects into simple-to-track numerical indicators. Therefore, the recommendation is to consider a twin-track approach to monitoring and reporting. (Findings 11, 16).

- **Action point:** consider a twin-track approach to monitoring and reporting. This connects monitoring the quantitative results and contributions of the Results Framework (Track 1) to monitoring the overall long-term outcomes (Track 2),

which are often qualitative or narrative-based. Track 1 will be monitored through the indicators in the Results Framework, while Track 2 will be monitored through the application of the Most Significant Change (MSC)⁴⁷ methodology. The MSC approach involves generating and analysing personal accounts of change and deciding which of these accounts is the most significant – and why. MSC is not just about collecting and reporting stories but about having processes to learn from these stories. MSC can be very helpful in explaining HOW change comes about (processes and causal mechanisms) and WHEN (in what situations and contexts). It can therefore be useful to support the development of project theory (theory of change, logic models). As such, Track 2 will capture stories of progress and results – that is, qualitative demonstrations of the impact that the project is having on the ground, to ensure a holistic picture of progress is received over time. These stories could be collected via the project Facebook page or website, creating an open call for members, trainees, and visitors to submit narrative examples of how the project had an impact.

47 https://www.betterevaluation.org/en/plan/approach/most_significant_change

LIST OF APPENDICES

Appendix A. Evaluation Matrix

Evaluation Criteria	Evaluation Questions	Measure/Indicator ¹	Data Sources	Data collection methods
1 Relevance	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> To what extent did the project respond to the needs of the rural women in Qinghai province? What have been some of the main opportunities for the project? How is the project building on them? What have been some of the main challenges for the project? How is the project mitigating them? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> % of agricultural extension workers participating in gender training who can apply their knowledge to support women farmers in their services. # of policy dialogue, initiatives and services provided by local government and/or service providers to support women farmers' income security and climate resilience, which have been influenced by the project. # of women smallholder farmers assisted by the project to register with Farmer Field Schools and Women's Associations 	<p>Project document, annual reports, progress reports, baseline findings</p> <p>Project stakeholders and beneficiaries' opinions (provincial, county and village authorities, private sector, women's federations, rural women)</p>	<p>Document Review</p> <p>Focus Group Discussions</p> <p>Key Informant Interviews</p>
2 Effectiveness	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> To what extent have the expected results and outputs been achieved, and what are the major contributions made by UN Women? What resources have the project provided to women that they previously had difficulty accessing, such as capital, credit, land, technology, training, and markets? To what extent were these resources useful? Does the COVID-19 epidemic affect the achievement of the project? How did the project team overcome it? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Number of women who have increased access to finance, economic resources and are able to utilize agricultural services to increase their productivity through the established networks by the project. Women farmers reported to have increased capacity to lead their network specifically to move up agricultural value chains. 	<p>Project management team (Beijing office, county offices)</p> <p>Project partners (Chinese Academy of Science, IFAD, UNEP)</p>	
3 Efficiency	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> How timely and efficient was the project's implementation? What were the main opportunities for cost-efficiency? What were the main barriers and how were they overcome? To what extent was the M&E system used to monitor project performance and make adjustments? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Number of market research/assessment to identify high potential markets/opportunities for women farmers. # of women smallholder farmers assisted by the project to register with Farmer Field Schools and Women's Associations # of Women's Farmer Field Schools and Women's Association established to promote collective actions 		

<p style="text-align: center;">4</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Sustainability</p>		<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. To what extent was the capacity of rural women in Qinghai province developed in order to ensure sustainability of efforts and benefits? 2. What factors contributed to the project implementation? Are they replicable? 3. After the completion of the project, to what extent will it be possible to maintain project's results? 4. Does the project have an exit strategy? 		<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. To what extent did the project help rural women improve their income and make their livelihoods better and more resilient to climate change? 2. Are there any unexpected project results, whether positive or negative? 		<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. To what extent has the project contributed to gender equality and women's empowerment? Has the project made a difference in terms of policies and mechanisms? 2. To what extent has the project engaged marginalized communities and belonging to vulnerable groups in planning and monitoring of project interventions? 	
	<p style="text-align: center;">5</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Impact</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">6</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Gender equality and human rights</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">7</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Coherence with UNW policies and with the interventions of other actors, especially the UN</p>				

1 Based on Results Framework from the Project Document.

Appendix B. List of Reviewed Documents

1. Project Document
2. Performance Monitoring Framework
3. Qinghai Liupan Mountain Area Poverty Reduction project document
4. International Fund for Agriculture Development (IFAD) baseline report, May 2019
5. Project Annual Reports (2018, 2019, 2020)
6. Project Brief (2020)
7. Reports from 5 project villages (2018, 2019, 2020)
8. Clippings from media on project activities

Appendix C. Audit trail

Chapter and section number	Comments	Evaluation team responses and/ or actions taken
Methodology	<p>This section is very brief and misses several elements required by GERAAS. For instance, the evaluation design and methodological approaches are not clearly described. The evaluators also provide a rating for each evaluation criterion but the methodology to come up with the rating is not detailed. While we would like to ensure the methodology is brief in the main report to support readability, the annexes should provide the details.</p>	Resolved
Findings	<p>Overall, the findings are very positive. If possible, we suggest reviewing these so that they are more balanced and present both the strengths and weaknesses of the project in a constructive way. Some findings are also a bit thin and could benefit from more evidence and analysis (this is clearly the case for the findings on effectiveness). The report includes a lot of pictures, some of which could be removed to expand on the analysis. Some findings also overlap and could be consolidated. In addition, it is sometimes unclear whether the data presented comes from internal monitoring or if it has been verified independently. We suggest reviewing the report to ensure that all data sources are consistently identified throughout.</p> <p>The evaluation presents evidence for improved income and livelihood but does not clearly assess the project's contribution to increased resilience to climate change. A finding on resilience to climate change should be developed given the thrust of the project.</p>	Resolved

Chapter and section number	Comments	Evaluation team responses and/ or actions taken
Disability inclusion	It is great that the evaluators were able to consult with persons living with disability, although the discussion on disability inclusion is somewhat limited. Please note that disability inclusion is a GERAAS criterion and to score well on this, this issue needs to be further incorporated in the findings and conclusions.	Resolved
Conclusions/lessons learned	These are currently presented together as one. We suggest separating those into two sections.	Resolved
Recommendations	The recommendations should be reviewed to ensure that they are prioritized and that they are linked explicitly to their corresponding finding(s)/conclusion(s).	Resolved

Appendix D. Interview Protocols

APPENDIX D1. DATA COLLECTION TOOL - UNW PROJECT TEAM



UN Women Project Team



Semi-structured interview, remote, expected duration 60 – 90 min.

Thank you for willing to speak to us. Your participation in this interview is very much appreciated and entirely voluntary. You are free to decline answering any or all of the questions. This conversation is confidential, so whatever you share with us will not be attributed to you and your name will not appear unless you specifically ask to be quoted or agree to be quoted.

Evaluation Area	Interview Questions
Relevance	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. How was the project area identified? Why the focus on 3 out of 7 counties? 2. How were the needs of the rural women in those counties identified? To what extent did the project respond to these needs? How did the project (or not) take stock of emerging needs? 3. In your opinion, why should UNW lead the work in the area of WEE and CC? What are the comparative advantages? Has UNW country office built on those advantages? How so?

Evaluation Area	Interview Questions
Effectiveness	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 4. Do you think the project's activities were commensurate with the authorities' financial, human and/or technical resources (i.e., was it too difficult for them to implement it or not)? What worked well? What could be improved? 5. How has the project engaged with the different groups of stakeholders <authorities, private sector, women's federations, rural women farmers>? What has worked well? What could be improved? 6. How would you describe the quality of activities so far (the quality of experts, technical support provided, training materials and information, logistics, etc.)? 7. Which improvements are required (e.g., design, approach, timing, administration, networking, capacity development, information sharing, technical capacity of staff, availability of staff, timeliness in responses)? 8. To what extent has the project contributed to enhancing the capacity of government and service providers to women farmers access climate-smart agricultural extension, information, tools and technologies? 9. To what extent has the project contributed to increasing the access of women to financial and productive resources, markets?
Efficiency	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 10. Was the project timeframe appropriate to achieve change and/or early indicators of impact or was the project too ambitious? 11. How would you assess planning and reporting requirements? Do you find them appropriate or too difficult? What works well? What could be done better? 12. Is planning and reporting focusing on results? What works well? What could be done better? 13. Do you find that the information gathered as a result of M&E is relevant and sufficient to monitor and evaluate project progress? Does it allow to flag any potential problems in a timely manner? What do you think works well? What could be improved? 14. How would you assess financial monitoring for the project? Does the current mechanism allow to plan for efficient use of financial and human resources? How are resources distributed between project KDs? What works well? What can be improved? 15. What were the main opportunities for cost-efficiency? What were the main barriers and how are they overcome? 16. To what extent did the project team adapt to the COVID-19 situation and how did this affect the achievement of results?

Evaluation Area	Interview Questions
<p>Sustainability</p>	<p>17. Do you think the partnerships established during the project are going to last beyond the project implementation dates? If yes, how so? If not, why?</p> <p>18. Which are other partners that the project is not engaging with at the moment should be considered for future initiatives? Why?</p> <p>19. How should the project ensure that the tools/deliverables produced during the lifetime of the project remain useful and accessible after its end?</p> <p>20. Does the project have an exit strategy? How will it be rolled out?</p> <p>21. How would you describe the funding gaps at the country level?</p> <p>22. What efforts have been made to date to secure additional funding at the country level? What were the opportunities? What were the challenges?</p>
<p>Impact</p>	<p>23. Did the project produce the intended results in the short, medium and long term? If so, for whom, to what extent and in what circumstances?</p> <p>24. What unintended results – positive and negative – did the intervention produce? How did these occur?</p> <p>25. What key enabling factors explain gains in the project areas? What are the limiting factors and barriers that hindered progress?</p>
<p>Gender equality and human rights</p>	<p>26. How does the project define marginalized communities and belonging to vulnerable groups? How did it include them in planning and monitoring? Has the project addressed their specific needs? Is there evidence of results for these groups?</p> <p>27. How useful were the gender – equality trainings to governmental officials in 7 counties?</p> <p>28. How would you assess the project’s contribution to climate change?</p>
<p>Coherence with UNW policies and with the interventions of other actors, especially the UN</p>	<p>29. How would you assess the complementarity of actions implemented at the provincial / county /or village levels (e.g., with other UN Agencies, development partners)?</p> <p>30. What works well? What could be improved?</p>

APPENDIX D2. DATA COLLECTION TOOL - RURAL WOMEN



Rural Women leaders and representatives of Women Federations (project beneficiaries)



Face to face semi-structured interviews and Focus Group Discussion, expected duration 90 – 120 min.

