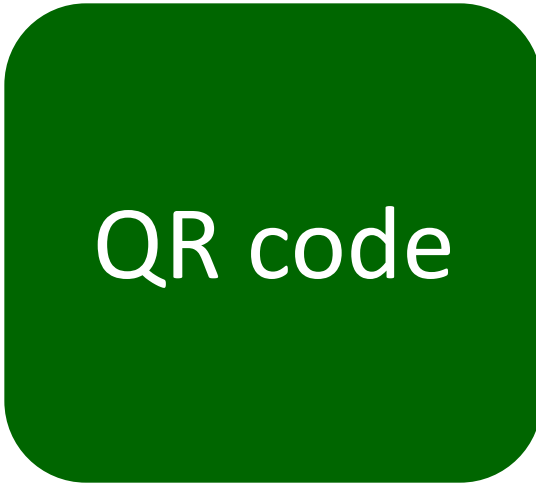




Building Capabilities for Green, Climate-resilient, and Inclusive Development in the Lower Koshi River Basin (HI-GRID) Project: Mid-Term Evaluation



Dr. Shankar Shrestha, Dr. Shikha Thapa Magar, Prof. Dr. Tara Nidhi Bhattarai, Binita Shahi, Ram Prasad Devkota, Dr. Divas B. Basnyat
Nepal Development Research Institute (NDRI), Sanepa, Lalitpur, Kathmandu, Nepal

1 Introduction

The “*Building Capabilities for Green, Climate-resilient, and Inclusive Development in the Lower Koshi River Basin*” (HI-GRID) project, implemented by ICIMOD with funding from DFAT (May 2023–April 2027) works across 28 municipalities in four watersheds to address risks of ‘Too Much and Too Little’ water. Its focus areas include DRR, nature-based solutions, pro-poor value chains, green enterprises, responsible tourism, and GEDSI.

NDRI conducted the Mid-Term Evaluation (covering May 2023–April 2025), which reviewed progress against planned outputs and outcomes, documented achievements, and highlighted areas for improvement. The evaluation also captured key lessons to strengthen implementation, strategy, and sustainability for the remainder of the project period.

2 Objectives

The mid-term evaluation (MTE) of the HI-GRID project’s purpose was to conduct an impartial assessment of the project's progress at its midpoint. The MTE was crucial for ensuring the HI-GRID project remains on track, adaptable, and effectively contributes to climate-resilient and inclusive development in the Lower Koshi River Basin (LKRB).

The specific objectives of MTE were:

- To assess progress against planned outcomes and outputs, identifying achievements, and areas requiring improvement.
- To identify key learnings to enhance project implementation, strategy, and sustainability.

