



United Nations Development Programme

China

Governance Assessments

Project Assessment

The DGTTF Lessons Learned Series

China

Governance Assessments

Project Assessment

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Abbreviations

CCCPE	China Center for Comparative Politics and Economics
CCP	Chinese Communist Party
CICETE	China International Center for Economic and Technical Exchanges
DG	Democratic Governance
DGTF	Democratic Governance Thematic Trust Fund
GDP	Gross Domestic Product
NGO	Non-Governmental Organization
OGC	Oslo Governance Centre
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme

Acknowledgments

This report is published by the UNDP Democratic Governance Group through the Oslo Governance Centre, with funding from the UNDP Democratic Governance Thematic Trust Fund. The Oslo Governance Centre are grateful to the author, Harry Garnett, UNDP China, and all those who were interviewed and consulted in the preparation and writing of this assessment report, who are listed here in alphabetical order: Gu Qing, Henny Ngu, Jiang Xiaopeng, Napoleon Navarro, Peter Patze, Professor Ding Yuanzhu, Professor He Zengke, Professor Hu Angang, Professor Jia Xijin, Professor Mao Yushi, Professor Song Houze, Professor Wang Ming, Professor Yu Keping, Professor Zhou Hongyun, Professor Zhou Ye'an, Professor Zhou Zhiren, Raymond Hyyuen, Song Qinghua, Wang Jing, Xiao Yuan, Xiaozhen Ooyang, Zhang Jialin, and Zhou Taidong. Also, we would like to thank Pauline Tamesis, Bo Jensen, Joachim Nahem, Ingvild Øia and Henri Schumacher. Javier Fabra provided invaluable support to coordinating this publication series. Darko Pavlovic coordinated the project.

August 2011

Preface

The Millennium Declaration, a key outcome of the Millennium Summit in 2000, emphasizes the centrality of democratic governance to achieving the Millennium Development Goals. World leaders agreed that improving the quality of democratic institutions and processes, and managing the changing roles of the state and civil society in an increasingly globalized world, should underpin national efforts to reduce poverty, sustain the environment, and promote human development.

The Democratic Governance Thematic Trust Fund (DGTTF) was created in 2001 to enable UNDP country offices to explore innovative and catalytic approaches to supporting democratic governance. The DGTTF Lessons Learned Series represents a collective effort to systematically capture lessons learned and best practices, to share them with all stakeholders, to serve as an input to organizational learning, and to inform future UNDP policy and programming processes.

Executive summary

The project **Support for the Development of a Governance Assessment Framework in China** (2008) aimed to build a broad consensus on governance assessment, and establish a governance assessment framework in accordance with the realities of political development in China and based on the latest international research on governance assessments. The project took place in 2008 with a DGTTF grant of \$200,000 to cover the costs of four workshops, a study tour abroad, and the preparation and publication of the governance assessment framework.

The objective of this review is to assess the extent to which the project was innovative and catalytic in the context of the country concerned. It asks what has made the project succeed or fail, and why. And it informs UNDP's future strategic policy and programme planning processes in the democratic governance focus areas.

The project's intended outputs were

1. The latest knowledge products relevant to international best practice and thinking on governance assessment translated and shared with the Chinese target audience (government officials, academics, civil society organizations).
2. Background papers and original research (field studies and surveys) on the key components of governance assessment and the Chinese context produced, to feed into the workshops and seminars on the development of the governance assessment framework. These papers will, for example, highlight issues such as the need for governance assessments to be gender- and poverty-sensitive, and to be the result of national ownership.

3. National and international workshops held to bring together major stakeholders, such as academics, government officials, CSOs, and international development agencies, to discuss key components of governance assessment frameworks.
4. A draft framework for governance assessment developed and disseminated to all stakeholders.
5. A dissemination report containing the draft governance assessment and the results of the project as a whole, to be published in academic journals, in the media for awareness raising and outreach, and through internal channels to political leaders to advocate for the assessment's wider application.

For some years, China had been shifting from a development model based on economic growth to one that incorporates equity, inclusion, and balanced development. While assessment frameworks and associated indicators are well developed for economic growth and environmental protection, they are less well developed for governance. There was, therefore, a need to develop a China-specific governance assessment framework to which indicators can subsequently be added to assess progress made in the adjustment to China's development model.

This project set out to achieve this by:

- i. Supporting the dissemination of best practice knowledge and experiences in governance assessments from initiatives supported by UNDP and other international development agencies.
- ii. Facilitating a consultative and participatory process to identify key issues for governance assessment that are appropriate for China's development priorities, and develop a nationally owned draft framework for governance assessment in China.
- iii. Building consensus among national stakeholders on the draft framework for governance assessment in China.

The project reviewed revealed that:

1. The project is **innovative**. This is the first time that a *comprehensive* governance framework has ever been constructed in China. The evaluation team met with several institutions that had prepared *partial* governance frameworks with indicators that had been applied at the local government level. The framework includes twelve 'categories' of governance. Within each are between ten and twenty 'main indicators', which are elements of good

governance. Many of these elements are very politically sensitive, involving human rights, rule of law, legitimacy, social justice, social stability, and open government.

2. The project has been, and will continue to be, **catalytic**. The academics that have sponsored the partial governance assessments reported that the framework had influenced their work. Many local governments are aware of the framework and would like to apply it in their jurisdictions. Most important of all, senior Chinese Communist Party (CCP) members are aware of the framework. The framework has been described in CCP's Theoretical Research Update, and the Director of the Chinese Centre for Comparative Politics and Economics (CCCPE), the organization responsible for the project, has presented the framework at the Central Party School. Domestic and international media attended the press conference held by UNDP China at the end of the project, and at least forty news agencies reported on the news conference. Members of the project team were also interviewed by leading Chinese media.
3. The project was implemented in a **participatory** manner. Stakeholders from academia, government, and NGOs took part in three national and one international workshop, leading to the framework's finalization. The framework, which was presented in draft at the third workshop, was revised following input from these key stakeholders.
4. The project was completed **efficiently**. The budget was fully disbursed to support a large number of quite complex activities involving many participants from many organizations, in a short implementation period of, effectively, eight months. However, CCCPE found the disbursement of the funds slower than they would have liked, with payments often lagging some time after the activity had been completed.
5. There are plans to **scale-up** the project. CCCPE plans to design actual indicators and pilot the assessment framework in six cities. It will continue to promote the framework through training events, including those for senior CCP cadres, and articles in academic journals.
6. The project has strong national **ownership**. This is not only because of the participatory nature of the design of the framework, but also because of its unique Chinese characteristics. One framework category that would not be included elsewhere in the world is 'intra-party democracy'. The 'legitimacy' category includes "citizens' identifi-

cation with the CCP and the Government" and "authority of the CCP and the Government". Under 'social justice' is "representativeness of the People's Congress members".

