Project Name: China-Sustainable Forestry Development (©)...

Region: East Asia and Pacific Region

Sector: Forestry; Natural Resources Management

Project ID: CNGB60029

Borrower(s): PEOPLE’S REPUBLIC OF CHINA

Implementing Agency: STATE FOREST ADMINISTRATION (SFA)
Address: 18 East Street, Hepingli, Beijing, China 100714
Contact Person: Mr. Song Shikui, Director, World Bank Loan Project Management Center
Tel: 86-10-6422-9944 (Ext. 3216)
Fax: 86-10-6421-7796
Email: pmcsfa@cenpok.net

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1. Country and Sector Background

Overview: The Sustainable Forestry Development Project aims to protect some of China’s most important remaining natural forests, associated biodiversity, and vital watersheds and reduce the risk of downstream flooding, while ensuring a supply of wood to meet China’s growing demand, in a way that takes pressure off forests elsewhere in Asia. It will also help local communities affected by the national logging ban to maintain or improve their standard of living by switching to other, more environmentally friendly, sources of income. By emphasizing participatory, community driven, and bottom-up approaches to forest resources planning and management, the project involves local governments and communities early in forest resource assessment and management plan development leading to greater ownership by local governments and communities, better adherence to management prescriptions and resource use zoning, and better targeted poverty alleviation programs to reduce the reliance on unsustainable forest exploitation. By incorporating community development projects - which will be linked to long-term and sustainable management of forestry resources - a strong link between conservation and sustainable income generation and economic development will be built.

Under the project, 1.2 million ha of natural forests will be protected and managed sustainably, thus reducing soil and water erosion and flooding, preserving globally important biodiversity, and reducing greenhouse gas emissions through carbon sequestration. Also, 170,000 ha of plantations will be planted to produce a variety of forest products, including approximately 13.3 million cubic meters of commercial timber, 2.73 billion kg of bamboo, and fruit, nut, and miscellaneous forest production, amounting to millions of yuan in income generation. The total number of
beneficiaries is estimated at 687,500-266,100 households or approximately
2.71 million individuals, with many of the beneficiary groups including a
large share of women and ethnic minorities. Of the 55 recognized ethnic
minority groups in China, a total of 18 (Li, Tibetan, Qiang, Tujia, Miao,
She, Dong, Dulong, Hui, Mongols, Manchus, Yao, Bai, Lisu, Nu, Yi, Pumi and
Naxi) reside in SFDP project counties and sites.

Country and Sector

Background

The forestry sector plays a critical role not only in protecting
biodiversity and watersheds but also in the Chinese economy, providing 40
percent of rural household energy, almost all of the lumber and panel
products for the large construction sector, and raw material for the large
domestic pulp and paper industry. The resource base is small. Forest
cover amounts to only 0.11 hectares per capita which is significantly
below the world average of 0.77 hectares per capita. Forest land is
divided into two categories: natural forests (about 87 million hectares),
which are located in isolated areas in the northeast and southwest and
account for 92 percent of standing wood volume; and plantations (about 34
million hectares), which account for only 8 percent of standing volume,
since most are newly established. China is the third largest consumer of
timber in the world and faces a widening imbalance between supply and
demand for wood products. The present consumption level (about 300
million cubic meters of standing stock) exceeds the annual growth of the
forests. This deficit is being made up by imports and over-cutting, which
contributes, contributing substantially to the loss of 500,000 hectares of
natural forest area per year. This situation has been allowed to persist
because logging enterprises do not bear the full cost of over-harvesting,
are not efficiently regulated, and lack knowledge of sustainable natural
forest management. Although the Government of China (GOC) has taken steps
to address the widening wood deficit by investing in plantations, it has
not tackled the fundamental imbalances in the sector, until recently, when
the devastating flood that occurred in the Yangtze Basin and northeast
China during the summer of 1998. Triggered by the extensive flooding, GOC
took the following bold actions. First, the State Council issued an
emergency circular in August 1998 announcing the following immediate
policy changes: ban on logging in natural forests; no opening up of new
lands at the expense of forests; freezing of all construction projects on
forest land for one year; and a new requirement for direct cabinet
approval for any occupation of forest land. Supplemental regulations have
been issued by the provinces that provide detailed guidelines for
implementation at the local level. Second, The Government launched an
ambitious new investment program (Natural Forest Protection Program -
NFPP) to improve natural forest management, covering approximately 95
million hectares of state-owned forests in 17 provinces. NFPP supports
increased protection of natural forests, establishment of timber
plantations, and the transfer of state loggers to more environmentally
sustainable employment. The plan is being implemented in two phases
(1998-2000 and 2001-2010), at a total cost of 12 billion yuan, financed in
part by budgetary allocations and subsidized loans from central and local
governments. Third, the Government enacted additional legislation, such
as a new land use law in September 1998, to promote more efficient use of
land and increased reforestation. Fourth, GOC launched another program in
1999 to convert approximately 3.6 million ha of steep lands (over 25
percent slope) in the upper reaches of the Yangtze and Yellow rivers from
agriculture back to forest (and grasslands). The program was piloted in
1999-2000 in 17 provinces and will be implemented from 2001 to
2010. Effective implementation of this new investment program is the
biggest challenge facing the forest sector. Successful implementation will require (a) developing comprehensive integrated management plans for forest resources, particularly for natural forests, that maximize economic and environmental benefits for local communities; (b) improving the efficiency of the wood processing sector through continued reform of the policy framework for state-owned enterprises; (c) expanding forestry resources to support continued growth of construction and agro-processing sectors, with an emphasis on productivity gains through improvements in silvicultural technologies, particularly planting stock development and silvicultural management; and (d) developing more participatory approaches for the design and implementation of natural forest management and afforestation programs to strengthen incentives for sustainable resource management by local communities.