Thank you for willing to speak to us. Your participation in this interview is very much appreciated and entirely voluntary. You are free to decline answering any or all of the questions. We are independent consultants conducting the final evaluation of the QWFIS project implemented by UN Women. We understand that for positive interventions to be implemented, we need to understand the realities which shaped the situation. Therefore, the purpose of this interview is to understand how this project made a difference to you, your activity and livelihood in the context of your village / county. Specifically, we want to understand the factors that made it easier or harder to deal with the challenges you are facing in your village / county through the perspective of your own experience.

This conversation is confidential, so whatever you share with us will not be attributed to you and your name will not appear unless you specifically ask to be quoted or agree to be quoted.

Evaluation Area	Interview Questions
Relevance	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Did the project understand what your needs were? Why did you find the project activities you participated in responded (or not) to your needs (e.g. in terms of income, services, markets, decision-making power, access to resources, coping with the climate changes, and / or others perceived by you)?
Effectiveness	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 2. Have you participated in any training provided by the project? If so, what training and how many times? 3. Did you participate in farmer field school? How was your experience? Did you find it useful (or not)? How so? 4. Overall, what new things did you learn during the training sessions / farmer school? 5. Have you applied what you learned (e.g. business, leadership, financial aspects)? If so, could you please give some examples of how it was useful to you? 6. Did the training, resources, and/or services provided to you through the project have an impact on the level of your income? How so (i.e. better, the same, worse)?
Efficiency	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 7. What obstacles did you encounter while participating in project activities? What were the reasons? How did you overcome them? 8. If you attended trainings during COVID, was it different than the training provided in person? Did you have difficulties connecting and/or understanding the trainer and/or material? What kind of support did you receive to be able to participate? 9. How has COVID affected your daily work? How has the project help (or not) overcome these challenges?

Evaluation Area	Interview Questions
Sustainability	<p>10. After the end of the project, do you think that you can still access the resources / support as you did during the project? Why or why not?</p> <p>11. Based on your own experience, what are your suggestions for project improvements?</p>
Impact	<p>12. What do you think was the most important / noticeable change the project had for you / your livelihood / activity? How about the village / county? Is this change positive or negative? Why is that?</p> <p>13. <consultant gives brief definition of climate change>What are the problems you associate with climate change your village / county? In your opinion, has the project helped to deal with climate change problems in your village? How so (or not)?</p>
Gender equality and human rights	<p>14. What does it mean to you to have ‘income security’? How about ‘resilient to climate changes’?</p> <p>15. Thinking about the definitions that you gave; how did the project help you (or not) improve income security and / or resilience?</p> <p>16. What are the challenges women face compared to men in your village / county? How did the project help you deal with these challenges <prompting: roles in labour / income distribution; women role models in community; participation in community meetings and decision – making in community affairs>?</p> <p>17. Do you feel that there was some change in attitudes and / or behaviour towards women in your community? From services providers? How would you describe this change?</p> <p>18. <Question to Women’s Federations representatives> How do you think the project helped influence the roles of women’s organizations and leadership? <prompting: opportunities in external exchanges and building partnerships, networks></p>

APPENDIX D3. DATA COLLECTION TOOL - UN WOMEN PROJECT PARTNERS

 **UN Women / Project Partners: IFAD, FAO, UNEP**

 *Semi-structured interview, remote, expected duration 60 min*

Thank you for willing to speak to us. Your participation in this interview is very much appreciated and entirely voluntary. You are free to decline answering any or all of the questions. We are independent consultants conducting the final evaluation of the QWFIS project implemented by UN Women. The purpose of this interview is to understand the realities which shaped the project implementation period, its complementarity to the efforts undertaken by your organisation and what lessons were learnt for the future.

This conversation is confidential, so whatever you share with us will not be attributed to you and your name will not appear unless you specifically ask to be quoted or agree to be quoted.

Evaluation Area	Interview Questions
Relevance	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Given your experience in the area of Women Economic Empowerment (WEE) and Climate Change (CC) and your experience in China, to what extent do you think the project responded to the needs of the rural women in Qinghai province?
Effectiveness	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 2. How has UN Women project team engaged with your organisation? What worked well? What could be improved? 3. From your experience so far, what type of co-ordination mechanisms worked well? What can be improved? 4. If you have participated or witnessed project activities, how would you describe their quality (the quality of experts, technical support provided, training materials and information, logistics, etc.)?
Efficiency	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 5. How would you describe collaboration between the UN Women Country Office and the government stakeholders? What worked well? What could be improved?
Sustainability	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 6. Do you think the partnerships established during this project are going to last beyond the project implementation dates? If yes, how so? If not, why? What challenges has your organisation experienced with similar interventions? 7. Which other partners is the project not engaging with at the moment but should be considering for future initiatives in the area of WEE and CC? Why?
Impact	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 8. Depending on your experience with the project, what unintended results (positive or negative) did the project produce? How so? 9. In your opinion, what were the key enabling factors for the project? What were the limiting factors and barriers that hindered progress?
Gender equality and human rights	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 10. In your opinion, to what extent has the project engaged marginalized communities and belonging to vulnerable groups in planning and monitoring of project interventions? How does your organisation engage, what mechanisms are used? How successful (or not) are they? 11. How would you assess the project's contribution to cross-cutting areas such as gender equality and women empowerment, climate change? How does your organisation incorporate these elements in its interventions?
Coherence with UNW policies and with the interventions of other actors, especially the UN	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 12. Could you please describe your organization's strategy and / or interventions in the area? How do you think the project complements (or not) these efforts? 13. What works well? What could be improved? 14. Does your organisation intend to work in the area of Women Economic Empowerment and Climate Change in the coming five years? What will be the priority areas?

APPENDIX D4. DATA COLLECTION TOOL - AUTHORITIES



Provincial and county level project offices



Face to face interview, expected duration 90 – 120 min.

Thank you for willing to speak to us. Your participation in this interview is very much appreciated and entirely voluntary. You are free to decline answering any or all of the questions. We are independent consultants conducting the final evaluation of the QWFIS project implemented by UN Women. We understand that for interventions to be implemented, we need to understand the realities which shaped the situation. Therefore, the purpose of this interview is to understand how this project made a difference in the context of your village / county / province. Specifically, we want to understand the factors that made it easier or harder to deal with the challenges you are facing in your village / county / province through the perspective of your own experience.


This conversation is confidential, so whatever you share with us will not be attributed to you and your name will not appear unless you specifically ask to be quoted or agree to be quoted.

Evaluation Area	Interview Questions
<p>Relevance</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. In your opinion, what are the needs of rural women in the Qinghai province? Are they similar to the ones in the villages and counties where the project worked? To what extent did the project respond to these needs? 2. How did you work with UN Women country office in Beijing? How was your experience <prompting: frequency of communication, information sharing, quality of events / experts, etc>?
<p>Effectiveness</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 3. Looking at the activity plan, to what extent have the planned outputs been achieved? What worked well? What didn't work well? 4. Which project trainings did you participate in? In your opinion, how were those trainings useful (or not)? How did those trainings (or not) help women improve their operations and / or livelihoods? 5. What resources have the project provided to women that they previously had difficulty accessing <prompting: capital, credit, land, technology, training, and / or markets>? How exactly was it provided? 6. Did the COVID-19 epidemic affect the activity of the project? How did the project team overcome it?

Evaluation Area	Interview Questions
Efficiency	<p>7. How about the timeliness of the project implementation? Were there any delays (or not)? If yes, what were the obstacles and how did you overcome them?</p> <p>8. Are you familiar with the projects monitoring system used to track progress and results? If not, please explain. If yes, to what extent did you use this system? Did you find it useful to monitor performance and adjust? What worked well? What could be improved?</p>
Sustainability	<p>9. After the project end date, what activities started with project support do you think will continue? Who will be responsible to finance and implement them? What are the likely barriers to activities being replicated?</p> <p>10. <consultant provide brief definition of project exit strategy> Are you familiar with the project exit strategy? What do you think has worked well? What should be improved?</p>
Impact	<p>11. Which partners (such as agricultural extension organizations, enterprises, etc.) has the project cooperated with during implementation? How would you describe these collaborations? What worked well? What could be improved?</p> <p>12. How do you think the project's activities had an impact on women's income? Has it made it better, the same, worse? How so?</p> <p>13. In your opinion, how did the project address challenges related to climate change adaptation? Please give examples.</p> <p>14. Overall, were there any unexpected project results (positive or negative)?</p>
Gender equality and human rights	<p>15. To what extent has the project contributed to gender equality and women's empowerment? Has the project made a difference in terms of policies and mechanisms? Has it strengthening women's organization and leadership? How so, please give examples.</p>

APPENDIX D5. DATA COLLECTION TOOL - LOCAL ENTERPRISES

Representatives of local enterprises

 Face to face interview, expected duration 60 min.

Thank you for willing to speak to us. Your participation in this interview is very much appreciated and entirely voluntary. You are free to decline answering any or all of the questions. We are independent consultants conducting the finalevaluation of the QwFIS project implemented by UN Women. The purpose ofthis interview is to understand the realities which shaped the project implementation period, its complementarity to the efforts undertaken by your enterprise and whatlessons were learnt for the future.

This conversation is confidential, so whatever you share with us will not be attributed to you and your name will not appear unless you specifically ask to be quoted or agree to be quoted.

Evaluation Area	Interview Questions
Relevance	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> In your opinion, what are the needs rural women face in the Qinghai province? How about the village / county you are working in? based on your experience with the project / knowledge about the project, to what extent do you think the project helps to address those needs?
Effectiveness	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> What trainings did you participate in? How often? How did those trainings help you improve your capacities and awareness to provide resources and services to women ? How did your opinion change before and after trainings? How is your enterprise helping women farmers to get access to elements that can help to increase their productivity (e.g. climate-smart agricultural extension, information, tools, technologies)? How has that helped (or not) women farmers generate income? What does that agricultural value chain in your sector of activity look like (village to county to province to outside)? How has your enterprise contributed to help women farmers / networks of women farmer organizations to move up these agricultural value chains?
Efficiency	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> What obstacles did your enterprise meet in the process of implementing the project, especially in providing resources and services to women? How did you overcome it? How did Covid impact your business activities and your participation in the project activities? How did you deal with that?
Sustainability	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> What factors contributed to the successful aspects of the project implementation? Are they replicable? Did your enterprise build up any partnerships with women’s enterprises? Do you think they are likely to continue in the future after the project ended? What are your suggestions for similar projects in the future?
Impact	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> What are the influences and changes your enterprise made in this project (<prompting: behaviour, skills, attitudes, business services and practices>?) Were there any unexpected project results, whether positive or negative?
Gender equality and human rights	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> Does your enterprise employ women? To what extent the women role models and technology transfer facilitators have been selected and supported in the project?