7. The framework is likely to be **sustained**, largely because of the CCP's and Government's growing interest in balancing social and economic aspects of China's development, and also because of the explosive growth of NGOs. There are estimated to be between 3 and 4 million NGOs in China today, of which many work with governance.

Key lessons learned and recommendations stemming from the project review are:

1. It is important to take full account of the national political and social contexts when setting expectations for a governance assessment project such as this. The design of this project recognized that the preparation of a comprehensive governance framework for China had not only never been done before in China, a country until recently focused on the implementation of a very successful economic growth model, but that its very preparation would be highly politically sensitive. For this reason, it was important at this stage not to go beyond relatively general definitions of the elements of good governance, and not to define the actual indicators. The design also recognized that the Chinese model for change involved, first, developing ideas at the theoretical level in academia, then influencing senior cadres. This is done mainly through piloting at the local level, but also through face-to-face meetings and training.
2. Broad participation in the design of the assessment framework, and the strong national ownership this created, are particularly important in a politically sensitive environment. Support for something new in governance is more likely to succeed if promoted from many directions: academia, government (local and central), NGOs, and senior party officials. If the proposed framework is piloted, efforts should be made to include the target population.
3. This project provides a model of good communications. The workshops stimulated communication among a group of key stakeholders. Communications covered a broad spectrum of interests: academic, government officials, NGOs and CSOs, and the media. Communications to senior CCP cadres were particularly important, both face-to-face and through training and the publication of the framework in the CCP newsletter. Numerous academic articles on governance and governance assessment were circulated, as well as the book that summarized

the projects experiences as well as the framework itself. And good use was made of the media to promote the framework.

4. More than two years after the framework was completed, it is important for there to be concrete follow-up activities. The plan to pilot the framework at the local level, as is planned by CCCPE, should be implemented as soon as possible so that the momentum created by the project is not lost.
5. As it pilots the framework at the local government level, CCCPE should consider adding more precisely defined level two 'elements' or, as the framework calls them, 'main indicators', and then try to attach objectively measurable (quantitatively or qualitatively) indicators to each of these elements. These could be refined further as the local government pilots are implemented.
6. The scope for exchanging experiences with other assessment exercises, including the DGTTF-supported *Promoting Public Participation in Governance Performance Assessments to Accelerate the Achievement of the Millennium Development Goals*, should be pursued.

Introduction

Objective, Scope and Approach

The objective and scope of the project *Support for the Development of a Governance Assessment Framework in China* (2008) was to build a broad consensus on governance assessment and establish a governance assessment framework in accordance with the realities of political development in China, and based on the latest international research on governance assessments. The project took place in 2008 with a DGTTF grant of \$200,000 to cover the costs of four workshops, a study tour abroad, and the preparation and publication of the governance assessment framework.

This project review focuses on the extent to which the project was innovative and catalytic in the country context. It asks what has made the project succeed or fail, and why. And it helps to inform UNDP's future strategic policy and programme planning processes in the democratic governance focus areas. It assesses the project's impact in terms of relevance, effectiveness, efficiency, innovation, catalytic effect, and sustainability, defined according to these DGTTF guidelines:

- ✓ **Relevance** How relevant is the project to the country's priority needs, and was the right strategy applied within the country's specific political, economic, and social contexts?
- ✓ **Effectiveness** Effectiveness is a measure of the extent to which an aid activity attains its objectives.
- ✓ **Efficiency** Efficiency measures the outputs in relation to the inputs. Were activities cost-efficient and were objectives achieved on time?
- ✓ **Innovation** Innovative projects address recognized critical democratic governance issues that, if resolved, may

lead to substantial improvements in democratic governance. They are initiatives, in terms of the problem addressed or the approach taken, that have never before been attempted in a given country. And although they may be potentially risky or less certain of success than traditional projects, they will position UNDP as a key player in democratic governance, one that 'pushes the frontier'.

- ✓ **Catalytic effect** A catalytic project has a high likelihood of receiving support from government or other governance institutions (including other donors) for scaling up or following up, if the project is successful.
- ✓ **Sustainability** Sustainability is concerned with measuring whether the benefits of an activity are likely to continue after donor funding has been withdrawn. Projects also need to be financially sustainable.

The project review also considers four key strategic principles of UNDP's policy on country-led governance assessments: ownership, alignment, national capacity development, and strengthening accountability. It was expected that the review would shed light on the usefulness of these principles, and also lead to further elaborations on how to optimize the operationalization of these principles.

The report was prepared by a consultant working under the supervision of the Oslo Governance Centre. The consultant solicited, received, reviewed, and consolidated country specific data and information from national counterparts, including academic institutions and NGOs, plus UNDP Country Office staff. The assignment entailed a combination of home-based work (review of all relevant project documents, preparation of draft country project report, and preparation of final report) and a five-day mission in-country. The team sought information on the interviewees' experience of implementing the project, and about its outcomes and impacts. The mission also included a one-day International Seminar on *Governance and Governance Assessment: China and the World*, organized by UNDP and CCCPE, and attended by academics, government officials, NGOs, donors, the UNDP Resident Representative and UNDP DG staff, and the DG Practice Leader from the UNDP Asia and the Pacific Regional Centre in Bangkok, as well as a delegation from Vietnam's governance reform programme.