2. Objectives
The project objective is to ensure that viable, participatory, and locally-managed systems for conservation, management, and sustainable use of forest resources and associated biodiversity are developed and adopted in project sites to reduce unsustainable exploitation of forest resources and to protect the natural environment. These practices - developed and applied for the protection and sustainable management of natural forest resources in pilot areas in China - would provide models for wider replication under the government’s Natural Forest Protection Program (NFPP). The global environmental objective is to foster improved conservation and sustainable management of biodiversity in remaining natural forest areas by ensuring in situ protection of threatened and globally important forest habitats and rare and endemic species.

3. Rationale for Bank’s Involvement
Bank involvement in the project and NFPP will provide the following contributions: The project will introduce and disseminate the latest scientific management approaches (i.e. international best practices) in natural forest planning and management, management of nature reserves, community participation in co-management, and monitoring and evaluation. Previous Bank projects have proven to be very effective vehicles to transfer technology and knowledge. The NFPP’s main focus is to reform on reforming state forest enterprises and redeploy redundant workers. The project seeks to redress the potential loss of income to rural forest communities which the NFPP has not been able to fully address. There are a number of small-scale pilot initiatives supported by bilateral donors and NGOs (especially GTZ, Ford Foundation, WWF, The Bridge Fund) from which lessons for larger scale replication can be learned, particularly with regard to participatory community planning and development. The Bank is in a good position to facilitate this process, which will involve not only project initiatives but also the resolution of key policy issues that are systemic in nature. The Bank has been involved in biodiversity conservation in China since the initiation of the Biodiversity Action Plan and assisted China with the preparation and implementation of the first GEF-supported biodiversity project - Nature Reserves Management Project (NRMP). Through this and other activities, the Bank has gained a comprehensive understanding of and experiences on the key biodiversity conservation issues facing China. The Bank can facilitate integration of experiences and results into its policy dialogue on environment and development. The project will require multiple sources of financing. The Bank’s experience in coordinating multiple donors in financing a range of
4. Description
The project will finance, over a period of six years, the following main components and activities. (a) Natural Forest Management Component will support the development and dissemination of new sustainable management techniques in natural forest areas protected under the Government’s NFPP and community development and livelihood enhancement activities targeting selected rural communities. The latter targets the most forest dependent rural communities in the project areas who would potentially be most affected by the NFPP restrictions. The EU is expected to finance this component in its entirety. The component includes the following subcomponents and key activities: (i) natural forest management including development of forest management plans through resource assessment, zoning, and forest classification; yield regulation and control; policy studies relating to opportunities for forest ecological benefit compensation systems, marketing, and market intelligence systems; implementation of forest management plan through demonstrations, NTFP domestication, establishment of yield plots to model growth and yield and assessment of biodiversity change; and monitoring and evaluation; (ii) forest management training to employees and vocational training to laid-off workers of State Forest Enterprises in the project areas; (iii) community development activities including small household loans, household training, small village infrastructure based on village development plans developed by the project communities and associated technical studies (e.g., rural energy, animal grazing, and so on); and (iv) training directed at forest administration staff, and dissemination beyond the project area using mass media and in-country workshops. (b) Protected Areas Management Component (Global Component) will support conservation and improved management of biodiversity of global importance in selected, high priority nature reserves in natural forest areas. It will be implemented in the three key provinces plus four adjacent provinces to enhance trans-boundary biodiversity protection and enhance exchanges between these provinces. The Global Environment Facility is expected to finance this component in its entirety. The subcomponents and key activities include: (i) participatory nature reserves planning and management including management plan development, strengthening of field-level management and targeted applied research; (ii) community-based nature conservation including co-management activities that link biodiversity conservation with sustainable income generation, wildlife management to reduce damage to local community livelihoods, community conservation education and awareness, and delivery of sustainable alternatives and enhancement of community skills; and (iii) training and capacity building to strengthen institutions responsible for biodiversity conservation and management at the provincial and nature reserve levels; and; and (iv.) project management, monitoring and evaluation including key policy studies. (c) Plantation Establishment Component will help increase the production of wood to meet the growing gap between domestic supply and demand, generate new employment and income for forestry farms and rural households and improve environmental management. It will be implemented in the three key provinces plus eight more and include the following sub-components and key activities: (i) establishment of commercial wood plantations for solid wood, reconstituted panels, and pulp; (ii) establishment of economic forest crops, including fruit, nut and medicinal trees, bamboo, and rattan; (iii) pre-commercial...
thinning of existing plantations to demonstrate increase productivity and financial gains from proper thinning and tending; and (iv) provision of related technical support services such as planting stock development and nursery management, training and extension, small-scale rural infrastructure required for afforestation and post-harvest treatment and marketing of horticultural crops and monitoring and evaluation including environmental and social parameters.