Appendix E. List of Consulted Stakeholders

DURING FIELD VISIT (2-6 AUGUST 2021)

No.	Location	Name	Positions/Roles	Date
1	Provincial Project Management Office, Xining City	Mr. Liu	Director of Project Management Office	August 2, 2021
2		Mr. Sun	Deputy-Director Project Management Office	August 2, 2021
3		Mr. Cui	Staff Project Management Office	August 2, 2021
4		Mr. Zhao	Principal of Botong Vocational Training School, Xining City	August 4, 2021
5	Minhe County Project Management Office	Mr. Li	Director of Minhe County Rural Revitalization Bureau	August 3, 2021
6		Mr. Meng	Deputy-Director of Minhe County Rural Revitalization Bureau	August 3, 2021
7		Mr. Zhang	Staff of Minhe County Rural Revitalization Bureau	August 3, 2021
8		Ms. Yang	Staff of Minhe County Rural Revitalization Bureau	August 3, 2021
9		Ms. Guo	Project Officer of Minhe County Women's Federation	August 3, 2021
10	Huangyuan County Project Management Office	Mr. Zhang	Director of Huangyuan County Rural Revitalization Bureau	August 4, 2021
11		Mr. Zhao	Director of Project Management Office, Huangyuan County Rural Revitalization Bureau	August 4, 2021
12		Ms. Xiang	Previous Chair Person of Huangyuan County Women's Federation	August 4, 2021
13		Ms. Wang	Current Chair Person of Huangyuan County Women's Federation	August 4, 2021

No.	Location	Name	Positions/Roles	Date
14		Mr. Li	Head of Agricultural Extension Station of Huangyuan County	August 4, 2021
15		Ms. Zhao	Staff from Dange'er Leather Embroidery Company, Huangyuan County	August 4, 2021
16		Ms. Ding	Staff from Dange'er Leather Embroidery Company, Huangyuan County	August 4, 2021
17	Qiaotou Village, Huangyuan County	Mr. Song	Village First Communist Party Secretary	August 4, 2021
18		Mr. Liu	Village First Communist Party Secretary (Newly Recruited)	August 4, 2021
19		Mr. Zhong	Village Communist Party Secretary	August 4, 2021
20	Huzhu County	Ms. Bao	Director of Huzhu County Rural Revitalization Bureau	August 5, 2021
21		Mr. Zhang	Director of Huzhu County People's Congress	August 5, 2021
22		Ms. Wen	Program Officer of Huangyuan County Women's Federation	August 5, 2021
23		Ms. Ha	CEO of Golden Pan Embroidery Company, Huzhu County	August 5, 2021
24		Mr. Li	Deputy Head of Dan Ma Township Government, Huzhu County	August 5, 2021
25		Mr. Wang	Zelin Village Communist Party Secretary, Huzhu County	August 5, 2021
26		Mr. Dong	Zelin Village Committee Head, Huzhu County	August 5, 2021
TOTAL 26 persons (9 women and 17 men)				

FOCUS GROUP DISCUSSIONS

Location	Target Groups	Date
Guanglin Women's Cooperative, Minhe County (a Hui and Tu ethnic minority county)	7 women leaders and men members of cooperative	August 3, 2021
Guanglin Women's Cooperative, Minhe County	2 male members in the cooperative (working as drivers)	August 3, 2021
Bahan Village, Huangyuan County	20 rural women involved in Leather Embroidery, including 4 disabled women and village women's federation leader	August 4, 2021
Baojia Village, Huzhu County (a Tu ethnic minority county)	18 rural women involved in learning housekeeping, culinary and midwifery skills, including village women's federation leader	August 5, 2021
Zelin Village, Huzhu County	6 rural women, including 2 involved in operating e-commerce, one of Tibetan ethnicity and the other of Tu ethnicity.	August 5, 2021
Wushi Village, Huzhu County	12 rural women from village women's Pan Embroidery Workshop, including the head woman of the workshop. All are from the Tu ethnicity.	August 5, 2021
TOTAL 65 persons (63 women and 2 men)		
GRAND TOTAL: 91 persons (72 women, 19 men)		



REMOTELY:

1. Qing Wang, female, Programme Analyst, UN Women China
2. Jialei Lin, female, Programme Manager, UN Women China
3. Arushi Dubey, female, UN Women Regional Office, Evaluation Reference Group
4. Shi Yinyin, female, IFAD, Project Assistant
5. Sun Yinhong, male, Country Program Office, IFAD China Office
6. Zhang Yanyan, female, Project Manager, Institute of Geographic Sciences and Natural Resources Research of China Academy of Sciences/ United Nations Environmental Programme- International Ecosystem Management Partnership
7. Song Yiching, female, Team Leader, Institute of Geographic Sciences and Natural Resources Research of China Academy of Sciences/ United Nations Environmental Programme- International Ecosystem Management Partnership

Appendix F1. TOR for international consultant

Position	International Consultant for Independent Final Project Evaluation of the project “Strengthening Qinghai women farmer’s income security and resilience in a changing climate (QWFIS)”
Duty Station	Beijing, China (Home-based)
Type of Contract	Special Service Agreement (SSA)
Duration:	Maximum 40 days between 7 July 2021 to 8 October 2021
Supervision:	Programme Analyst, Gender and Climate Change, UN Women China

I. BACKGROUND

Empowering women and girls are at the core of Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action and is critical in achieving the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). Worldwide, women and girls are at the frontline in agriculture and natural resource management while being the key guardians of agrobiodiversity and food security for resilience food systems, but they often do not have equal rights to own, use and control of productive resources and have limited support for their multiple roles and their formal or informal networks and cooperation. This poses major challenges to food security, and agrobiodiversity, especially in the areas with dramatic climate

change and a fragile ecological and socio-economic environment in global south.

Although China is experiencing a rapid and massive urbanization process, livelihood conditions differ considerably across the country. The rural areas and smallholder farmers, majority are women, in the west and southwest are the most important targets of the policies concerning national poverty alleviation and rural vitalization. These rural areas share common characteristics, such as fragile (mountain, dry land) ecologies, highly climate sensitive and weak adaptive capacities. As agrobiodiversity can play an important function in climate change adaptation, smallholder farming is under stress, particular affecting women, who play

key roles in agriculture due to high levels of male migration to urban areas. The erosion of farmer seed systems and lack of safe and good quality seeds are causing fundamental constraints and hindering the viable development of local initiatives toward food and nutrition security and sustainable development more broadly. Such development includes the production and consumption of safe, healthy and diversified foods, for which the national demand is increasing due to a series of food safety problems and growing environmental concerns.

COVID-19 has exposed some of the structural imbalances exacerbating and deepening pre-existing inequalities and vulnerabilities in social, political, economic, and biodiversity systems, which causes basic food and livelihood crisis and issues at grassroot levels especially in global south. In the words of the Secretary-General, “the pandemic has highlighted the fragility of our food systems.” The small farmers, fishers, pastoralists, and rural workers are among the population most at risk to experience socio-economic marginalization. Rural women, as the majority of the small producers as well as mothers and community leaders, are the most affected group, yet they play key roles in feeding and holding families and rural communities together coping with the crisis and adapting to increasing climate changes in 2020. The effects of the pandemic have posed a serious challenge to the 2030 Agenda and the SDGs.

UN Women, grounded in the vision of equality enshrined in the Charter of the United Nations, works for the elimination of discrimination against women and girls; the empowerment of women; and the achievement of equality between women and men as partners and beneficiaries of development, human rights, humanitarian action and peace and security. Placing women’s rights at the centre of all its efforts, the UN Women leads and coordinates United Nations system efforts to ensure that commitments on gender equality (GE) and gender mainstreaming translate into action throughout the world.

In China, UN Women provides technical and financial assistance to innovative programmes and strategies for gender equality and women’s

empowerment. Economic Empowerment is one of key thematic areas that UN Women China team has been focusing on.

II. PROJECT DESCRIPTION

Informed by findings from the 2016 UN Women China and Ministry of Environmental Protection research study entitled Gender Dimensions of Vulnerability to Climate Change in China², which presents evidence that women farmers are most vulnerable to negative climate change impacts and that systemic biases and challenges continue to persist, this project addresses the key gender based challenges identified by the research study, including: women farmers’ restricted access to productive and climate-resilient resources (energy, water, pasture, forests, agricultural inputs, agricultural extension services, information, assets, tools, technologies, markets, skills); barriers to their access to financial products and services (credit, savings, financial literacy); and exclusion from opportunities to move up the value chain, as well as limited capacities to build up climate resilience when compared with men within households and in rural communities.

Located in west part of China, Qinghai Province was ranked 21st out of 31 provinces in terms of gross regional product per capita (RMB 36,510), and 27th in terms of per capita disposable income (RMB 12,948) in 2013³. Qinghai is facing the degradation of land resources, a loss in the resilience of the ecosystem to droughts and floods, and degradation of water resources, all of which contribute to the perpetuation of poverty and the deterioration of livelihoods among the rural poor, especially women.

Since 2018, UN Women China has been implementing the “Strengthening Qinghai women farmer’s income security and resilience in a changing climate” project in Qinghai province with the support from CHANEL Foundation in partnership with the Qinghai Poverty

2 <http://asiapacific.unwomen.org/en/digital-library/publications/2016/12/gender-dimensions-of-vulnerability-to-climate-change-in-china>

3 2014 Statistic Yearbook, National Bureau of Statistics

and Development Bureau and the Qinghai Women's Federation, and through the Institute of Geographic Sciences and Natural Resources Research of Chinese Academy of Sciences as the responsible party. The original duration of the project is 3 years, and the total budget is USD 950,000.

The objective of the project is to promote poverty reduction among women farmers by helping them become more economically resilient in a changing climate through improving and increasing their accessibility to climate-resilient and productive assets, finance, tools, technologies, capacities, and opportunities for moving up the value chain. The project directly addresses both China's national poverty reduction goals as well as SDG global frameworks and principles for delivering gender equality and women's economic empowerment in selected poverty-stricken counties in Qinghai Province.

Implemented via training (knowledge, capacity and skills building), advocacy, and awareness initiatives, the project has involved both the direct beneficiaries of over 55,000 women farmers in 7 counties in Qinghai province and over 360 other beneficiaries and participants include: government officials with responsibilities to support poverty reduction, economic resilience, and greater participation in decision-making among women farmers; as well as private sector managers and leaders with potential to provide climate-resilient assets, tools, technologies, and services to women farmers; family members; and members of key community organizations (women's associations and farmer's associations).

In order to implement this project, UN Women China houses a Programme Management Team, comprising a National Programme Officer (NPO), and a Programme Assistant (PA). Under the overall supervision of the Country Programme Manager, the NPO will have the day-to-day responsibility of oversight and monitoring outputs and achieving the overall results under the project. The PA will support overall administration of all project activities, including financial management.

The project's Performance Monitoring Framework and Theory of Change (ToC) are attached for reference.

III. PURPOSE OF THE EVALUATION

The evaluation is aimed to feed learnings into how much UN Women's efforts contribute to women's economic empowerment and rural women's development in China. The findings and recommendations will be used to inform the coming country strategic note development, especially in the Women's Economic Empowerment (WEE) and Climate Change portfolio, one of the key areas of UN Women China.