A key challenge, both for this review and for the project itself, was to take account of the political realities in China. How far it would be possible to go in preparing a governance framework? And how detailed and specific could and should the framework be, in a country that still is very sensitive to governance issues even though it is now officially adopting a more comprehensive

development model incorporating good governance as well as economic growth?

Structure of the Report

The report is structured in four sections:

1. To position the DGTTF project, the **first section, Country Context**, presents an overview of the country's economic and political situation at the time of the project's design.
2. The **second section** outlines the activities of the ***Support for the Development of a Governance Assessment Framework in China*** (2008) project.
3. The **third section** analyses the DGTTF project's impact, following the criteria discussed above.
4. Finally, **section four** discusses lessons learned from the review and concludes with some recommendations for next steps in China, the OGC governance assessments programme, and UNDP's Democratic Governance Group generally.

Country Context

Economy

Since the late 1970s, China has gradually moved from a closed, centrally planned system to a more market-oriented economy that plays a major global role. By 2010, China had a population of 1.3 billion, and had become the world's largest exporter and second largest economy. Reforms included phasing out collectivized agriculture, gradual liberalization of prices, fiscal decentralization, increased autonomy for state enterprises, creation of a diversified banking system, development of stock markets, rapid growth of the private sector, and opening to foreign trade and investment. The efficiency gains resulting from a restructured economy have contributed to a more than tenfold increase in GDP since 1978. Even though the global economic downturn reduced foreign demand for Chinese exports for the first time in many years, China outperformed all other major economies in 2010, with GDP growth of around 10 percent.

Although the rapid rise in incomes has raised many people out of poverty (per capita GDP, purchasing power parity, is about \$7,400, well below Montenegro, and about the same as Algeria), 2.8 percent are officially below the poverty line¹, with unofficial estimates putting the proportion much higher than this². There are wide disparities between incomes in the coastal cities and inland rural areas. The Gini coefficient, measuring inequality of income, is about the same as Russia, and not far below the US.

Government

The President and Vice President are elected by National People's Congress for a five-year term. Both are eligible for a second term. Elections were last held in March 2008, and are next scheduled for March 2013. The current President has been in office since 2003. The Premier is nominated by the President, and confirmed by National People's Congress. The legislature is the unicameral National People's Congress, which has 2,987 seats. Members are elected by municipal, regional and provincial people's congresses, and the People's Liberation Army to serve

five-year terms. There are 23 provinces, five autonomous regions, and four municipalities. We were told during the mission that local governments have substantial autonomy; governance and economic reform initiatives tend to be piloted at the local level. However, ultimate authority rests with the CCP's 25-member political bureau (politburo) and its nine-member standing committee.

Governance

Corruption is a serious problem in China. Every year, researchers at the Central Party School, the CCP organ that trains senior and midlevel officials, survey over 100 of the school's officials. Between 1999 and 2004, respondents ranked corruption as either the most serious or second most serious social problem. Similarly, in late 2006 the State Council's Development Research Centre asked 4,586 business executives (87 percent in non-state firms) to rate their local officials in terms of integrity. Almost one-quarter said that their local officials were "bad", and 12 percent said they were "very bad". This is no surprise, since in 2008 China was ranked 72 of 179 countries in Transparency International's Corruption Perceptions Index.

China is very sensitive to complaints from foreign countries about its human rights record. In April 2011, the government unveiled its first National Human Rights Action Plan. The 54-page document outlined human rights goals to be achieved over the next two years, and addressed issues such as prisoners' rights and the role of religion in society. The assessment team was told that human rights issues can be discussed quite openly in China today, by Chinese (some highly sensitive human rights variables are included in the governance framework prepared under this project), although it is obvious that some issues, such as Tibet, cannot be discussed.

Since the beginning of this century, Chinese academia has placed greater emphasis on the evaluation of public governance in an effort to construct assessment systems compatible with the domestic realities of China. As a result, a large number of governance assessment systems emerged within Chinese academia. In his *A Framework for Chinese Governance Assessment*, Professor Yu Keping, the leader of this DGTTF project, reports that the governance assessment systems that have emerged from China are either research- or practical-oriented:

The purpose of research-oriented systems is to provide a theoretical guide on governance assessment rather than measure on the ground conditions. The Assessment Criteria of China's Democratic Governance, proposed by the author

¹ World Bank China website; CIA Handbook on China, 2011.

² Staff from UNDP China Country Office

in New Political Science (2002), is an example of research-oriented assessment. Practical-oriented systems aim for actual measurement and evaluation. For instance, the Indicator System of Ecological Civilization in Cities, jointly developed by the research teams of CCCPE and Xiamen Municipality on the issue of Building Socialist Ecological Civilization, was designed to measure ecological governance in Chinese cities.

Professor Yu and many other academics the team met during the mission have written articles and books on governance in China.³

³ These include the book edited by Professor Yu: *The Reform of Governance*, published by Brill, Boston and Leiden in 2010.

Project

Support for the Development of a Governance Assessment Framework in China (2008)

Context and Strategy

For some years, China has been shifting from a development model based on economic growth to one that incorporates equity, inclusion, and balanced development. While assessments frameworks and associated indicators are well developed for economic growth and environmental protection, they are less well developed for governance. There was, therefore, a need to develop a China-specific governance assessment framework to which indicators can subsequently be added to assess progress made in this change in China's development model.

This project set out to achieve this objective by:

- i. Supporting the dissemination of best practice knowledge and experiences in governance assessments from initiatives supported by UNDP and other international development agencies.
- ii. Facilitating a consultative and participatory process to identify key issues for governance assessment that are appropriate for China's development priorities, and develop a nationally owned draft framework for governance assessment in China.
- iii. Building consensus among national stakeholders on the draft framework for governance assessment in China.