5. Financing

Total (US$m)
Total Project Cost 242.34

Co-financing is being sought for two of the three components - Protected Areas Management and Natural Forest Management. The GEF has approved inclusion of the Protected Areas Management component into the March 2001 GEF, and it is anticipated that co-financing of the Natural Forest Management component by EuropeAid will be confirmed in the near future. GEF financing of the Protected Areas Management component would be implemented by the World Bank. EuropeAid would co-finance the Natural Forest Management component in parallel and would be responsible for processing, management and supervision of its own technical assistance package.

6. Implementation

Project Management. Project management will build upon the successful implementation structure developed under earlier Bank forestry projects in China. Leading Groups at the central, provincial, and county levels will be established to provide general policies and guidelines; review work programs; and ensure coordination, linkages, and sharing of experiences between the three components. Project entities at the national-, provincial-, county-, and nature-reserve levels will be responsible for day-to-day implementation, supervision, and monitoring.

National Level. The Leading Group at the national-level would be chaired by the Administrator of the State Forestry Administration (SFA) with membership of the Project Management Center (PMC), Natural Forest Protection Center (NFPC), Department of Wildlife and Plant Protection (DWPP), Department of Planning and Finance, and other relevant departments in SFA. Within SFA, NFPC will be responsible for overseeing the Natural Forest Management component, since it is directly responsible for implementation of the NFPP. PMC will be responsible for the Plantations Establishment component, based on its successful implementation track record of three previous World Bank-financed plantation projects.