UN Women China Office would like to hire an international consultant to conduct an end-project evaluation to the above-mentioned project and develop a comprehensive evaluation report with findings, conclusions, and recommendations on how UN Women China can strengthen its work in women's economic empowerment.

IV. OBJECTIVE OF THE EVALUATION

The objectives of the end-project evaluation are:

- to assess project results, especially the above mentioned the outcome and output level results of the project in terms of effectiveness, replicability and sustainability;
- Assess the relevance of the project;
- Assess the integration of gender equality;
- to document lessons learnt from the project implementation;
- to provide learnings and recommendations to guide the future economic empowerment programmes and the country WEE and Climate Change portfolio.

V. EVALUATION CRITERIA, QUESTIONS AND METHODOLOGY:

The evaluation needs to follow the following **criteria:**

1. Relevance
2. Effectiveness
3. Efficiency

4. Impact
5. Sustainability
6. Gender equality and human rights
7. Coherence with UN Women policies and with the interventions of other actors, especially the UN

The following key **evaluation questions** will be refined during the inception phase:

1. To what extent is the project relevant to and respond to the needs of the rural women in Qinghai province?
2. To what extent were the expected outcomes and outputs achieved and how did UN Women contribute towards there?
3. How timely and efficient is the project's implementation?
4. To what extent the gender knowledge and skills impact the women beneficiaries to improve their business and livelihoods?
5. To what extent was the capacity of rural women in Qinghai province developed in order to ensure sustainability of efforts and benefits?
6. To what extent was gender equality and women's empowerment advanced as a result of the project?
7. To what extent is the project coherent internally with UN Women's policies and externally with the interventions of other actors?
8. What factors contributed to the project implementation? Are they replicable?
9. What barriers and challenges did the project experience during the implementation?
10. To what extent was the M&E system used to monitor project performance and make adjustments?
11. Were there any unintended results, either positive or negative?
12. To what extent did the project team adapt to the COVID-19 situation and did this affect the achievement of results?

METHODOLOGY :

Evaluation design/approaches: This evaluation will apply mixed methods with quantitative and qualitative data collection and analysis. An outcome harvesting approach is recommended and a gender-responsive approach is a must to ensure the collection of disaggregated data. UNEG guidelines – including the UNEG Norms and Standards for Evaluation – should be referenced.

Data collection methods and data sources: Mixed data collection methods should be used including a field work to Qinghai province, as well as on-line and/or off-line data/information collection from the key project stakeholders (beneficiaries, the associated government and non-government agencies, the project responsible partner, etc.). A sampling methodology for data collection should be developed.

Evaluability: Baseline, end-line and annual report data are available to the evaluators to use.

Limitations: Limitations regarding COVID-19 may affect the ability to meet with key stakeholders face-to-face.

Participatory evaluation is encouraged in UN system. Stakeholders including relevant UN agencies, local government agencies, civil societies, women's groups and leaders will be invited to participate in the process of the evaluation.

VI. SCOPE OF THE EVALUATION

THEMATIC SCOPE:

This evaluation is expected to assess UN Women programme's contribution to rural women's economic empowerment in Qinghai province China.

TIME SCOPE:

The end-project evaluation is expected to assess the project strategies and activities implemented by both UN Women China team and its Responsible Party (the Institute of Geographic Sciences and Natural Resources Research of Chinese Academy of Sciences) from July 2018 to Apr 2021.

GEOGRAPHIC SCOPE:

Overall, this project is implemented at 7 counties in Qinghai Province.

VII. SCOPE OF WORK, DELIVERABLES AND TIMELINE

SCOPE OF WORK

- To work with UN Women project team to plan for the evaluation;
- To conduct desk review of the project related documents, including but not limited to the project document, concept notes, workplans and budget plans, responsible party reports, donor reports and communication materials;
- To develop an evaluation plan with sound methodologies with quantitative and qualitative approaches and data analysis, and a feasible timeline;
- To verify and analyse all data and develop preliminary results;
- To brief preliminary results to the UN Women

project team;

- To develop a comprehensive evaluation report in English with executive summary, key findings, conclusions, and recommendations. The recommendations should include for a way forward for the Women Economic Empowerment Portfolio development
- The report will only be considered final when it meets the UN Women GERAAS quality standards.
- The report should be copy-edited and in line with UN Women branding guidelines.

The International Consultant's role:

- To lead and conduct the evaluation, and be responsible for the relevant deliverables;
- To outline the monitoring methodology and framework;
- To oversee field visits and data collection.
- To communicate with UN Women whenever needed;
- To work closely with the National Consultant for the final project evaluation;

DELIVERY SCHEDULE

Deliverables	Activities	Expected delivery date	% Payment
Reviewed inception report in English (clean and track-change version) with sound methodologies, evaluation matrix, data collection tools, detailed evaluation plan and feasible timeline, which follows ethical conduct in evaluation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Have working meetings with UN Women project team to plan for the evaluation; • Lead and conduct desk review to the project related documents, including but not limited to the project document, concept notes, workplans and budget plans, responsible party reports donor reports and communication materials; • Integrate feedback from the inception presentation and submit a detailed evaluation inception report in English; 	By 30 July 2021	40%

Deliverables	Activities	Expected delivery date	% Payment
Based on the draft evaluation report developed by national consultant, a final evaluation report in English, with recommendations for UN Women China's strategic note and WEE portfolio and Climate Change portfolio included.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Finalize the English report based on the comments collected and in line with UN Women GERAAS quality standards 	By 24 September 2021	60%

*Payment will be made upon submission of deliverables with an approval of the Project Analyst based on GERAAS criteria⁴.

** Travel to the field in Qinghai might be conducted depending on the feasibility of the working arrangement for international consultant.

VIII. ETHICAL CONDUCT IN EVALUATION

The evaluators should abide by the principle of *UN Evaluation Group's Ethical Guideline and Code of Conduct for Evaluation in UN System* and follow the *UN Women Evaluation Handbook*⁵. They are also requested to sign UN Women Evaluation Consultant Agreement.

The data collection from the stakeholders and beneficiaries needs informed consent. The data should be safeguarded in the whole process of collection, utilization and maintain to ensure the confidentiality and rights protected in line with UN Women policy.

IX. COMPETENCIES

CORE VALUES:

- Respect for Diversity
- Integrity
- Professionalism

4 GERAAS Criteria: <https://www.unwomen.org/-/media/headquarters/attachments/sections/about%20us/evaluation/evaluation-geraasmethodologymatrix-en.xlsx?la=en&vs=1436>

5 UN Women Evaluation Handbook Tools: <https://genderevaluation.unwomen.org/en/evaluation-handbook/tools>

CORE COMPETENCIES:

- Awareness and Sensitivity Regarding Gender Issues
- Accountability
- Effective Communication
- Inclusive Collaboration

Please visit this link for more information on UN Women's [Core Values and Competencies](#):

<http://www.unwomen.org/-/media/headquarters/attachments/sections/about%20us/employment/un-women-employment-values-and-competencies-definitions-en.pdf>

FUNCTIONAL COMPETENCIES:

- Excellent ability to communicate and write in English

X. QUALIFICATION

- Master's degree in relevant subjects (monitoring and evaluation, international relations and/or development, or other relevant social sciences) with minimum of 5 years' experience or PhD degree with 3 years' experience in development programming, preferably in the Asia-Pacific region. Bachelor's degree in relevant subject with 7 years' experience may be accepted.
- At least one-year proven experience as a team leader for evaluations with international organizations in consulting for evaluation and assessment is a must.
- At least one-year proven experience with multi-national organizations, inter-governmental

organizations, and/or United Nations agencies is a must.

- Proven experience as a team leader for evaluations with international organizations in consulting for rural development in China is an advantage.
- Previous working experience on gender issues and women’s economic empowerment is an advantage.

XI. COMMUNICATION AND REPORTING OBLIGATIONS

The consultants will report to the UN Women China’s Gender and Climate Change Programme Manager to update the progress and arrangement to UN Women.

XII. EVALUATION CRITERIA

Applications will be evaluated based on the cumulative analysis.

- Technical Qualification (100 points) weight; [70%]
- Financial Proposal (100 points) weight; [30%]

A two-stage procedure is utilized in evaluating the applications, with evaluation of the technical application being completed prior to any price proposal being compared. The total number of points allocated for the technical qualification component is 100. Only the price proposal of the candidates who passed the minimum technical score of 70% of the obtainable score of 100 points in the technical qualification evaluation will be evaluated.

FINANCIAL/PRICE PROPOSAL EVALUATION

- Only the financial proposal of candidates who have attained a minimum of 70% score in the technical evaluation will be considered and evaluated.
- The total number of points allocated for the price component is 100.
- The maximum number of points will be allotted to the lowest price proposal that is opened/ evaluated and compared among those technical qualified candidates who have attained a minimum of 70% score in the technical

evaluation. All other price proposals will receive points in inverse proportion to the lowest price.

XIII. SUBMISSION OF PROPOSAL

Interested candidates are encouraged to submit electronic application (consolidated as ONE attachment) online, no later than 2 June 2021. Kindly note the system will only allow one attachment, please combine below listed submission package into one.

SUBMISSION PACKAGE INCLUDES:

- Updated CV
- Education certificate
- Personal History Form (P11 which can be downloaded from https://asiapacific.unwomen.org/-/media/field%20office%20easia/docs/misc/2012/p_11_form_unwomen.doc?la=en&vs=4602)
- Reference evaluation report(s) from previous work
- **Financial proposal:** the financial proposal shall specify a lump sum amount breaking down the professional fee for each deliverable and all related costs (if any). Please see the financial proposal template as below:

Items	Amount CNY
Deliverable 1	
Deliverable 2	
Travel cost (if feasible)	
Total Financial Proposal	

ANNEX I : PERFORMANCE MONITORING FRAMEWORK

Results	Indicators	Means of Verifications / Source of Information	Data Collection Methods and Responsible Entity	Frequency
<p>Overall goal: Women have income security, decent work and economic autonomy. (SP).</p>	<p>(i) SP_D_2_3B: Number of rural women supported to gain access, use and/or control of productive resources by UN-Women Baseline: TBD Target: 60% over the baseline</p> <p>(ii) SP_D_2_3C: Number of countries that use the Buy from Women Platform to connect women farmers to information, markets and/or finance Baseline: 0, Target: 1</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Project reports • Media reports • Government statistical reports on poverty in the selected countries in Qinghai Province • Review and evaluation reports 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • UN Women and the RP will manage an internal mid-term review. • UN Women to manage a final external evaluation. • RP to collect information/reports • RP to submit quarterly based narrative and financial reports • UN Women to prepare annual report to donor. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • One internal mid-term review will be conducted at the end of the 2. • External final evaluation will be conducted before the end of the project. • Collection Information/reports throughout the project cycle. • Annual based donor report.
<p>Outcome: More women farmers in Qinghai Province have increased income security and are more resilient in a changing climate.</p>	<p>(i) Number of women in Qinghai province that have reported to have increased income security and climate resilience (e.g. access to social safety net/social protection or coping mechanisms. Baseline: TBD Target: TBD</p> <p>(ii) Gender mainstreaming provisions added to poverty reduction policy/legislative frameworks. Baseline: 0 Target: 1</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Project report • Training reports • Media report • Review and Evaluation Report 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • UN Women and the RP will manage an internal mid-term review. • UN Women to manage a final external evaluation. • RP to collect media and other information/reports • RP to submit quarterly based narrative and financial reports 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • One internal mid-term review will be conducted at the end of the 2. • External final evaluation will be conducted before the end of the project. • Collection at any time possible throughout project cycle. • Quarterly narrative and financial progress report