Activities

- i. Three national and one international workshop were held to review international experience of governance assessments and indicators and develop the governance assessment framework for China. Chinese scholars, government officials, and representatives of CSOs

attended the workshops, along with international experts, including experts from OGC. The first workshop, in March 2008, covered the theory and practice of governance assessment. The second, held in Harbin, covered governance development in China over the past 30 years. The draft framework was presented at the third national workshop, and was substantially revised following lively discussions, the team was told. International experience was covered in the third workshop. There were also pre-workshop meetings that included staff from UNDP and CICETE, as well as CPPPE, and post-workshop meetings of the CCCPE staff. One workshop suggested by UNDP that did not take place was a mini-symposium with the Xiaokang Indicator team, although members of the team did attend one of the above workshops. In its final project report, CCCPE states that the mini-symposium did not take place, because of a "lack of efficient communication".

- ii. CCCPE collected and organized domestic material on government performance and governance and translated foreign research papers on both topics. The CCCPE team assembled its own papers to present at the workshops, including:
 - o Yu Keping, *Governance Assessment Framework for China*
 - o Yu Keping, *Governance Changes in China, 1978-2008*
 - o He Zengke, *Commentary on Governance-related Assessment Systems in China*
 - o He Zengke, *A Tentative Study on Corruption and Governance Assessment, Evaluation, Diagnosis and Early Warning System*
 - o Zhou Hongyun, *Review of International Study on Governance Assessment Indicator System*
 - o Bao Yajun, *Governance in Chinese Academic Circles: Retrospect and Prospects*
- iii. CCCPE established a platform for stakeholders to discuss governance and governance assessments. This was the beginning of a national network to share knowledge on these subjects.
- iv. CCCPE undertook a study tour to the Oslo Governance Centre, where they discussed international experiences with staff and conducted academic exchanges with Professors Oyvind Osterud, Head of the Norwegian Power and Democracy Study, Tom Christensen Professor in the Department of Political Science at the University of Oslo, and Professor Berit Aasen of the Norwegian Institute of Urban and Regional Research.⁴

- v. At the end of the project, in December 2008, to launch the Governance Assessment Framework for China, CCCPE held a press conference on the governance assessment framework. That was attended by forty people from government institutions, universities, research institutions, CSOs, NGOs, and the media. Domestic media included Xinhua.com, People.com.cn, Studytimes, 21st Century Business Herald, Wenhui News, and the Phoenix Weekly. Some foreign news agencies also attended, including the PR Newswire. This resulted in coverage of the news conference by some forty news agencies. Some leading media networks, including the online versions of certain newspapers, provided front page reports of the news conference. Several government websites also covered the event.
- vi. Team members were interviewed by leading media, such as The Economic Observer Newspaper, Decision-Making, and Chinese Society Newspaper.
- vii. The results of the project were published. The principal summary of the project is a paperback book, *Governance Assessment Framework for China*, which included the framework itself as part of a chapter written by Professor Yu Keping, and other chapters outlining national and international experiences of governance assessments and indicators. Prior to the report's publication, an article on the framework was circulated to CCP members through its newsletter, Research Trends.
- viii. Professor Yu Keping points out in his Final Report that the most important activities and outputs of this project were those that were "intangible": the discussions among academics, with government officials, among CSOs, with the media and, most of all, with CCP leaders about governance and governance assessment. This, he told the team, has resulted in raising the profile of governance and governance assessment through the development of a community of practice.

⁴ Prof. Todd Landman of the University of Essex participated in the Beijing workshop, as did the Oslo Governance Centre; Landman met separately with CCCPE since Professor Yu Keping was very familiar with his academic work.

Findings

Relevance

The project is highly relevant, as the Chinese people and leaderships pay increasing attention to governance issues. Good governance has become an important objective for the CCP and Government. The 16th People's Congress in 2003 introduced four categories of governance: macroeconomic adjustment, market regulation, social management (a term the team heard many times during the mission, and which informants had difficulty in defining), and public service. In 2005, the President gave a speech to governors, in which he referred to a "harmonious social society". He also talked about 'social management' as the means to achieve that harmonious society, which is characterized by an equitable distribution of income, community management, and public security, each of which is a governance, rather than purely economic growth, objective. Many of the key governance concepts mentioned publicly by political leaders, discussed among academics, and promoted by the rapidly growing numbers of NGOs and CSOs, have been included in the framework.

Innovation

The framework's preparation is the first time that a *comprehensive* governance framework has ever been constructed in China (see Annex I for the framework itself). The framework's main headings (translated as 'categories') cover a wide range of governance issues:

- i. Civic participation
- ii. Human and civil rights
- iii. Intra-party democracy
- iv. Rule of law
- v. Legitimacy
- vi. Social justice
- vii. Social stability
- viii. Openness of government affairs

- ix. Administrative effectiveness
- x. Accountability
- xi. Public Service
- xii. Government cleanness

Within each of twelve categories of governance are ten to twenty main indicators, which are actually elements of good governance rather than true indicators. Many of those elements are politically sensitive, involving human rights, rule of law, legitimacy, social justice, social stability and open government. Elements include, for example, "protection and tolerance of minorities and dissidents", "citizens' rights to self-protection", "transparency of party affairs", "equity of basic public services", "freedom of the press", and "citizens' rights and access to political information". None of these would have appeared in a governance framework forming the basis for training senior CCP cadres a few years ago. At least one category (and many of the main indicators) is unique: intra-party democracy. The assessment team was told that the category for social stability, and the measures associated with that objective, is particularly important in China.

There are a number of partial governance frameworks that do have indicators and, in some cases, have been tested. Since 2007, the Unirule Institute of Economics has prepared annual reports on public governance in China's Capital Cities. These are based on household surveys of perceptions and experience of public service provision, including human rights, corruption, and citizen participation. Cities are ranked under the various public governance, public service, civil rights, and administration indicators, and according to a composite indicator. The team was told by the Unirule team that some cities take the ranking very seriously and do attempt to address the issues raised by the scores. In addition, NGOs and CSOs within those cities use the rankings to pressure local government officials and mobilize local citizens to address the issues. Interestingly, the composite governance ranking is not correlated with per capita income, although correlations among the four sets of governance indicators are strong, strengthening the case for improving governance across a wide front, as the CCCPE framework does. Other observers pointed out that the Unirule indicators are less influential than they might be, because they lack CCP endorsement. The School of Governance along with the Ministry of Human Resources has implemented indicators measuring government performance. The widely known Xiaokang indicator system includes several governance indicators, for example on democracy and the rule of law.⁵ The NGO Research Centre at Tsinghua University has prepared and tested a civil society index.