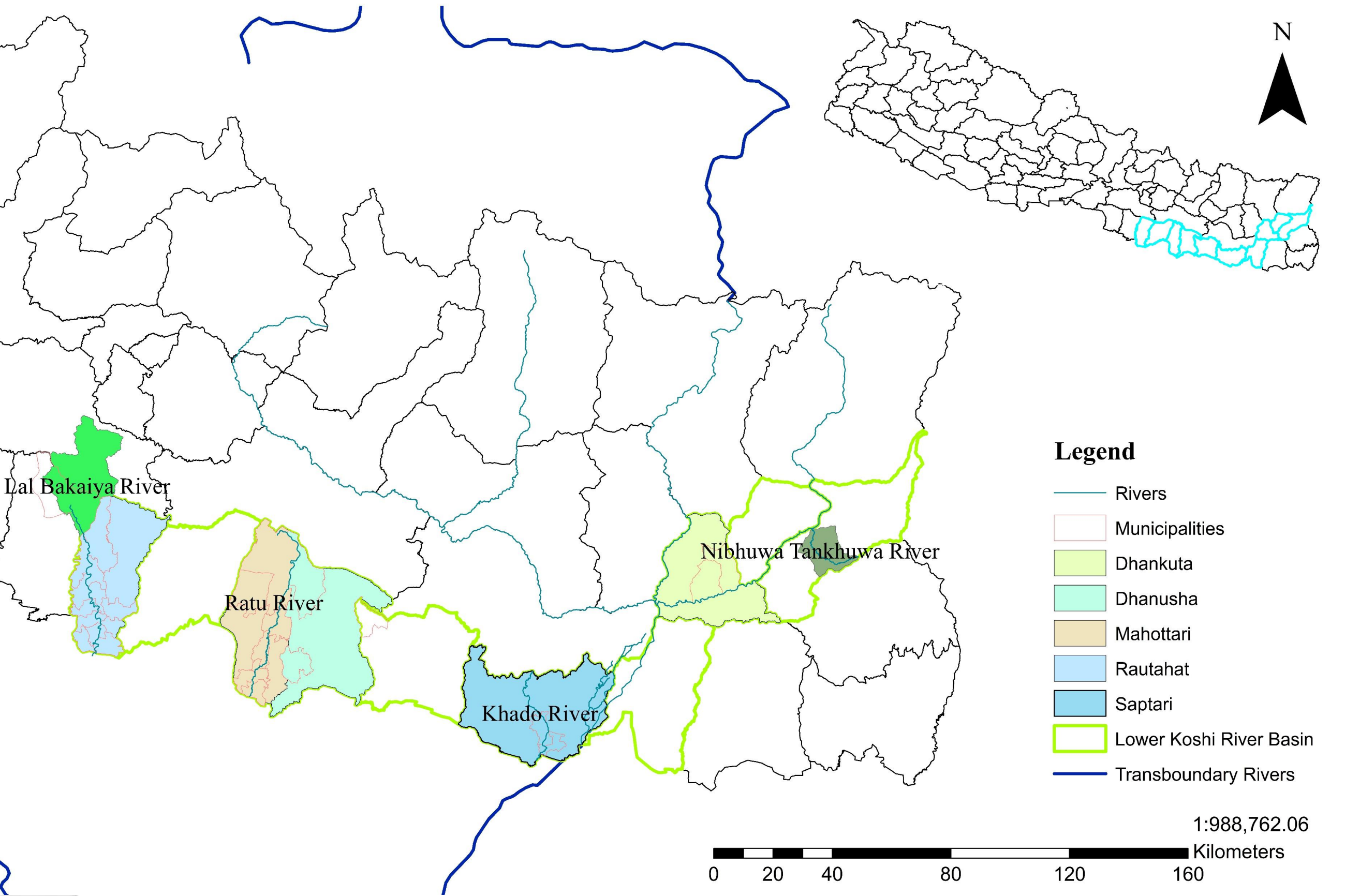
3 Study Coverage

The MTE focused on 12 selected municipalities across four watersheds in the Lower Koshi River Basin:

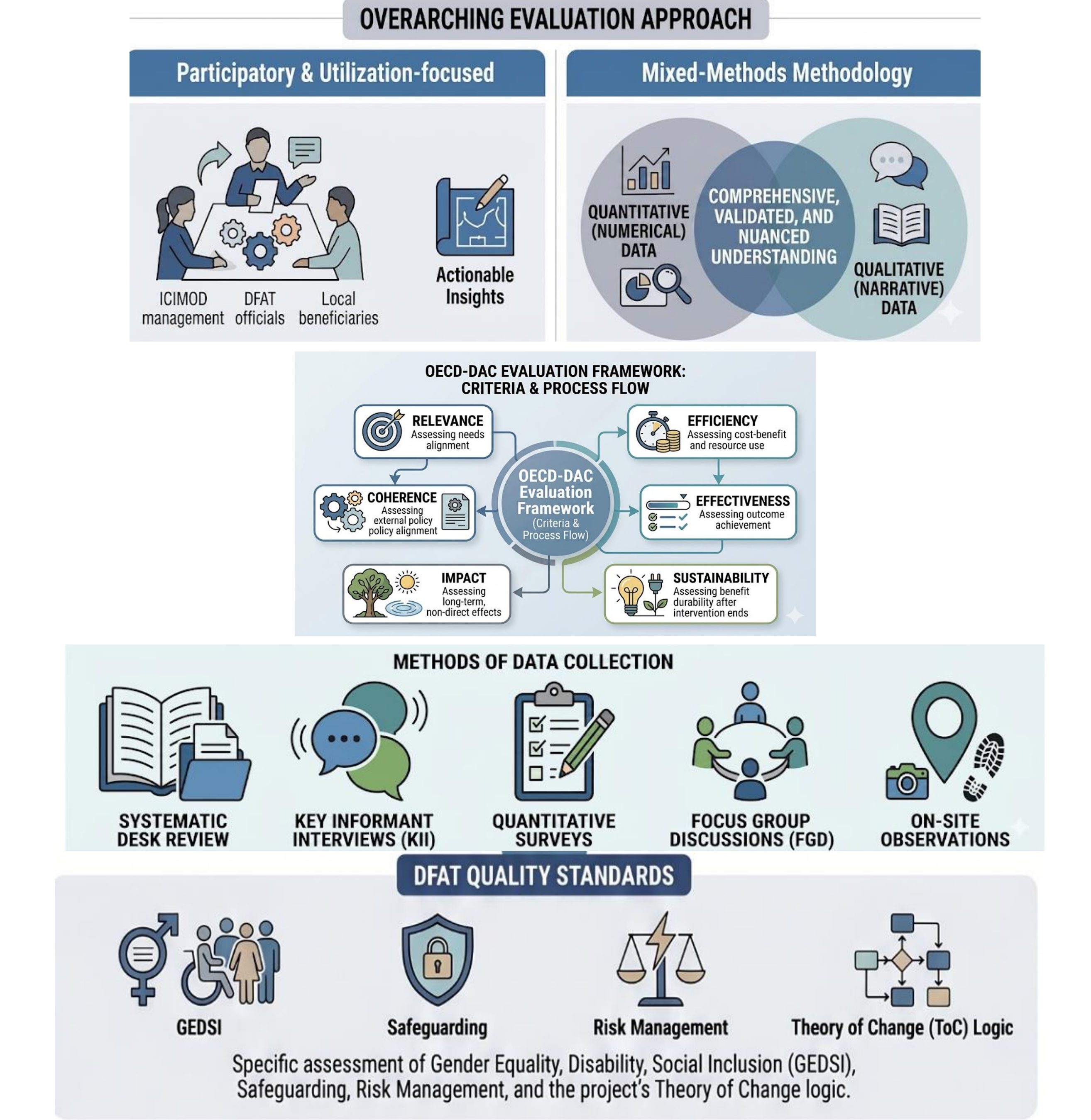
- Nibuwa-Tankhuwa Watershed: Dhankuta and Chhathar Jorpati.
- Lal Bakaiya Watershed: Gujara, Maulapur, Ishnath, and Gaur.
- Ratu Watershed: Bardibas, Balwa, Bhangaha, Janakpur, and Mithila.
- Khando Watershed: Tilathi Koiladi

