

Terminal Evaluation of UNEP Project “Coherent
Implementation of the Environmental Dimension of
Sustainable Development Goals at the Regional and National
Levels in the Pan-European Region”, SMA ID 41008
(2020 – 2023)



Evaluation Office of the United Nations Environment Programme

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Front cover: Picture showing Mountain Environment of North Macedonia

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Coherent implementation of the environmental dimension of Sustainable Development Goals at the regional and national levels in the Pan-European Region

SMA ID: 41008

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This Terminal Evaluation (TE) is conducted with the help of the project team. TE was participatory and was prepared for UNEP by Arun Rijal, as an external consultant following the Structure and Contents recommended by the UNEP Evaluation Office. All partners and stakeholders were very supportive and with their cooperation Everyone shared their time and ideas to make this review process a success.

I would like to thank Marianna Bolshakova, Project Manager; Erika Mattsson, Finance Manager; Leila Urekenova, Managing Officer and Mahir Aliyev, Project team member for taking their time to speak with me and sharing valuable information and providing further clarifications with regards to project development and execution. I would also like to thank Janet Wildish Senior Evaluation Officer and Karen Villafana, Evaluation Officer, from the UNEP Evaluation Office for their help with planning the evaluation, informing stakeholders (partners) and providing relevant documents. I would like to thank to all others that I communicated during the evaluation.

The views expressed in this report are intended to offer an overview of, and some of the lessons learned from this project. I have tried to balance my thoughts and to offer fair perspectives of what was learned from the people related to this project. I would like to thank once again all connected to this project and wish them every success in their continuing endeavors.

Evaluation Team

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Brief consultant biography

The Senior Consultant, Dr. Arun Rijal with M.Sc. in Botany, M.Sc. in Natural Resource Management and Ph.D. in Forestry, has expertise in Forestry, biodiversity, natural resource management, climate change, Protected Area management, project concept and proposal development, socio-economic research in relation to climate change, forestry etc., and impact assessment in mentioned field of expertise. Arun has extensive experience in GEF project evaluation, monitoring and development and have worked in more than 50 countries around the world.

His professional experience of more than 35 years were gained in project development, implementation, coordination, partnership, monitoring and evaluation of projects and proposal review of various UN and other international organisations, government institutions and academic research institutions. He was also member of High Level Climate Change Council and in that capacity, he contributed in programme and policy formulations and international negotiations. He has undertaken assignments for UNDP, FAO, UNEP, DANIDA, USAID and others and is very familiar and up-to-date with guidelines for undertaking Mid-term Reviews and Terminal Evaluations of GEF-supported projects.

About the Evaluation

Joint Review: No

Report Language: English

Review Type: Terminal Evaluation

Brief Description: This report is a Terminal Evaluation of a UNEP project implemented between 30 June 2021 and April 2023. The project's overall development goal was to strengthen the capacities of both national authorities and the relevant regional fora and process to integrate environmental dimension in the 2030 Agenda implementation. The evaluation sought to assess project performance (in terms of relevance, effectiveness and efficiency), and determine outcomes and impacts (actual and potential) stemming from the project, including their sustainability. The evaluation has two primary purposes: (i) to provide evidence of results to meet accountability requirements, and (ii) to promote learning, feedback, and knowledge sharing through results and lessons learned among UNEP, the donors and the relevant agencies of the project participating country.

Sources of Funding by Country: Norway, Switzerland, Israel

Sources of Funding by Institution Types:

Foundation/NGO	No
Private Sector	No
UN Body	Yes
Multilateral Fund	Yes
Environment Fund	Yes

Key words: Agenda 2030, nature-based solution (NBS), IBC, pan-European countries

Primary data collection period: 15 December 2024 to 15 January 2025 (virtual interviews)

Field mission dates: No Field mission involved.