⁵ A goal of the Xiaokang society is to build a moderately prosperous society for the entire Chinese population that features accelerated economic development, enhanced democracy, advanced science and education, prosperous culture, harmonious society, higher living standard, more efficient use of resources and friendly environment.

Catalytic effect

The project has been, and will continue to be, catalytic. The academics that have implemented the partial governance assessments reported that their work has been influenced by the framework. It was also reported to the team that many local governments are aware of the framework and would like to apply the framework in their jurisdictions. These include the major cities of Xi'an, Chengdu, Shenzhen, Changchun, Hangzhou, Lanzhou, and Xiamen. The Social Innovations Programme, in which CCCPE plays a key role, is also a local entry point for the framework, for both government and CCP officials.

Most important of all for the catalytic effect, senior CCP members are aware of the framework. It has been described in CCP's *Theoretical Research Update*, and the Director of CCCPE, the organization responsible for the project, has presented the framework at the Central Party School. In an interview, Professor Yu referred to three routes to the CCP leadership, each of which has been pursued in this project:

- i. CCP Research Digest
- ii. Direct advice to the President
- iii. Interactions at the local level.

The CCCPE has an advantage over other academic institutions (as those institutions acknowledged to the team), because it is strongly connected to the CCP.

Given the importance placed by UNDP on national ownership and cultural sensitivity, it is crucial not to judge the eventual impact of the implementation of this framework by exclusively western democratic governance standards, although the basic principles should be observed. The UNDP approach to democratic governance covers inclusive participation, responsive institutions, adherence to international standards and principles. Professor Yu himself has written about what democracy means in the Chinese context in the book *China: the Next Thirty Years*. Professor Yu interprets for the Chinese context "by, of, and for the people" and discusses the "separations of powers", two key democratic governance concepts. This emphasizes accountability within the CCP and from the CCP to the people, while also stressing the importance of another governance objective: stability. The framework prepared under this project therefore includes a category for accountability within the CCP and between the CCP and the people, and another for stability.

It is also important to be realistic about the rate of the framework's implementation, and its impact. As with political parties throughout the world, members hold varying views, some being more enthusiastic than others about promoting

the sorts of governance objectives that the framework outlines. Further, these objectives will be interpreted differently. It is to be hoped that the kinds of discussions promoted by this project and CCCPE, and by other academic institutions and NGOs and CSOs, will help the interpretations to converge.

Promotion of the framework has benefited from wide press coverage. Domestic and international media attended the press conference held by UNDP China at the end of the project, with at least forty news agencies reported on the news conference. Members of the project team were also interviewed by leading Chinese media.

Scalability

There are plans to scale-up the project. CCCPE plans to define the various elements of governance in the framework, design actual indicators, and pilot the assessment framework in up to seven cities. CCCPE will continue to promote the framework through training events, including those for senior CCP cadres, and articles in academic journals. Scalability does depend on CCCPE attracting additional funds. In CCCPE's view, this could be a combination of government, donor, and local authority funds. The team was repeatedly told by those interviewed that scaling-up will be a very gradual process, as with all reform in China, particularly with as sensitive a topic such as governance.

According to CCCPE and other key informants, the reform process in China (for governance reforms just as for economic reforms) begins with an academic institution studying the issue at a theoretical level. Suggestions on how to address the issue are reviewed by other academics. If they are reviewed favourably and if, as a result, there is support within the CCP for these ideas, they are piloted by local governments. Implementation is reviewed by academics and the CCP, locally and nationally. Finally, if the ideas have proved to be beneficial, they spread to other local governments and have an impact on national CCP and government policy. This step-by-step process means that scalability of this DGTTF project will be very gradual and take place over many years. It will also be geographically uneven – the economic opening which began over 30 years ago has had a substantial impact on some cities but much less in other cities and rural areas.

Efficacy

The project did contribute to the achievement of Country Programme Outcomes and Outputs, although indirectly and partially⁶:

⁶The numbering follows the UNDP Country Programme Document

3. *Enabling environment for civil society participation and its effective engagement in Xiaokang⁷ priority issues supported:* civil society did participate in the project's workshops.
 4. *Rule of law strengthened to protect human rights of all, especially the poor and the disadvantaged groups:* human rights objectives are included in the framework.
- 3.2 *Increased participation of civil society in the design and implementation of development policies/programmes:* civil society did participate in the design of the framework, especially in the third workshop.
- 4.1 *Poor and disadvantaged groups empowered to seek remedies for injustices, and justice institutions enabled to be responsive to claims, consistent with international human rights norms:* The framework represents a small, but necessary, step towards meeting this objective.

The project did deliver all of its intended outputs, as stated in the project document:

- i. The latest knowledge products relevant to international best practice and thinking on governance assessment translated and shared with the Chinese target audience (government officials, academics, CSOs).
- ii. Background papers and original research (field studies and surveys) on the key components of governance assessment and the Chinese context produced to feed into the workshops and seminars on the development of the governance assessment framework. These papers will, for example, highlight issues such as the need for governance assessments to be gender- and poverty-sensitive, and to be the result of national ownership.
- iii. National and international workshops held to bring together major stakeholders such as academics, government officials, CSOs, and international development agencies to discuss key components of governance assessment frameworks.
- iv. A draft framework for governance assessment developed and disseminated to all stakeholders.
- v. A dissemination report containing the draft governance assessment and the results of the project as a whole to be published in academic journals, in the media for awareness raising and outreach, and through internal channels to political leaders to advocate for the assessment's wider application.
- vi. Monitoring and evaluation of project outputs.