Management of the Protected Areas Management component will be by a central Project Office (PO). The PO will work closely with the Division of Nature Resources (DNR) in the DWPP and will be staffed with appropriate technical expertise in required fields, including a full-time Protected Area Management Officer, a full-time Community-Based Conservation Officer, and a full-time Nature Reserve Training Coordinator who will also be responsible for coordinating the M&E. Provincial Level. Overall implementation would be overseen by the provincial Leading Group, chaired by the Director of the Provincial Forestry Department (PFD), and would be carried out by existing organizations under the PFD to ensure institutionalization of project activities. The Natural Forest Protection Office (NFPO), the PMO and the Office of Wildlife and Plant Protection (OWPP) would be responsible for the NFM, PE, and PAM components,
respectively. Local Level. For NFM component, 6 county PMOs and thirteen township working groups will be establish to oversee implementation. For PAM component, each nature reserve would create a Project Management Group (PMG), directly under the nature reserve director. The PMG would be responsible for supervision of all aspects of project activities in the reserve. For PE component, county PMOs in the County Forestry Bureaus would manage the work and provide technical support, while individual households, groups of households, share-holding forest farms, village or township collective forest farms and state forest farms will carry out the plantation activities.Monitoring and Evaluation Arrangements: Monitoring will be done at three levels - delivery of inputs by the project activities, outputs including the use of project goods/services by beneficiaries, and the extent to which project objectives have been achieved (outcome/impact). During implementation, project performance, including the achievement of project outputs and progress toward the attainment of development objectives, will be monitored through the use of semi-annual progress reports prepared by the PMC and PO.Financial Management and Auditing Requirements: An assessment of the adequacy of the project financial management system was conducted at pre-appraisal and concluded that this project meets minimum Bank financial management requirements. All previous forestry projects have been in full compliance with audit and accounting covenants. The project entities will produce project financial management reports in line with the format and content agreed to between the Bank and China. In addition, traditional disbursement methods would will be used as opposed to the PMR-based disbursement systems. As with other Bank Group-financed projects in China, the Foreign Investment Audit Bureau of China National Audit Office (CNAO) will have overall responsibility for auditing the accounts of the project. Audits of the financial statements of implementing agencies and of the Special Accounts will be submitted to the Bank within six months after the end of the financial year. Supervision and Reporting Arrangements: The project will be supervised through Bank missions scheduled for twice a year consisting of both Field Office and Headquarters staff. A project launch workshop will be arranged soon after Board approval which will focus on (a) project concept and objectives; (b) project management activities including procurement, financial management, implementation arrangements; and (c) project environmental protection guidelines and resettlement policy framework. A joint mid-term review will be undertaken with the EU. Prior to that, a mid-term report will be prepared by the PMC with inputs from NFPC and PO summarizing the results of monitoring and evaluation, identifying problems encountered during implementation, revising project costs, and discussing measures to complete the Project as scheduled. In addition, an implementation completion report, reviewing the planned objectives and achievements of the project, including costs and benefits derived and performance and contribution of all parties associated with project execution, will be prepared by the PMC and submitted to the Bank within six months of the closing date.

7. Sustainability
Experience from earlier Bank involvement in Chinese forestry strongly supports the expectation of sustainable impact. Forest resources established under earlier projects have demonstrated good technical performance in terms of growth rates, survival, preliminary economic returns, and environmental impact. Similarly, the ongoing GEF-NRMP is
demonstrating good outcomes in terms of not only raising the quality of staff and management but also institutionalizing project activities into the SFA system. Institutional sustainability will be addressed through a comprehensive program of technical assistance, training, and study tours to strengthen existing capacity and ensure development of long-term management skills in project management units, extension institutions, and beneficiaries. In addition, the project is relying on existing administrative and organizational structures especially at the local levels to implement activities. Financial sustainability will be addressed through a cost recovery program for the PE component and through self-managed community development funds for the NFM and PAM components. These funds will be designed during the first year of implementation and will build on the experiences of micro-financing/revolving fund schemes. Demanding cost sharing arrangements have proven to be an effective way of ensuring adherence to high operational standards and have resulted in high levels of cost recovery. Furthermore, partnerships with NGOs and other donors for PAM component at the reserve-level will ensure continuation of incremental field activities beyond the life of the project. Staff and routine operating expenses are already provided by the Government. Environmental sustainability will be addressed through the introduction of environmentally sound forest management (including co-management) plans and detailed environmental protection and monitoring guidelines for the Plantation Establishment component. Social and cultural sustainability at the village level will be addressed by ensuring representation of all groups including ethnic minorities and women and, in the Tibetan areas, the involvement of monks, in developing the community plans.

8. Lessons learned from past operations in the country/sector
The main lessons are summarized below, which come from project work, including the 1998 QAG/AGR review of the forest portfolio and GEF supported projects in the Bank; analytic and advisory activities, including the 1999 draft China Case Study for the OED Review of the 1991 Forest Policy and Its Implementation, the 1999 Strategic Framework for Natural Resource Management in East Asia, and the 1994 ENV/AGR review of implementation of the Bank’s forestry policy; and the Bank’s knowledge management system, including the 1998 workshop on sustaining tropical forests; and donor/NGO consultations, including the background documents for the WWF-World Bank Alliance.Key issues for effective natural forest management:
- Forestry cannot be considered in isolation from other land uses and must be fully integrated into land use planning;
- Successful management is only possible with a defined and enforced permanent forest area;
- Accurate inventory of multiple forest resources are needed to guide forest planning;
- Management objectives need to be tailored to the potential of specific sites and the demands of local communities; and
- Linkages between conservation and development should be explicit;
- The interests of all stakeholders must be taken into account in decisions on forest management;
- All management options for forests -- even total protection -- incur financial and economic costs; consequently, the options selected must have long-term financial and economic sustainability;
- Commercial timber plantations and trees in farming systems must play a role in securing sustainable management of natural forests and need to be planned and monitored to appropriate standards; and
- Institutions and agencies charged with forest management must raise technical standards and provide structures that are conducive to the outputs sought.