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List of acronyms

CAP	Climate Action Plan
CCA	Common Country Analysis
CCA	Climate Change Adaptation
CCRA	Climate Change Risk Assessment
CEP	Committee on Environment Policy
DCO	Development Coordination Office
DKM	Nature Conservation Centre of Turkey
EA	Executing Agency
ECE	United Economic Commission for Europe
ECIBC	Environmental and Climate Change Integrated Business Case
EESC	European Environment and Social Committee
EfE	Environment for Europe
ESD	Education for Sustainable Development
EU	European Union
EYE	European Youth Event
FAO	Food and Agriculture Organisation
FMO	Fund Management Officer
GEN	Geneva Environment Network
GEF	Global Environment Facility
HRC	Human Right Commission
ICSD	Interstate Commission on Sustainable Development
IBC	Issue Based Coalition
IE	Implementing Entity
IP	Implementing Partner
IPU	Inter-Parliamentary Union
LCEI	Life cycle-wide environmental impacts
M&E	Monitoring and Evaluation
MASHAV	Israel's Agency for International Development Cooperation at Israel's Ministry of Foreign Affairs
MEA	Multilateral Environmental Agreement

MoU	Memorandum of Understanding
MTR	Mid-term Review
MTS	Medium-Term Strategy
NbS	Nature-based Solution
OECD	Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development
PIM	Project Implementation Manual
PM	Project Manager
PMC	Project Management Cost
PMU	Project Management Unit
POW	Programme of Work
ProDoc	Project Document
PSC	Project Steering Committee
RC	UN Resident Coordinator at Country level
RCO	Resident Coordinator's Office
SDCF	UN Sustainable Development Cooperation Framework at Country level
SDFSs	Sustainable Development Framework Strategies
SDG	Sustainable Development Goals
SIDA	Swiss International Development Cooperation Agency
SMART	Specific, Measurable, Accurate, Realistic, Time-bound
SQ	Strategic Question
TE	Terminal Evaluation
TM	Task Manager
ToC	Theory of Change
ToR	Term of Reference
UN	United Nations
UNCT	UN Country Team
UNDA	United Nations Development Assistance
UNDCO	United Nations Development Coordination Office
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
UNDT	United Nations Dispute Tribunal
UNDT	United Nations Development Team

UNEA	United Nations Environment Assembly
UNECE	United Nations Economic Commission for Europe
UNEG	United Nations Evaluation Group
UNEP	United Nations Environment Programme
UNESCO	United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation
UNMIK	United Nations Mission to Kosovo
UNWTO	United Nations World Tourism Organisation
UNSDCF	United Nations Sustainable Development Cooperation Framework
USD or US\$	United States Dollar
VCT	Virtual Country Team
WECF	Women in Europe for Common Future
WHO	World Health Organization

Project identification

Table 1: Project Identification Table

UNEP SMA ID ¹ :	41008		
Implementing Agency (UNEP Division/Branch/Unit):	UNEP Europe Office	Executing Agency:	N/A
Sources of Funding (Co-finance):	Countries²: Norway, Switzerland, Israel	Institution³ Name/Type: UNDA, SIDA, OECD	
Relevant SDG(s):	SDG 1. 7.14 - Enhance policy coherence for sustainable development. Indicator 1 7.14.1. SDG 17.16 - Enhance the Global Partnership for Sustainable Development, complemented by multi-stakeholder partnerships that mobilize and share knowledge, expertise, technology and financial resources, to support the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals in all countries. Indicator 17.16.1. SDG 17.1 7 - Encourage and promote effective public, public-private and civil society partnerships, building on the experience and resourcing strategies of partnerships. Indicator 17.17.1.		
MTS (at approval):	MTS 2018-21; 2021-2023	UNEP approval date:	30/09/2020
POW Direct Outcome(s) number/reference <i>(applicable for projects approved from 2022):</i>	POW Direct Outcome:	MTS 2025 Outcome(s) number/reference <i>(applicable for projects approved from 2022):</i>	MTS 2025 Outcome:
OR POW Output(s) number/reference <i>(applicable for projects approved pre-2022)</i>	POW Output: EA (a) Output 1, Output 2, Output 6 EA (b) Output 2, Output 3,		POW Expected Accomplishment:
		OR POW Expected Accomplishment(s) number/reference <i>(applicable for projects approved pre-2022):</i>	Subprogramme 4: Environmental Governance EA (a) (i); EA (b) (ii)
Sub-programme:	Environment Governance	Programme Coordination Project:	N/A
UNEP approval date:	30/09/2020		
Expected start date:	September 2020	Actual start date:	October 2020
Planned completion date:	December 2021	Actual operational completion date:	30 June 2023
Planned total project budget at approval:	USD 1,716,927	Actual total expenditures reported as of 28/11/24	USD 2,212,458
Expected Medium-Size Project/Full-Size Project co-financing:	Cash: In-kind: USD 396,780	Secured Medium-Size Project/Full-Size Project co-financing:	Cash: In-kind: USD 957,494