Efficiency

The project was implemented efficiently. It was executed nationally through the China International Centre for Economic and Technical Exchanges (CICETE), which reports to the Ministry of Commerce with CCCPE responsible for implementation. The budget was fully disbursed to support a large number of quite complex activities involving many participants from many organizations, in a short implementation period of, effectively, eight months.

The project inputs were completed, as in the project document:

- i. Compile and translate relevant materials from foreign sources.
- ii. Collect and screen relevant domestic materials.
- iii. Conduct a study tour to the Oslo Governance Centre to collect relevant materials, learn about governance assessment experiences from other countries, and build professional partnerships.
- iv. Commission papers and research on the Chinese situation at central and local levels.
- v. Translate papers and research into English for international conference.
- vi. Conduct four national seminars.
- vii. Invite experts on governance research to advice on the drafting process.
- viii. Arrange international conference on governance assessments.

However, CCCPE found the disbursement of the funds slower than it would have liked, with payments often received some time after the activity had been completed.

The Country Office did not submit a formal DGTTF annual report, because CCCPE prepared a very informative final report for the project in February 2009.

One strong plus for the project was that the institutional arrangements for were in place from day one. Once the project had been approved, CCCPE was able to start the project reasonably near the beginning of the DGTTF year.

⁷ "Xiaokang" is the Chinese government's vision of an all-round well-off society.

Sustainability

The framework is likely to be sustained. This is largely because of the CCP's and the Government's growing interest in balancing social and economic aspects of China's development, but also because so many academic institutions, including the most prestigious (such as CCCPE with its CCP connections), are interested in governance. The 12th Five-Year Plan includes reference not only to the MDGs, but also to good governance among its objectives. Independent evaluation of national plans was introduced for the 11th Five-Year Plan.⁸

The framework is also likely to be sustained, because of CSO and NGO interest in governance. According to Professor Xijin Jia at the NGO Research Centre at Tsinghua University, there are now between 3 and 4 million NGOs, with the number rising exponentially (80 to 90 percent have been set up in recent years). NGOs will exert growing influence, both as a political force and as service providers, because so many have been started by and are staffed by young people. The Government is now keen to support NGOs as part of the social management that is being promoted in many official documents. Professor Xijin Jia mentioned that many local CCP cadres have given speeches in support of NGOs. Many local governments are contracting out some public services to NGOs at the local level. Volunteerism, people coming together to provide public services, has risen dramatically in recent years. For example, millions of people volunteered for disaster relief during the recent earthquakes. The team visited Shining Stone, an NGO that specializes in community involvement in the solution of community issues. Shining Stone characterizes itself as a conflict resolution organization that brings together citizens and local government to resolve community issues, including the use of people from communities in solving their own service delivery problems, such as refuse collection. The NGO role in good governance and local service provision is also being promoted through Social Innovation Awards, in which CCCPE participates. However, it is noted that CCP support is not unreserved. A number of key informants mentioned that there have been articles from CCP that were hostile to CSOs, and that these articles have led some local authorities to drop their support of CSOs and NGOs.

The framework will also be sustained partly because of the project's and CCCPE's dissemination of the framework. The framework is used in public administration schools throughout China. CCCPE itself has prepared numerous academic papers that include reference to the framework.

Country-led governance assessments

The project does inform UNDP's country-led governance assessments in terms of ownership, alignment, national capacity development, and accountability.

Ownership

Ownership of the project is strong, partly because it was implemented in a very participatory manner. Stakeholders from academia, government, and NGOs took part in three national and one international workshop leading to the finalization of the framework. The framework, which was presented in draft at the third workshop, was revised following input from these key stakeholders.

National ownership is strong also because of its uniquely Chinese characteristics. One framework category that would tend not be included in national or local governance frameworks elsewhere in the world is 'intra-party democracy'.⁹ This is indicative of the reality that the real and key decision-making takes place within the CCP in this single party state. Further, elements under the 'legitimacy' category include "citizens' identification with the CCP and the Government" and "authority of the CCP and the Government". And 'social justice' includes "representativeness of the People's Congress members". In addition, CCCPE is in a good position to build further ownership of the framework. This is partly because of its CCP connections and influence, partly because of the very participatory way in which it designed the framework, partly because of its outreach activities through the press and CCP, and also because of its connections with the local governments that will apply the framework once it has been fully designed.

CCCPE broadened the ownership base for the framework by setting up a thematic task force. This consists of academics and officials, most of whom the team met:

Core national partners from CCCPE

Professor Yu Keping (Director of CCCPE), Chief Consultant; Professor He Zengke, political transparency and anti-corruption, Dr Zhou Hongyun, public participation, Dr Chen Jiagang, government accountability, and Dr Bao Yajun (Associate Professor, CCCPE), political stability.

National partners from the other academic institutions

Professor ZhuoYue (Xiamen University), Professor Hu Shuigen (Zhejiang University), and Professor Wu Jiannan (Xi'an Jiaotong University), experts on government performance, Professor Ding Yuanzhu (State Development and Reform Commission), expert on public services, Dr Jia Xijin, gender expert (Tsinghua University), Professor Hu Angang (Tsinghua University), expert

⁸ As the team was told by the University of Tsinghua's Professor Hu Angang, one of the foremost economists and national planning experts.

⁹ The 'main indicators' included election mechanisms of party leaders at various levels, checks and balances within CCP, party committee deliberation and decision-making procedures, democratic recommendation and appointment of cadres by party committees. Many of these would apply to political parties everywhere, but are rarely mentioned in national governance frameworks.

on national ownership, Mr. Wan Donghua (National Statistics Bureau), Mr. Zhu Baoliang (National Economic Information Office, Macro Economy Department), Professor Mao Yushi (Director of Tianze Research Center, also from Unirule), and Professor Zhou Ye'an (Renmin University), experts on democracy, rule of law and social justice.

Alignment

The project is aligned with China's political priorities. The CCP-connected and CCCPE-led design of the framework, together with the planned local government pilots, will help the political leadership to mainstream governance into China's development model.