Key recommendations for Bank-financed natural forest
management projects:  
- Support modernization and implementation of more appropriate legislation, regulation, and resource rights;  
- Support alternative resource control systems, such as deconcentration, decentralization, and co-management with government agencies, local communities, the private sector, NGOs, and others;  
- Closely coordinate technical training with the timing and needs of institutional change and development for locally responsible resource management agencies;  
- Give priority to effective policy analysis and development, since policy and market failures have been more serious than technical problems of forest management, silviculture, and conservation;  
- Support investments in boundary demarcation, resource assessment and inventories and growth and yield studies; and,  
- Strengthen systems for monitoring resource management and audit of institutional performance.

Key recommendations for the China forestry program:  
- Mobilize concessional cofinancing to soften IBRD terms, as IBRD funding alone may be too costly for poor households and lead to their exclusion from project activities;  
- Strengthen data collection and monitoring and evaluation (particularly of socio-economic factors) at project, provincial, and national levels, as it is currently difficult to evaluate the impact of project loans, management innovations, and forest policies on overall sector performance and Bank projects;  
- Deepen policy dialogue and support sectoral reforms, particularly in the areas of SOE restructuring, private sector development, and land tenure, and resource taxation;  
- Continue to support commercial plantation development, which will reduce pressure on natural forests, expand domestic wood supply, and generate environmental benefits;  
- Expand GEF program, as China’s global biodiversity resources warrant a larger share of international support than is presently received;  
- Diversify participants in sector dialogue by reaching out to the wider academic community, a broader range of institutions, and NGOs in the forest sector.

9. Program of Targeted Intervention (PTI) N

10. Environment Aspects (including any public consultation)

Issues: The SFDP has been assigned an EA category "A" in the Bank’s classification system. An Environmental and Social Impact Assessment (reviewing the project’s likely positive and negative environmental and social impacts) and an Environmental Management Plan (covering mitigation measures, monitoring, and institutional strengthening) have been prepared. The report incorporated the findings and recommendations of the Social Assessment (SA) which was conducted separately. Environmental Issues: Overall, the project focuses on high-priority natural resource management issues and is expected to generate significant environmental benefits. The National Forest Management (NFM) and Protected Area Management (PAM) components are expected to have positive environmental impacts, both directly, by protecting some of the most important remaining natural forests and associated biodiversity in China, and indirectly, through protecting key watersheds and thus lowering the risk of downstream flooding. Any negative environmental issues arising from these components are expected to be insignificant and easily mitigated. Simple environmental guidelines will be formulated for village-level small-scale infrastructure once they are identified through the community assessment and planning process under the NFM component. Guidelines for infrastructure development proposed for nature reserves will be included in the reserve management plan. The
Plantations Establishment (PE) component should also have positive environment impacts through the reduction of pressures on the natural forest as well as decreased demand for imports of forest resources from outside of China, and contributions to local community income. Negative environmental issues arising from this component are expected to be limited in scope and easily mitigated. Nonetheless, these will require an in-depth process to be followed, principally due to the wide geographic coverage of the component. An objectively verifiable process of screening of sites identified for conversion to plantation under the component has been developed to ensure that the component sites are outside of intact forest, will not convert or degrade natural habitats, or adversely affect cultural property. In addition a pest management plan as well as a set of environmental protection guidelines for plantations establishment (revised from an earlier version developed under previous Bank-financed plantations projects) providing plantation planning, establishment and operations protocols will be applied to ensure that unintended environmental impacts are avoided, with special attention to issues of pest management.