Results	Indicators	Means of Verifications / Source of Information	Data Collection Methods and Responsible Entity	Frequency
<p>Output 1: Government and services providers, particularly at the local level, have enhanced capacity to support women farmers to access climate-smart agricultural extension, information, tools and technologies.</p>	<p>(i) % of agricultural extension workers participating in gender training who can apply their knowledge to support women farmers in their services Baseline: 0 Target: 75%</p> <p>(ii) # of policy dialogue, initiatives and services provided by local government and/or service providers to support women farmers' income security and climate resilience, which have been influenced by the project Baseline: 0 Target: TBD%</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Baseline survey report • Pre and post training assessments • Project report • Media report 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • PR to prepare baseline report and collect media reports • RP to submit quarterly based narrative and financial reports • UN Women to prepare annual report to donor. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • At the end of individual activity • Quarterly based narrative and financial reports. • Annual based donor reports.
<p>Output 2: Women farmers have increased access to financial and productive resources, and are able to utilize agricultural services to increase their productivity.</p>	<p>(i) # of women smallholder farmers assisted by the project to register with Farmer Field Schools and Women's Associations Baseline: 0 Target: TBD</p> <p>(ii) # of women who have increased access to finance, economic resources and are able to utilize agricultural services to increase their productivity through the established networks by the project. Baseline: TBD Target: TBD</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Pre and post training assessments • Media report • Project reports 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • RP to submit quarterly based narrative and financial reports • UN Women to prepare annual report to donor. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • At the end of individual activity • Quarterly based narrative and financial reports. • Annual based donor reports.

Results	Indicators	Means of Verifications / Source of Information	Data Collection Methods and Responsible Entity	Frequency
<p>Output 4: Women farmers and network of women farmer organizations have increased capacity to move up the agricultural value chains.</p>	<p>(i) women farmers reported to have increased capacity to lead their network specifically to move up agricultural value chains. Baseline: 0 Target: TBD</p> <p>(ii) # of market research/assessment to identify high potential markets/opportunities for women farmers. Baseline: 0 Target: 1</p> <p>(iii) # of women smallholder farmers assisted by the project to register with Farmer Field Schools and Women's Associations Baseline: 0 Target: TBD</p> <p>(iv) # of Women's Farmer Field Schools and Women's Association established to promote collective actions</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Pre and post training assessments • Media report • Project reports 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • RP to submit quarterly based narrative and financial reports • UN Women to prepare annual report to donor. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • At the end of individual activity • Quarterly based narrative and financial reports. • Annual based donor reports.

ANNEX II : THEORY OF CHANGE

PROJECT THEORY OF CHANGE

The goal of the project will be aligned fully with the UN Women Global SP Outcome 3, “women have income security, decent work and economic autonomy”.

The proposed project will contribute to UN Women SP and 2018 UN Women China AWP **Outcome 2.2: “More women farmers in Qinghai Province have increased income security and are more resilient in a changing climate”**

It is based on the **theory of change** (TOC) that:

IF (i) Government policy decision-makers and services providers, particularly at the local level, have enhanced capacity to support women farmers to access climate-smart agricultural extension, information, tools and technologies; (ii) Women farmers have increased access to finance and productive resources and are able to utilize agricultural services to increase their productivity; and (iii) Women farmers and network of women farmer organizations have increased capacity to move up the agricultural value chains; **then** more women farmers will be able to participate and take up new economic opportunities and become more resilient to the impacts of climate change, **because** the root cause and drivers in agricultural poverty have been addressed, and barriers will have been removed.

The above TOC is designed based on the country context of China. The project recognizes the importance of the work to influence enabling policy and legislative environment to support the implementation of climate-smart agriculture and gender-sensitive policy and regulatory to enhance access to finance and productive resources, including land’s rights, tenure and ownership. However, this is the area of high political sensitivity, where an external party outside of the Chinese Communist Party has very limited influence, given China’s single party system. Therefore, the project has identified key areas of work that it can engage in advocacy work with the government (duty bearers) as well as some practical programme

interventions identified at the local level, where there is more flexibility and less political sensitivity.

Outcome: More women farmers in Qinghai Province have increased income security and resilience in a changing climate.

This outcome aims at supporting women smallholder farmers in deployment of their agricultural productivity, considering their needs and local farming system, and promoting their access to resources in the selected counties. From a poverty reduction perspective, it is an urgent need for government to consider formulation policies to enhance coping mechanisms, such as social protection/social safety net to help poor, especially women farmers to manage income risks/vulnerabilities in order to prevent women farmers from falling back into extreme poverty in the event of climate-related disasters e.g. drought flood etc. that affect their agricultural productivity and income security.

Output 1: Government and services providers, particularly at the local level, have enhanced capacity to support women farmers to access climate-smart agricultural extension, information, tools and technologies.

Despite tremendous efforts to accelerate poverty reduction and development in China, gender has not been considered as one of the key elements and therefore not integrated into policy/programme interventions to address poverty and agriculture extension services for the poor in rural China. Extension workers are a crucial link between women farmers and their capacity strengthening. There is also a need to enhance the agents’ capacity in general by incorporating elements of resilience to climate change, covering topics such as high yield seed varieties, soil preparation, and land management and cultivation practices. As per the IFAD ProDoc, according to the limited data from five project counties, only 16.09% of rural laborers were trained by the government extension system in 2013; 45.45% of trainees were women.⁶ The limited access to extension services, and the

⁶ Design Completion Report of IFAD Qinghai Liupan Mountain Area Poverty Reduction Project, Feb. 2015.

overarching cultural context limit women's coping mechanism to climate change.

According to the results of the IFAD project baseline survey, 70% of the rural households in the project area want access to credit, but less than 20% of them had access to formal credit.⁷ Women farmers rarely have access to loans, and related questions will be included in the baseline survey study under this designed project. There is a need to increase awareness among people in government, in financial institutions, and in the private sector on the specific challenges that women face in accessing financial services; this will be achieved using evidence from the local institutional assessment and findings from the survey on the financial needs of women.

Output 1, Levering from partnership with IFAD, the project will focus on the supply side interventions to ensure that government and service providers meet the needs of women farmers. The proposed activities under Output 1 will focus on capacity of government and grassroots extension service providers and financial service providers to meet the needs of women farmers. Moreover, Output 1 will target policy makers and staff from Women Federation at various levels to strengthen their gender perspectives through training and evidence-based advocacy with the view to create long-term influence on the policy formulation and decision-making processes. Indicative activities are as follows:

- Design and organize gender awareness training sessions, based on findings from the baseline survey targeting government officials and grassroots extension workers and technicians to better address specific challenges faced by women farmers.
- Design and conduct gender training of financial service providers (loan officers, private sector, and intermediaries) to design plan for better offering financial support services to women farmers.
- Organize gender mainstreaming training sessions for government officials in the poverty

alleviation system including government line department and women's federation, at county level to enhance understandings and equip skills of the government officials to provide better service delivery and to improve ability for technical review for future policy formulation.

- Organize a consultation meeting by inviting experts to improve the endline study with project achievements, lessons learned and policy recommendations for women's economic empowerment and resilience in a changing climate.
- Organize national conference on promoting women's economic empowerment and resilience in a changing climate, engaging national and local policy decision-makers in areas of poverty alleviation, agriculture, and women's federation; international community; academia; and the media.

Output 2: Women farmers have increased access to financial and productive resources, and are able to utilize agricultural services to increase their productivity.

Women's access is restricted to agricultural productivity resources including extension services, information, technology and market. Closing the gender gap in agriculture in the context of a changing climate would benefit women and increase the wellbeing and resilience of society as a whole.⁸ Women smallholder farmers need to strengthen their capacity to better access to productive resources – agricultural inputs, finance and credit, extension services, information and technology. They must be familiarized with bank/loan procedures and specific requirements for financing. Building on FAO Farmer Field School (FFS) approach for women farmers to learn new technologies and exchange ideas among themselves during the agricultural production cycle, and the IFAD project which supported Farmers' Associations/Farmers' Cooperatives, the proposed project needs to support training activities for women farmers through women's FFS and Women's Associations to learn about loan

7 Design Completion Report of IFAD Qinghai Liupan Mountain Area Poverty Reduction Project, Feb. 2015.

8 UN Women Flagship Programming Initiatives, 2015.

procedures and other services. As the Women's Association is an efficient medium through which large numbers of women farmers can be engaged in learning agricultural knowledge and skills, and utilizing financial terminologies and procedures.

Output 2 will support a further step by adapting the women-centered participatory Farmer Field School (FFS) methodology demonstrated by FAO and previously utilized by CCAP, the project RP in China. Through the institution of the Women's Associations, the women farmers, especially those FFS facilitators in the pilot sites will be provided with capacity-building training to improve their productive knowledge, skills about knowledge transferring to their fellow women farmers, decision-making ability, as well communication and negotiation skills for holding dialogues and maintain partnerships with government and service providers.

To achieve this output, the following indicative activities will be conducted:

- Facilitate the formation of FFSs and Women's Associations with selected women leaders/facilitators and registered women smallholders.
- With the selected women smallholders as Farmer Field School (FFS) convergence point/facilitators, technology transfer to other women farmers will be carried out during a complete production cycle. Others will be encouraged to learn from each other and share experiences among themselves.
- Facilitate dialogue and partnership between Women's Association, local governments, financial institutions, and women's federation to design and conduct training on financial knowledge and business skills, such as financial terminologies, loan procedures, and schemes.

Output 3: Women farmers and network of women farmer organizations have increased capacity to move up the agricultural value chains.

Poor women farmers remain bound to lower-end production of simpler agricultural products that do not command much value in the market due to their low agricultural productivity, unpaid

and domestic work responsibilities, lack of opportunities in participation of decision-making in farmers' cooperatives. Women farmers have not fully benefited from the market system supporting agricultural productivity due to challenges including low levels of education, and the lack of women led organizations at community level to facilitate access to inputs, extension and financial services.