National capacity development

Capacity to design governance assessment frameworks was developed in the many academic institutions that collaborated in the design of this framework through three national and one international workshop. Students of governance will read the many papers prepared by CCCPE staff on the framework itself or referring to the framework's categories of good governance. They will also benefit from CCCPE's book on the framework, which includes many papers by international governance indicator experts. Senior CCP cadres will also benefit from the training on the framework, which they will continue to receive. Once the pilots begin to be implemented, local governments and CCPs will also develop their capacity to implement the framework.

Accountability

According to CCCPE, a number of local authorities are interested in implementing the framework as an accountability mechanism. More local authorities are getting used to applying various governance indicator systems to measuring their performance, as discussed above with, for example, Unirule's perceptions surveys.

Lessons learned and recommendations

1. Importance of national political and social context

It is crucial to take full account of the national political and social contexts when setting expectations for a governance assessment project such as this. The project design recognized that a comprehensive governance framework had not only never been prepared before in China, a country until recently focused on the implementation of a very effective economic growth model, but also that its very preparation would be highly politically sensitive. For this reason, it was important that the project did not go beyond relatively general definitions of the elements of good governance, and that it did not define the actual indicators themselves. Examples of these rather general definitions of what the framework calls 'main indicators' (perhaps, more correctly, elements of good governance) include "election laws and regulations", "self governance of villagers", "functions of workers congress", "officials accountability", and "public infrastructure by the state". In many other countries, it would be appropriate to define these variables more clearly and then complete the other two columns of the framework: the indicators themselves and the data sources. But this would be too much for a society that believes in a gradual approach to social transformation. The design also recognized that the Chinese model for change begins by developing ideas at the theoretical level in academia, then influences senior cadres, mainly through piloting at the local level, but also through face-to-face meetings and training. Another important aspect of this national context is the need for a party-connected academic institution responsible for project implementation, as was the case with CCCPE. This could well apply in many developing countries, especially in the former Soviet Union, and many countries in South East Asia and Africa.

2. Broad participation is particularly important in a politically sensitive environment

Broad participation in the design of the assessment framework, and the strong national ownership this created, are particularly important in a politically sensitive environment. Support for something new in governance is more likely to succeed if promoted from many directions: academia, government (local and central), NGOs, and senior party officials (local and national). The participation in this project went well beyond the four workshops. It is clear that there was much cross-fertilization of ideas on good governance among the many academics and NGO leaders who took part in the workshops, and who are now members of the governance assessment community of practice. The involvement of CSOs, particularly where their number is growing rapidly as in many developing countries, is particularly important for sustainability. However, as the framework is piloted at a local level, it will be important to involve the population of the chosen entities not only through a survey, but through its systematic inclusion in the design, planning, implementation, and interpretation of the entire assessment exercise.

3. Model of good advocacy

This project provides a model of good advocacy. The workshops stimulated communication among a group of key stakeholders. This covered a broad spectrum of interests: academic, government officials, NGOs and CSOs, and the media. Communications with senior CCP cadres were particularly important and was achieved face-to-face, through training, and with the publication of the framework in the CCP newsletter. Numerous academic articles on governance and governance assessment were circulated, and the book summarized the projects experiences as well as the framework itself. The media were well used in promoting the framework.

4. More active follow-up

More than two years after the framework was completed, it is important for there to be some very concrete follow-up activities. The plan to pilot the framework at the local level, as CCCPE intends, should be implemented as soon as possible so that the momentum created by the project is not lost. Although information about the framework has continued to be disseminated, there has not been as active follow-up as there might have been. This may further the logic for two-year DGTF projects, as they are now but were not in 2008. This may have allowed CCCPE to advance further with the local pilots. UNDP should seize the opportunity for reasonably quick follow-up. That has capacity implications for UNDP, both in terms of funding and staffing. This evaluation may serve the purpose of re-stimulating interest in the project.

5. More precise definition of main indicators Before it pilots the framework at the local government level, CCCPE should consider adding more precisely defined level-two 'elements', or as the framework calls them 'main indicators, and then try to attach objectively measurable (quantitatively or qualitatively) indicators to each element. For example, a main indicator under Civic Participation is 'Function of workers congress'. This indicator needs to say more about the function of workers' congresses, perhaps about how they might work to support effective civic participation. And then an indicator needs to be added in the next column (which is blank throughout the framework) to help measure the achievement of workers' congresses in improving civil participation. This exercise could begin immediately through a fifth workshop involving many of the same participants, plus a wider range of stakeholders, perhaps from more operational and less academic institutions, including NGOs, central and local government. CCCPE probably needs to add the involvement of institutions with experience of collecting governance (or any) data, such as the National Statistic Bureau. The indicators could be refined further as the local government pilots are implemented, and consideration should be given to the option of using directly verifiable facts and statistics as well as perception (survey) data as indicators.

6. Exchange of experiences There are numerous assessment exercises in China and several of them receive UNDP support. The scope for exchange of experiences with such assessment, including the DGTTF supported *Promoting Public Participation in Governance Performance Assessments to Accelerate the Achievement of the Millennium Development Goals*, should be pursued.

The support for the development of a governance assessment framework for China, carried out in 2008, has been very successful in supporting the Chinese policy of a more balanced approach to its development, moderating its exclusively economic growth model. The implementing agency's strong CCP connections have been instrumental in the project's success, along with CCCPE's very gradualist approach. That helped to gain, first, academic and CCP support for a set of rather general governance indicators (or, more correctly, components of good governance), then planning to move on to pilot a more precise set of indicators at the local government level. CCCPE has been highly successful in creating a community of interest around the framework. That will serve Chinese democratic governance well in the future. Now is the time to move energetically to pilot a more precise framework in a number of cities, to study the experience, adjust the framework, and, with CCP support, to promote the approach throughout China.