Scope of the MTE

The evaluation covered the period from May 1, 2023 (the project start date) to April 30, 2025. Geographically, the evaluation focused on the municipalities under the four Intermediate Outcomes (IOs) of the four watersheds in Nepal's LKRB. The evaluation encompassed all project components, management structures, and partnerships, specifically aligned with the two End of Investment Outcomes and the four intended IOs and the respective expected outputs and activities that support the IOs.



4 Methodology



5 Key Activities

SYSTEMATIC DESK REVIEW	KEY INFORMANT INTERVIEWS (KII)	QUANTITATIVE BENEFICIARY SURVEYS	ON-SITE OBSERVATIONS	FOCUSED GROUP DISCUSSIONS (FGD)
01	60	83	7	4
Deep-dive analysis of project design documents, financial records, municipal annual plans, and internal monitoring data.	Targeted interviews with ICIMOD staff, municipal leaders (11+ sites), and private sector stakeholders.	Surveys conducted with project participants to measure satisfaction and impact across value chains, tourism, and water management.	Field visits to verify functionality of CBEWS, water recharge ponds, and community homestays (Dhankuta, Lal Bakaiya, Ratu, Khando Rivers).	Collective feedback sessions (10-13 participants each), prioritizing lived experiences of community members and marginalized groups.

6 Key Observations and Findings

Criteria	Key Evaluation Questions (KEQ)	Rating
Relevance	To what extent does the HI-GRID project align with primary stakeholders (women and marginalized communities in targeted municipalities) needs, municipal and national government priorities? How appropriate was the project design and is it still valid within the current situation?	High
Effectiveness	What progress has been made towards the project’s outputs, intermediate outcomes, and end of investment outcomes? How can the effectiveness of the project improved to deliver results in the remaining period?	Moderate to High
Efficiency	How well has the project delivered results from value for money perspectives? Or is the project making appropriate and efficient use of DFAT and ICIMOD’s time and resources to achieve outputs and expected outcomes?	Moderate to High
Coherence	To what extent does the HI-GRID project complement other similar programs and policies?	High
Sustainability and Impact	To what extent has the project established measures which can ensure sustainability and generate long term impacts? How can project improve its strategies for sustainability and impact?	Moderate to High sustainability High impact
GEDSI Considerations	How effectively are GEDSI principles integrated into the planning, execution, monitoring and follow up of the HI-GRID project? Has GEDSI analysis, including relevant consultations, cycled-back into the project for better implementation?	Moderate
Safeguarding and Risk Management	How effectively has ICIMOD been managing safeguarding and other project-related risks? Which aspects of its risk management approach require improvement?	Moderate for Safeguarding High for Risk Management
Theory of Change and Results Framework	How coherent and logical is the Theory of Change and Results Framework currently used by the project? How effectively do the indicators represent intended outcomes and outputs?	Moderate

7 Actionable Recommendations

- Institutionalize GEDSI & GRB:** Move beyond advocacy by embedding them into mandatory governance systems, supported with refresher training, coaching, and accountability mechanisms.
- Scale Nature-based Solutions (NbS):** Integrate water-smart practices and livelihood models into municipal systems, ensuring they are interconnected, accessible (including for persons with disabilities), and technically supported.
- Enforce GEDSI Implementation:** Treat GEDSI as a non-negotiable standard. Ensure inclusive participation, especially of persons with disabilities, and establish strong monitoring with mandatory follow-up actions when gaps are identified.
- Mainstream Safeguarding:** Standardize safeguarding principles across all municipalities by embedding them into training modules and communication materials.
- Institutionalize Tiered Support & Accountability:** Address uneven municipal capacity by tailoring support levels and holding leadership accountable for progress.
- Link Training to Mandatory Use:** Ensure capacity building translates into practice by requiring tools and providing sustained coaching, not one-off sessions.
- Promote Structured Peer-Learning:** Replace ad hoc replication with resourced peer-learning and systematic transfer of successful models

Acknowledgement:

International Centre for Integrated Mountain Development (ICIMOD)
Australian Government, Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade (DFAT)