Through conducting a market research, the project will help to identify crops and market opportunities that women entrepreneurs and farmers can enter with relatively low barriers. The market research will also identify appropriate crops and sustainable agricultural activities, and finding market opportunities for Women's Associations. The project will also provide technical support to farmers cooperatives with attention to processing, transporting and marketing of agricultural products. UN Women will use the same network established by the IFAD project, complement each other by focusing on UN Women's comparative advantage in providing support to enhance women farmers' networks, including Women's Associations, which will help to aggregate production into higher-value processing to achieve economy of scale and reduce transaction costs for the women smallholders. The proposed project will support set up women role-models in villages and select women leaders in Farmers' Associations/ Cooperatives to allow women's voices to be heard in agricultural production and market services.

Building on the IFAD project, which has included cooperatives and associations in the project counties and already provided technical support for processing, transporting and marketing of agricultural products, UN Women will target support to strengthen the formation of women-led organizations to enhance women farmers' position in the market supply chains including upgrading their agricultural products. The Women Association and Farmers' Cooperatives will be the leading force to ensure improved access of women to the market and women can benefit from more value-added trade. The crucial access to information via smart phone, e-commerce and localizing the Buy from Women digital platform initiative in the Qinghai

context shall be explored by the Output 3.

Specific activities supported under this output include:

- Conduct market research and assessment to analyze different market channels/modalities for women smallholders to access the markets.
- Organize business and marketing skills training workshops for members of the Women’s Associations based on findings from the markets assessment.
- Conduct TOT training for facilitators/leaders of Women’s Associations as role models on skills related to organizational leadership and confidence-building, communication, information, and so on. Tailor-made training models and materials will be developed and used for training based on needs assessments to be conducted in the baseline survey.
- Conduct community advocacy campaigns and raise women smallholders’ awareness on collective power in access to information and markets.
- Facilitate women smallholders to register with Women’s Associations in order to promote e-commerce and localize the **Buy From Women** initiative in the context of Qinghai.⁹

ANNEX III : USEFUL HYPERLINKS

- 1) UN Women GERAAS evaluation quality assessment checklist
- 2) [UN Women Evaluation Consultants Agreement Form](#)
- 3) [UNEG Norms and Standards for evaluation](#)
- 4) [UN Women Evaluation Handbook](#)

9 <https://youtubeWBTPwBA5o1M> BuyFromWomen Brochure, 2018.

Appendix F2. TOR for national consultant

Position	National Consultant for Independent Final Project Evaluation of the project “Strengthening Qinghai women farmer’s income security and resilience in a changing climate (QWFIS)”
Duty Station	Beijing, China (Home-based)
Type of Contract	Special Service Agreement (SSA)
Duration	Maximum 40 days between 7 July 2021 to 30 September 2021
Supervision:	Programme Analyst, Gender and Climate Change, UN Women China

I. BACKGROUND

Empowering women and girls are at the core of Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action and is critical in achieving the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). Worldwide, women and girls are at the frontline in agriculture and natural resource management while being the key guardians of agrobiodiversity and food security for resilience food systems, but they often do not have equal rights to own, use and control of productive resources and have limited support for their multiple roles and their formal or informal networks and cooperation. This poses major challenges to food security, and agrobiodiversity, especially in the areas with dramatic climate change and a fragile ecological and socio-economic environment in global south.

Although China is experiencing a rapid and massive urbanization process, livelihood conditions differ considerably across the country. The rural areas and smallholder farmers, majority are women, in

the west and southwest are the most important targets of the policies concerning national poverty alleviation and rural vitalization. These rural areas share common characteristics, such as fragile (mountain, dry land) ecologies, highly climate sensitive and weak adaptive capacities. As agrobiodiversity can play an important function in climate change adaptation, smallholder farming is under stress, particularly affecting women, who play key roles in agriculture due to high levels of male migration to urban areas. The erosion of farmer seed systems and lack of safe and good quality seeds are causing fundamental constraints and hindering the viable development of local initiatives toward food and nutrition security and sustainable development more broadly. Such development includes the production and consumption of safe, healthy and diversified foods, for which the national demand is increasing due to a series of food safety problems and growing environmental concerns.

COVID-19 has exposed some of the structural imbalances exacerbating and deepening pre-existing inequalities and vulnerabilities in social, political, economic, and biodiversity systems, which causes basic food and livelihood crisis and issues at grassroot levels especially in global south. In the words of the Secretary-General, “the pandemic has highlighted the fragility of our food systems.” The small farmers, fishers, pastoralists, and rural workers are among the population most at risk to experience socio-economic marginalization. Rural women, as the majority of the small producers as well as mothers and community leaders, are the most affected group, yet they play key roles in feeding and holding families and rural communities together coping with the crisis and adapting to increasing climate changes in 2020. The effects of the pandemic have posed a serious challenge to the 2030 Agenda and the SDGs.

UN Women, grounded in the vision of equality enshrined in the Charter of the United Nations, works for the elimination of discrimination against women and girls; the empowerment of women; and the achievement of equality between women and men as partners and beneficiaries of development, human rights, humanitarian action and peace and security. Placing women’s rights at

the centre of all its efforts, the UN Women leads and coordinates United Nations system efforts to ensure that commitments on gender equality (GE) and gender mainstreaming translate into action throughout the world.

In China, UN Women provides technical and financial assistance to innovative programmes and strategies for gender equality and women’s empowerment. Economic Empowerment is one of key thematic areas that UN Women China team has been focusing on.

II. PROJECT DESCRIPTION

Informed by findings from the 2016 UN Women China and Ministry of Environmental Protection research study entitled Gender Dimensions of Vulnerability to Climate Change in China¹⁰, which presents evidence that women farmers are most vulnerable to negative climate change impacts and that systemic biases and challenges continue to persist, this project addresses the key gender based challenges identified by the research study, including: women farmers’ restricted access to productive and climate-resilient resources (energy, water, pasture, forests, agricultural inputs, agricultural extension services, information, assets, tools, technologies, markets, skills); barriers to their access to financial products and services (credit, savings, financial literacy); and exclusion from opportunities to move up the value chain, as well as limited capacities to build up climate resilience when compared with men within households and in rural communities.

Located in west part of China, Qinghai Province was ranked 21st out of 31 provinces in terms of gross regional product per capita (RMB 36,510), and 27th in terms of per capita disposable income (RMB 12,948) in 2013¹¹. Qinghai is facing the degradation of land resources, a loss in the resilience of the ecosystem to droughts and floods, and degradation of water resources, all of which contribute to the

10 <http://asiapacific.unwomen.org/en/digital-library/publications/2016/12/gender-dimensions-of-vulnerability-to-climate-change-in-china>

11 2014 Statistic Yearbook, National Bureau of Statistics

perpetuation of poverty and the deterioration of livelihoods among the rural poor, especially women.

Since 2018, UN Women China has been implementing the “Strengthening Qinghai women farmer’s income security and resilience in a changing climate” project in Qinghai province with the support from CHANEL Foundation in partnership with the Qinghai Poverty and Development Bureau and the Qinghai Women’s Federation, and through the Institute of Geographic Sciences and Natural Resources Research of Chinese Academy of Sciences as the responsible party. The original duration of the project is 3 years, and the total budget is USD 950,000.

The objective of the project is to promote poverty reduction among women farmers by helping them become more economically resilient in a changing climate through improving and increasing their accessibility to climate-resilient and productive assets, finance, tools, technologies, capacities, and opportunities for moving up the value chain. The project directly addresses both China’s national poverty reduction goals as well as SDG global frameworks and principles for delivering gender equality and women’s economic empowerment in selected poverty-stricken counties in Qinghai Province.

Implemented via training (knowledge, capacity and skills building), advocacy, and awareness initiatives, the project has involved both the direct beneficiaries of over 55,000 women farmers in 7 counties in Qinghai province and over 360 other beneficiaries and participants include: government officials with responsibilities to support poverty reduction, economic resilience, and greater participation in decision-making among women farmers; as well as private sector managers and leaders with potential to provide climate-resilient assets, tools, technologies, and services to women farmers; family members; and members of key community organizations (women’s associations and farmer’s associations).

In order to implement this project, UN Women China houses a Programme Management Team, comprising a National Programme Officer (NPO), and a Programme Assistant (PA). Under the overall

supervision of the Country Programme Manager, the NPO will have the day-to-day responsibility of oversight and monitoring outputs and achieving the overall results under the project. The PA will support overall administration of all project activities, including financial management.

The project’s Performance Monitoring Framework and Theory of Change (ToC) are attached for reference.

III. PURPOSE OF THE EVALUATION

The evaluation is aimed to feed learnings into how much UN Women’s efforts contribute to women’s economic empowerment and rural women’s development in China. The findings and recommendations will be used to inform the coming country strategic note development, especially in the Women’s Economic Empowerment (WEE) and Climate Change portfolio, one of the key areas of UN Women China.

UN Women China Office would like to hire one national consultant to conduct an end-project evaluation to the above-mentioned project and develop a comprehensive evaluation report with findings, conclusions, and recommendations on how UN Women China can strengthen its work in women’s economic empowerment.

IV. OBJECTIVE OF THE EVALUATION

The objectives of the end-project evaluation are:

- to assess project results, especially the above mentioned the outcome and output level results of the project in terms of effectiveness, replicability and sustainability;
- Assess the relevance of the project;
- Assess the integration of gender equality;
- to document lessons learnt from the project implementation;
- to provide learnings and recommendations to guide the future economic empowerment programmes and the country WEE and Climate Change portfolio.

V. EVALUATION CRITERIA, QUESTIONS AND METHODOLOGY:

The evaluation needs to follow the following **criteria**:

1. Relevance
2. Effectiveness
3. Efficiency
4. Impact
5. Sustainability
6. Gender equality and human rights
7. Coherence with UN Women policies and with the interventions of other actors, especially the UN

The following key **evaluation questions** will be refined during the inception phase:

1. To what extent is the project relevant to and respond to the needs of the rural women in Qinghai province?
2. To what extent were the expected outcomes and outputs achieved and how did UN Women contribute towards there?
3. How timely and efficient is the project's implementation?
4. To what extent the gender knowledge and skills impact the women beneficiaries to improve their business and livelihoods?
5. To what extent was the capacity of rural women in Qinghai province developed in order to ensure sustainability of efforts and benefits?
6. To what extent was gender equality and women's empowerment advanced as a result of the project?
7. To what extent is the project coherent internally with UN Women's policies and externally with the interventions of other actors?
8. What factors contributed to the project implementation? Are they replicable?
9. What barriers and challenges did the project experience during the implementation?
10. To what extent was the M&E system used to monitor project performance and make adjustments?

11. Were there any unintended results, either positive or negative?

12. To what extent did the project team adapt to the COVID-19 situation and did this affect the achievement of results?

METHODOLOGY:

Evaluation design/approaches: This evaluation will apply mixed methods with quantitative and qualitative data collection and analysis. An outcome harvesting approach is recommended and a gender-responsive approach is a must to ensure the collection of disaggregated data. UNEG guidelines – including the UNEG Norms and Standards for Evaluation – should be referenced.