Annex I: Codification of Tools and Instruments Used

The framework itself is shown below, with the final three columns to be completed prior to the planned local government pilots:

A Framework of Chinese Governance Assessment

No.	Category	Main indicators	Main indicators	Figure (numeric)	Data source
1	Civic Participation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Election laws and regulations ✓ Scope of direct elections ✓ Competitiveness of elections ✓ Self-governance of villagers ✓ Self-governance of urban residents ✓ Function of workers' congress ✓ Public hearings and deliberation on important policies ✓ Status quo of social and civic organizations ✓ Institutional environment of social organizations ✓ Influence of social organizations on political life ✓ Civic participation in public life via internet and mobile phone 			

Governance Assessments

No.	Category	Main indicators	Main indicators	Figure (numeric)	Data source
2	Human and Civic Rights	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Legal protection of citizens' rights ✓ Public awareness of legal protection of citizens' rights ✓ Protection of the rights of vulnerable groups, e.g. women, children and the poor ✓ Protection and tolerance of minorities and dissidents ✓ Civic and official awareness of human rights ✓ Civic legal demonstrations ✓ Citizens' rights to self-protection ✓ Citizen-led rights-safeguarding activities ✓ Legal assistance for citizens 			
3	Intra-party Democracy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Regulations on elections, decision-making processes and supervision of the CCP ✓ Election mechanisms of party leaders at various levels ✓ Democratic recommendation and appointment of cadres by party committees ✓ Function of party congresses at various levels ✓ Party committee deliberation and decision-making procedures ✓ Checks and balances within the CCP ✓ Transparency of party affairs ✓ Direct elections of party deputies ✓ Political consultation among the CCP and other democratic bodies in China 			

No.	Category	Main indicators	Main indicators	Figure (numeric)	Data source
4	Rule of Law	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Volume and quality of law-making activities ✓ Authority of the Constitution and laws ✓ Extent of governing the country by law ✓ Civic and official understanding and respect of laws ✓ Role of laws in real political life ✓ Independence and authority of legislation and jurisdiction ✓ Function of lawyers ✓ Civic and official awareness of law ✓ Legal review on government policies ✓ Implementation of judicial trials 			
5	Legitimacy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Citizens' identification with the Constitution ✓ Citizens' identification with the CCP and government ✓ Authority and practicability of laws ✓ Authority of the CCP and government ✓ Citizens' trust of grassroots governments ✓ Citizens' trust of local officials ✓ Citizens' satisfaction of the political status quo ✓ Citizens' recognition of the official ideology ✓ Citizens' attitudes toward their country's prospects 			
6	Social Justice	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Gini Coefficient ✓ Engel Coefficient ✓ Gap between urban and rural ✓ Regional development gaps ✓ Education equity ✓ Medicare equity ✓ Employment equity ✓ Female worker ratio in public sector ✓ Representation of party and government officials ✓ Representation of People's Congresses members and People's Political Consultative Conference members ✓ Equity of basic public services 			

No.	Category	Main indicators	Main indicators	Figure (numeric)	Data source
7	Social Stability	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Civilian military leadership ✓ Official ability to handle emergent events ✓ Citizens' sense of public security ✓ Continuity of policies ✓ Crime rate ✓ Inflation rate ✓ Conflicts in ethnic minority regions ✓ Number of collective riots ✓ Suicide rate ✓ Number of people who complain to higher authorities ✓ Citizens' sense of social crisis 			
8	Openness of Government Affairs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Laws and regulations on the transparency of official affairs and their effects ✓ Quantity and quality of political communication channels ✓ Transparency of decision-making processes ✓ Institutionalized transparency of administrative, judicial and procuratorate activities ✓ Citizens' knowledge of political affairs ✓ Freedom of press ✓ Citizens' rights and accesses to political information ✓ Authenticity and transparency of properties declaration by CCP and government officials 			
9	Administrative Effectiveness	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Administrative costs of government ✓ Administrative ability of the CCP and government officials ✓ Administrative efficiency ✓ Coordination among different CCP and government organs ✓ Probability of policy error ✓ ROI (return on investment) of public projects ✓ E-government (electronic government) ✓ Official ability of prompt reaction and response ✓ Citizen satisfaction with governmental decisions and administrative efficiency 			

No.	Category	Main indicators	Main indicators	Figure (numeric)	Data source
10	Accountability	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Officials' accountability ✓ Punishment of officials for breach of authority ✓ Communication channels between officials and citizens ✓ Officials' respect on civic opinion ✓ Mechanisms for the CCP and government to receive and respond to citizen demands ✓ Mechanisms of policy consultation and counsel for the CCP and government ✓ Policy feedback and adjustment by policy-making bodies ✓ Extent public policies reflect or represent citizen demands ✓ Impact of citizen opinions on government decision-making processes and output ✓ Volume and outcome of administrative litigations 			
11	Public Service	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Percentage of public service expenditure in government budget ✓ Status quo of basic social security ✓ Popularity rate of the nine-year compulsory and free education program ✓ Coverage of basic medical insurance ✓ Official assistance to the poor and disadvantaged ✓ Popularity rate of "one-stop" services ✓ Public infrastructure by the state ✓ Citizen satisfaction with public services provided by the government ✓ Official ecological governance and its effects 			

Governance Assessments

No.	Category	Main indicators	Main indicators	Figure (numeric)	Data source
12	Government Cleaness	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Anti-corruption laws and regulations and their effects ✓ Ratio of corrupt officials and corresponding punishment ✓ Economic audit on the CCP and governmental officials ✓ Supervision of the public budget ✓ Checks and balances of power ✓ Citizens' restriction on official power ✓ Media censorship ✓ Censorship of social forces, e.g. citizens' reporting ✓ Self-discipline of the CCP and government 			

Annex II: List of persons interviewed

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Professor He Zengke, Executive Director, CCCPE

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Professor Jia Xijin, Deputy Director, NGO Research Centre, Tsinghua University

Professor Mao Yushi, Director of Unirule

Professor Song Houze, Unirule

Professor Wang Ming, Director, NGO Research Centre, Tsinghua University

Professor Yu Keping, Director and Vice Minister, CCCPE

Professor Zhou Hongyun, Deputy Director, CCCPE

Professor Zhou Ye'an, People's University of China

Professor Zhou Zhiren, Professor, School of Government and Director, Centre for Public Sector Performance Management

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