Social Issues & the Consultative Process: The social assessment (SA) process has driven the design and re-design of specific sub-components of the project. As a result, specific project activities are more aligned with the needs of local communities. Moreover, areas of possible conflict (between community demands and natural resource protection objectives, between participating and non-participating communities in the project area, and between communities and government agencies) have been identified and appropriate instruments have been designed to safeguard against potential risks to community livelihoods. The project will continue to use social assessments during implementation. A three-phase consultation process, well integrated into the SA process was followed during project preparation. The first round of formal consultations followed a two stage approach: First, project information leaflets and brochures describing the proposed project concept were developed, distributed, and explained on two occasions, December 16, 1999 and March 6, 2000 -- in each of the proposed project sites. Second, the distribution and discussion of project information was followed up with a second round of wide-spread consultations through the Social Assessment (SA) process. To date, The SA included semi-structured interviews of over 1,500 households in approximately 242 project villages across 13 project provinces and over 70 focus group discussions involving some 8,000 community residents have been conducted. Of those consulted, 900 households belong to one of the 18 ethnic minority groups that may participate in the project and over 50 focus group discussions were held in ethnic minority areas. In addition, dozens of institutional stakeholder meetings, attended by (with administrative village leaders, township, county and provincial government officials) were held. Over 70 individual SA reports are available in the project files. Moreover, international environmental NGOs and major donors (World Wildlife Fund, The Nature Conservancy, Conservation International, Ford Foundation, US Forestry Service, National Science Foundation, San Diego Zoo) working on or interested in China forestry conservation have been consulted. The third round of formal consultations focused on discussion of the draft Environment and Social Impact Assessment (ESIA). As part of this consultation, all project affected people were informed of the ESIA findings and more than one hundred villages were randomly selected for village meetings. Leaflets of the ESIA findings and recommendations were distributed and posted in each village at least 10 days prior to a meeting. In areas where Han Chinese
are not comment, the leaflets were translated into local languages (e.g., Tibetan & Lisu). The village representative assigned a responsible person to keep minutes and summarize the discussion, including (a) the number of men and women who attended the meeting; (b) composition of villagers, village leaders, township/county officials, PMO staff, etc., who attended the meeting; and (c) a summary of questions, comments and concerns raised at the meeting. High levels of consultation and participation from diverse stakeholders are central to the outcome of the project. For this reason, the participatory and consultative approach initiated through the SA process will be continued through implementation as part of the participatory forest/nature reserve management planning and community development planning process, monitoring and evaluation.

Areas of remaining natural forest and natural habitat in China are located in relatively remote, steeply sloping areas. These areas are also home to significant ethnic minority populations. As both the Natural Forest Management and the Protected Area Management components focus on remaining areas of natural forest and natural habitat, the project areas for these two components include large populations of relatively poor ethnic minorities. Of the 55 recognized nationalities in China, a total of 18 reside in the project areas. As part of the SA process, ethnic profiles/briefs were prepared highlighting (i) the location and population of the ethnic minorities; (ii) different sub-groups, specific language type and levels of literacy; and (iii) key measures being taken under the project to ensure cultural and location specific appropriateness. The results contributed to the development of a separate Ethnic Minorities Development Plan and in accordance with World Bank Operational Directive 4.20 on Indigenous Peoples. Project sites in Sichuan, Yunnan, and Gansu provinces are inhabited by ethnic Tibetans, and two project areas are in areas that have special status as Tibetan autonomous areas. In the Natural Forest Management component, Songpan County, Aba Tibetan-Qiang Autonomous Prefecture, Sichuan Province was included because of its rich natural forests and biodiversity. Similarly, the Protected Area Management component includes Baimaxueshan Nature Reserve in Diqing Tibetan Autonomous Prefecture in Yunnan Province, because of the condition of the natural forest and globally significant biodiversity found there.

In addition, Ganzi Autonomous Region, a part of western Sichuan that is historically considered to be part of greater Tibet, is the focus of the project biodiversity survey. Local consultations undertaken as part of the Social Assessment confirmed interest and willingness on the part of Tibetan communities and their leaders to participate in the project.

11. Contact Point:

Task Manager
Susan S. Shen
The World Bank
1818 H Street, NW
Washington D.C. 20433
Telephone: (86-10) 6554-3361, ext: 3410
Fax: (86-10) 6554-1686
Email: sshen@worldbank.org

12. For information on other project related documents contact:
The InfoShop
The World Bank
Note: This is information on an evolving project. Certain components may not be necessarily included in the final project.

This PID was processed by the InfoShop during the week ending May 11, 2001.