Data collection methods and data sources: Mixed data collection methods should be used including a field work to Qinghai province, as well as on-line and/or off-line data/information collection from the key project stakeholders (beneficiaries, the associated government and non-government agencies, the project responsible partner, etc.). A sampling methodology for data collection should be developed.

Evaluability: Baseline, end-line and annual report data are available to the evaluators to use.

Limitations: Limitations regarding COVID-19 may affect the ability to meet with key stakeholders face-to-face.

Participatory evaluation is encouraged in UN system. Stakeholders including relevant UN agencies, local government agencies, civil societies, women's groups and leaders will be invited to participate in the process of the evaluation.

VI. SCOPE OF THE EVALUATION

THEMATIC SCOPE:

This evaluation is expected to assess UN Women programme's contribution to rural women's economic empowerment in Qinghai province China.

TIME SCOPE:

The end-project evaluation is expected to assess the project strategies and activities implemented

by both UN Women China team and its Responsible Party (the Institute of Geographic Sciences and Natural Resources Research of Chinese Academy of Sciences) from July 2018 to Apr 2021.

GEOGRAPHIC SCOPE:

Overall, this project is implemented at 7 counties in Qinghai Province.

VII. SCOPE OF WORK, DELIVERABLES AND TIMELINE

SCOPE OF WORK

- To work with UN Women project team to plan for the evaluation;
- To conduct data collection with stakeholders including relevant UN agencies, local government agencies, civil societies, women’s groups and leaders;
- To conduct desk review of the project related documents, including but not limited to the project document, concept notes, workplans and budget plans, responsible party reports, donor reports and communication materials;
- To develop an evaluation plan with sound methodologies with quantitative and qualitative approaches and data analysis, and a feasible

timeline;

- To brief preliminary results to the UN Women project team;
- To develop a comprehensive evaluation report in English with executive summary, key findings, conclusions, and recommendations. The recommendations should include for a way forward for the Women Economic Empowerment Portfolio development
- The report will only be considered final when it meets the UN Women GERAAS quality standards.
- The report should be copy-edited and in line with UN Women branding guidelines.

The National Consultant’s role:

- To conduct the evaluation, and be responsible for the relevant deliverables;
- To conduct field visits and data collection;
- To communicate with UN Women whenever needed;
- To work closely with the International Consultant for the final project evaluation;
- To translate and interpret for the international consultant whenever needed.

DELIVERY SCHEDULE

Deliverables	Activities	Expected delivery date	% Payment
A draft inception report in English with sound methodologies, evaluation matrix, data collection tools, detailed evaluation plan and feasible timeline, which follows ethical conduct in evaluation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Have working meetings with UN Women project team to plan for the evaluation; • Conduct desk review to the project related documents, including but not limited to the project document, concept notes, workplans and budget plans, responsible party reports donor reports and communication materials; • Integrate feedback from the inception presentation and submit a detailed evaluation inception report; • Bring substantive inputs into the inception report from methodology, matrix to plans in the field. 	By 15 July 2021	20%

Deliverables	Activities	Expected delivery date	% Payment
Presentation of preliminary findings will be the deliverable for second payment.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Conduct on-line and/or off-line data/ information collection from the key project stakeholders, including beneficiaries, project responsible party, etc.; • Travel to the field might be needed; • Develop report outline with preliminary results; • Presentation of preliminary findings to the evaluation reference group; 	By 15 August 2021	40%
A draft evaluation report in English, with recommendations for UN Women China's strategic note and WEE portfolio and Climate Change portfolio included	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Write report and solicit comments from UN Women project team and key stakeholders on the draft. 	By 15 September 2021	40%

*Payment will be made upon submission of deliverables with an approval of the Project Analyst based on GERAAS criteria

**Travel to the field in Qinghai will be needed for national consultant¹².

VIII. ETHICAL CONDUCT IN EVALUATION

The evaluators should abide by the principle of *UN Evaluation Group's Ethical Guideline and Code of Conduct for Evaluation in UN System* and follow the *UN Women Evaluation Handbook*¹³. They are also requested to sign UN Women Evaluation Consultant Agreement.

The data collection from the stakeholders and beneficiaries needs informed consent. The data should be safeguarded in the whole process of collection, utilization and maintain to ensure the confidentiality and rights protected in line with UN Women policy.

IX. COMPETENCIES

CORE VALUES:

- Respect for Diversity
- Integrity
- Professionalism

CORE COMPETENCIES:

- Awareness and Sensitivity Regarding Gender Issues
- Accountability
- Effective Communication
- Inclusive Collaboration

Please visit this link for more information on UN Women's [Core Values and Competencies](#):

<http://www.unwomen.org/-/media/headquarters/attachments/sections/about%20ous/employment/un-women-employment-values-and-competencies-definitions-en.pdf>

12 GERAAS Criteria: <https://www.unwomen.org/-/media/headquarters/attachments/sections/about%20ous/evaluation/evaluation-geraasmatrix-en.xls?la=en&vs=1436>

13 UN Women Evaluation Handbook Tools: <https://genderevaluation.unwomen.org/en/evaluation-handbook/tools>

X. QUALIFICATION

- Master's degree in relevant subjects (monitoring and evaluation, international relations and/or development, or other relevant social sciences) with minimum of 5 years' experience or PhD degree with minimum of 3 years' experience in

development programming in China is a must. Bachelor's degree in relevant subject with 7 years' experience may be accepted.

- At least 3 years of previous working experience on gender issues and/or women's economic empowerment is a must.
- Experience with multi-national organizations, inter-governmental organizations, business companies, and/or United Nations agencies is an advantage.
- Proven experience as a team leader for evaluations with international organizations in consulting for rural development in China is an advantage.
- Excellent ability to communicate and write in English.

XI. COMMUNICATION AND REPORTING OBLIGATIONS

The consultants will report to the UN Women China's Gender and Climate Change Programme Manager to update the progress and arrangement to UN Women.

XII. EVALUATION CRITERIA

Applications will be evaluated based on the cumulative analysis.

- Technical Qualification (100 points) weight; [70%]
- Financial Proposal (100 points) weight; [30%]

A two-stage procedure is utilized in evaluating the applications, with evaluation of the technical application being completed prior to any price proposal being compared. The total number of points allocated for the technical qualification component is 100. Only the price proposal of the candidates who passed the minimum technical score of 70% of the obtainable score of 100 points in the technical qualification evaluation will be evaluated.

Financial/Price Proposal evaluation

- Only the financial proposal of candidates who have attained a minimum of 70% score in the technical evaluation will be considered and evaluated.

- The total number of points allocated for the price component is 100.
- The maximum number of points will be allotted to the lowest price proposal that is opened/evaluated and compared among those technical qualified candidates who have attained a minimum of 70% score in the technical evaluation. All other price proposals will receive points in inverse proportion to the lowest price.

XIII. SUBMISSION OF PROPOSAL

Interested candidates are encouraged to submit electronic application (consolidated as ONE attachment) online, no later than 2 June 2021. Kindly note the system will only allow one attachment, please combine below listed submission package into one.

Submission package includes:

- Updated CV
- Education certificate
- Personal History Form (P11 which can be downloaded from https://asiapacific.unwomen.org/-/media/field%20office%20eseasia/docs/misc/2012/p_11_form_unwomen.doc?la=en&vs=4602)
- Reference evaluation report(s) from previous work
- **Financial proposal:** the financial proposal shall specify a lump sum amount breaking down the professional fee for each deliverable and all related costs (if any). Please see the financial proposal template as below:

Items	Amount CNY
Deliverable 1	
Deliverable 2	
Deliverable 3	
Travel cost (if feasible)	
Total Financial Proposal	

ANNEX I : PERFORMANCE MONITORING FRAMEWORK

Results	Indicators	Means of Verifications / Source of Information	Data Collection Methods and Responsible Entity	Frequency
<p>Overall goal</p> <p>Women have income security, decent work and economic autonomy. (SP).</p>	<p>(i) SP_D_2.3B: Number of rural women supported to gain access, use and/or control of productive resources by UN-Women Baseline: TBD Target: 60% over the baseline</p> <p>(ii) SP_D_2.3C: Number of countries that use the Buy from Women Platform to connect women farmers to information, markets and/or finance Baseline: 0, Target: 1</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Project reports Media reports Government statistical reports on poverty in the selected countries in Qinghai Province Review and evaluation reports 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> UN Women and the RP will manage an internal mid-term review. UN Women to manage a final external evaluation. RP to collect information/reports RP to submit quarterly based narrative and financial reports UN Women to prepare annual report to donor. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> One internal mid-term review will be conducted at the end of the 2. External final evaluation will be conducted before the end of the project. Collection information/reports throughout the project cycle. Annual based donor report.
<p>Outcome: More women farmers in Qinghai Province have increased income security and are more resilient in a changing climate.</p>	<p>(i) Number of women in Qinghai province that have reported to have increased income security and climate resilience (e.g. access to social safety net/social protection or coping mechanisms. Baseline: TBD Target: TBD</p> <p>(ii) Gender mainstreaming provisions added to poverty reduction policy/legislative frameworks. Baseline: 0 Target: 1</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Project report Training reports Media report Review and Evaluation Report 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> UN Women and the RP will manage an internal mid-term review. UN Women to manage a final external evaluation. RP to collect media and other information/reports RP to submit quarterly based narrative and financial reports 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> One internal mid-term review will be conducted at the end of the 2. External final evaluation will be conducted before the end of the project. Collection at any time possible throughout project cycle. Quarterly narrative and financial progress report

Results	Indicators	Means of Verifications / Source of Information	Data Collection Methods and Responsible Entity	Frequency
<p>Output 1: Government and services providers, particularly at the local level, have enhanced capacity to support women farmers to access climate-smart agricultural extension, information, tools and technologies.</p>	<p>(i) % of agricultural extension workers participating in gender training who can apply their knowledge to support women farmers in their services Baseline: 0 Target: 75%</p> <p>(ii) # of policy dialogue, initiatives and services provided by local government and/or service providers to support women farmers' income security and climate resilience, which have been influenced by the project Baseline: 0 Target: TBD%</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Baseline survey report Pre and post training assessments Project report Media report 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> PR to prepare baseline report and collect media reports RP to submit quarterly based narrative and financial reports UN Women to prepare annual report to donor. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> At the end of individual activity Quarterly based narrative and financial reports. Annual based donor reports.
<p>Output 2: Women farmers have increased access to financial and productive resources, and are able to utilize agricultural services to increase their productivity.</p>	<p>(i) # of women smallholder farmers assisted by the project to register with Farmer Field Schools and Women's Associations Baseline: 0 Target: TBD</p> <p>(ii) # of women who have increased access to finance, economic resources and are able to utilize agricultural services to increase their productivity through the established networks by the project. Baseline: TBD Target: TBD</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Pre and post training assessments Media report Project reports 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> RP to submit quarterly based narrative and financial reports UN Women to prepare annual report to donor. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> At the end of individual activity Quarterly based narrative and financial reports. Annual based donor reports.

Results	Indicators	Means of Verifications / Source of Information	Data Collection Methods and Responsible Entity	Frequency
<p>Output 4: Women farmers and network of women farmer organizations have increased capacity to move up the agricultural value chains.</p>	<p>(i) women farmers reported to have increased capacity to lead their network specifically to move up agricultural value chains. Baseline: 0 Target: TBD</p> <p>(ii) # of market research/assessment to identify high potential markets/ opportunities for women farmers. Baseline: 0 Target: 1</p> <p>(iii) # of women smallholder farmers assisted by the project to register with Farmer Field Schools and Women's Associations Baseline: 0 Target: TBD</p> <p>(iv) # of Women's Farmer Field Schools and Women's Association established to promote collective actions</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Pre and post training assessments • Media report • Project reports 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • RP to submit quarterly based narrative and financial reports • UN Women to prepare annual report to donor. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • At the end of individual activity • Quarterly based narrative and financial reports. • Annual based donor reports.

ANNEX II : THEORY OF CHANGE

PROJECT THEORY OF CHANGE

The goal of the project will be aligned fully with the UN Women Global SP Outcome 3, “women have income security, decent work and economic autonomy”.

The proposed project will contribute to UN Women SP and 2018 UN Women China AWP **Outcome 2.2: “More women farmers in Qinghai Province have increased income security and are more resilient in a changing climate”**

It is based on the **theory of change** (TOC) that:

IF (i) Government policy decision-makers and services providers, particularly at the local level, have enhanced capacity to support women farmers to access climate-smart agricultural extension, information, tools and technologies; (ii) Women farmers have increased access to finance and productive resources and are able to utilize agricultural services to increase their productivity; and (iii) Women farmers and network of women farmer organizations have increased capacity to move up the agricultural value chains; **then** more women farmers will be able to participate and take up new economic opportunities and become more resilient to the impacts of climate change, **because** the root cause and drivers in agricultural poverty have been addressed, and barriers will have been removed.

The above TOC is designed based on the country context of China. The project recognizes the importance of the work to influence enabling policy and legislative environment to support the implementation of climate-smart agriculture and gender-sensitive policy and regulatory to enhance access to finance and productive resources, including land’s rights, tenure and ownership. However, this is the area of high political sensitivity, where an external party outside of the Chinese Communist Party has very limited influence, given China’s single party system. Therefore, the project has identified key areas of work that it can engage in advocacy work with the government (duty bearers) as well as some practical programme interventions identified at the local level, where there is more flexibility and less political sensitivity.

Outcome: More women farmers in Qinghai Province have increased income security and resilience in a changing climate.

This outcome aims at supporting women smallholder farmers in deployment of their agricultural productivity, considering their needs and local farming system, and promoting their access to resources in the selected counties. From a poverty reduction perspective, it is an urgent need for government to consider formulation policies to enhance coping mechanisms, such as social protection/social safety net to help poor, especially women farmers to manage income risks/vulnerabilities in order to prevent women farmers from falling back into extreme poverty in the event of climate-related disasters e.g. drought flood etc. that affect their agricultural productivity and income security.

Output 1: Government and services providers, particularly at the local level, have enhanced capacity to support women farmers to access climate-smart agricultural extension, information, tools and technologies.

Despite tremendous efforts to accelerate poverty reduction and development in China, gender has not been considered as one of the key elements and therefore not integrated into policy/programme interventions to address poverty and agriculture extension services for the poor in rural China. Extension workers are a crucial link between women farmers and their capacity strengthening. There is also a need to enhance the agents’ capacity in general by incorporating elements of resilience to climate change, covering topics such as high yield seed varieties, soil preparation, and land management and cultivation practices. As per the IFAD ProDoc, according to the limited data from five project counties, only 16.09% of rural laborers were trained by the government extension system in 2013; 45.45% of trainees were women.¹⁴ The limited access to extension services, and the overarching cultural context limit women’s coping mechanism to climate change.

According to the results of the IFAD project baseline survey, 70% of the rural households in the project area

14 Design Completion Report of IFAD Qinghai Liupan Mountain Area Poverty Reduction Project, Feb. 2015.

want access to credit, but less than 20% of them had access to formal credit.¹⁵ Women farmers rarely have access to loans, and related questions will be included in the baseline survey study under this designed project. There is a need to increase awareness among people in government, in financial institutions, and in the private sector on the specific challenges that women face in accessing financial services; this will be achieved using evidence from the local institutional assessment and findings from the survey on the financial needs of women.

Output 1, Levering from partnership with IFAD, the project will focus on the supply side interventions to ensure that government and service providers meet the needs of women farmers. The proposed activities under Output 1 will focus on capacity of government and grassroots extension service providers and financial service providers to meet the needs of women farmers. Moreover, Output 1 will target policy makers and staff from Women Federation at various levels to strengthen their gender perspectives through training and evidence-based advocacy with the view to create long-term influence on the policy formulation and decision-making processes. Indicative activities are as follows:

- Design and organize gender awareness training sessions, based on findings from the baseline survey targeting government officials and grassroots extension workers and technicians to better address specific challenges faced by women farmers.
- Design and conduct gender training of financial service providers (loan officers, private sector, and intermediaries) to design plan for better offering financial support services to women farmers.
- Organize gender mainstreaming training sessions for government officials in the poverty alleviation system including government line department and women's federation, at county level to enhance understandings and equip skills of the government officials to provide better service delivery and to improve ability for technical review for future policy formulation.

15 Design Completion Report of IFAD Qinghai Liupan Mountain Area Poverty Reduction Project, Feb. 2015.

- Organize a consultation meeting by inviting experts to improve the endline study with project achievements, lessons learned and policy recommendations for women's economic empowerment and resilience in a changing climate.
- Organize national conference on promoting women's economic empowerment and resilience in a changing climate, engaging national and local policy decision-makers in areas of poverty alleviation, agriculture, and women's federation; international community; academia; and the media.

Output 2: Women farmers have increased access to financial and productive resources, and are able to utilize agricultural services to increase their productivity.

Women's access is restricted to agricultural productivity resources including extension services, information, technology and market. Closing the gender gap in agriculture in the context of a changing climate would benefit women and increase the wellbeing and resilience of society as a whole.¹⁶ Women smallholder farmers need to strengthen their capacity to better access to productive resources – agricultural inputs, finance and credit, extension services, information and technology. They must be familiarized with bank/loan procedures and specific requirements for financing. Building on FAO Farmer Field School (FFS) approach for women farmers to learn new technologies and exchange ideas among themselves during the agricultural production cycle, and the IFAD project which supported Farmers' Associations/ Farmers' Cooperatives, the proposed project needs to support training activities for women farmers through women's FFS and Women's Associations to learn about loan procedures and other services. As the Women's Association is an efficient medium through which large numbers of women farmers can be engaged in learning agricultural knowledge and skills, and utilizing financial terminologies and procedures.

Output 2 will support a further step by adapting the women-centered participatory Farmer Field School (FFS) methodology demonstrated by FAO and

16 UN Women Flagship Programming Initiatives, 2015.

previously utilized by CCAP, the project RP in China. Through the institution of the Women's Associations, the women farmers, especially those FFS facilitators in the pilot sites will be provided with capacity-building training to improve their productive knowledge, skills about knowledge transferring to their fellow women farmers, decision-making ability, as well communication and negotiation skills for holding dialogues and maintain partnerships with government and service providers.

To achieve this output, the following indicative activities will be conducted:

- Facilitate the formation of FFSs and Women's Associations with selected women leaders/facilitators and registered women smallholders.
- With the selected women smallholders as Farmer Field School (FFS) convergence point/facilitators, technology transfer to other women farmers will be carried out during a complete production cycle. Others will be encouraged to learn from each other and share experiences among themselves.
- Facilitate dialogue and partnership between Women's Association, local governments, financial institutions, and women's federation to design and conduct training on financial knowledge and business skills, such as financial terminologies, loan procedures, and schemes.

Output 3: Women farmers and network of women farmer organizations have increased capacity to move up the agricultural value chains.

Poor women farmers remain bound to lower-end production of simpler agricultural products that do not command much value in the market due to their low agricultural productivity, unpaid and domestic work responsibilities, lack of opportunities in participation of decision-making in farmers' cooperatives. Women farmers have not fully benefited from the market system supporting agricultural productivity due to challenges including low levels of education, and the lack of women led organizations at community level to facilitate access to inputs, extension and financial services.

Through conducting a market research, the project will help to identify crops and market opportunities that

women entrepreneurs and farmers can enter with relatively low barriers. The market research will also identify appropriate crops and sustainable agricultural activities, and finding market opportunities for Women's Associations. The project will also provide technical support to farmers cooperatives with attention to processing, transporting and marketing of agricultural products. UN Women will use the same network established by the IFAD project, complement each other by focusing on UN Women's comparative advantage in providing support to enhance women farmers' networks, including Women's Associations, which will help to aggregate production into higher-value processing to achieve economy of scale and reduce transaction costs for the women smallholders. The proposed project will support set up women role-models in villages and select women leaders in Farmers' Associations/ Cooperatives to allow women's voices to be heard in agricultural production and market services.

Building on the IFAD project, which has included cooperatives and associations in the project counties and already provided technical support for processing, transporting and marketing of agricultural products, UN Women will target support to strengthen the formation of women-led organizations to enhance women farmers' position in the market supply chains including upgrading their agricultural products. The Women Association and Farmers' Cooperatives will be the leading force to ensure improved access of women to the market and women can benefit from more value-added trade. The crucial access to information via smart phone, e-commerce and localizing the Buy from Women digital platform initiative in the Qinghai context shall be explored by the Output 3.

Specific activities supported under this output include:

- Conduct market research and assessment to analyze different market channels/modalities for women smallholders to access the markets.
- Organize business and marketing skills training workshops for members of the Women's Associations based on findings from the markets assessment.
- Conduct TOT training for facilitators/leaders of Women's Associations as role models on skills related to organizational leadership

and confidence-building, communication, information, and so on. Tailor-made training models and materials will be developed and used for training based on needs assessments to be conducted in the baseline survey.

- Conduct community advocacy campaigns and raise women smallholders' awareness on collective power in access to information and markets.

Facilitate women smallholders to register with Women's Associations in order to promote e-commerce and localize the **Buy From Women** initiative in the context of Qinghai.¹⁷

ANNEX III : USEFUL HYPERLINKS

- 5) UN Women GERAAS evaluation quality assessment checklist
- 6) [UN Women Evaluation Consultants Agreement Form](#)
- 7) [UNEG Norms and Standards for evaluation](#)
- 8) [UN Women Evaluation Handbook](#)

17 <https://youtubeWBTPwBA5o1M> BuyFromWomen Brochure, 2018.



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