¹ SMA refers to the ID provided by the Integrated Planning, Management and Reporting Solution (IPMR) system, which was introduced by UNEP in July 2023.

² Where applicable, list countries who have provided project funds and/or co-finance.

³ Indicate where funding institutions are any/all of the following: Foundation/NGO; Private Sector; UN Body; Multilateral Fund; Environment Fund.

No. and dates of formal project revisions:	1	Date of last approved project revision:	20 December 2021
No. of Steering Committee meetings:	N/A	Date of Last Steering Committee meeting:	No Steering Committee established
Mid-term Review/ Evaluation budgeted:	N/A ⁴	Mid-term Review/ Evaluation (actual date):	N/A
Terminal Evaluation (planned date):	December 2021	Terminal Evaluation (actual date):	Nov 2024-Feb 2025
Coverage - Country(ies):	EU and other West Europe: Andorra, Austria, Belgium, Bulgaria, Cyprus, Chechnya, Denmark, Estonia, Finland, France, Germany, Greece, Hungary, Iceland, Ireland, Italy, Latvia, Liechtenstein, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Malta, Monaco, Netherlands, Norway, Poland, Portugal, Romania, San Marino, Slovakia, Slovenia, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland, United Kingdom. Eastern Europe: Belarus, Moldova, Ukraine. South- East Europe: Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia, Kosovo (UNMIK), Montenegro, North Macedonia, Serbia. South Caucasus: Armenia, Azerbaijan, Georgia. Central Asia: Kazakhstan, Kyrgyz Republic, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan, Uzbekistan. Israel. Russian Federation. Turkey	Coverage - Region(s):	Europe
Dates of previous project phases:	N/A	Status of future project phases:	N/A

⁴ UNEP does not require MTR for projects under four years of implementation.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Project background

1. This project was developed to promote a more coherent and integrated approach to Implementation of the Environmental Dimension of Sustainable Development goals and the implementation of Agenda 2030 at the regional and national Levels in the pan-European Region. The project document, which was approved by UNEP on 30 September 2020, was designed for an 18-month period with a total planned budget of US\$ 1,716,927, which included in-kind contributions of US\$ 396,780. The actual total secured budget amounted to US\$ 2,229,856, with in-kind contributions reaching US\$ 957,494. The initial project duration was set from September 2020 to December 2021, but it was subsequently revised to span from January 2022 to June 2023. This extension was necessitated by the reform of the UNEP delivery model and the restrictions imposed by COVID-19, which impacted the implementation of several activities. This multi-donor funded project was implemented by UNEP in 54 countries from the pan-European Region, including West-Europe, Eastern Europe, South-East Europe, South Caucasus and Central Asia.

This Evaluation

2. This Terminal Evaluation (TE) of the project is conducted by an independent consultant and Evaluation was initiated on 1 November 2024. The evaluation was carried out in alignment with the principles set forth in the United Nations Evaluation Group (UNEG) "Ethical Guidelines for Evaluation." The assessments were characterized by independence, impartiality, and thoroughness, with the evaluator upholding both personal and professional integrity. In alignment with UNEP Evaluation Office guidelines, the evaluation consultant rated the project based on various criteria including strategic relevance, external context, effectiveness, financial management, efficiency, sustainability, and performance-affecting factors, utilizing the Evaluation Office's weighted ratings scale. The table below (table 2) presents a summary assessment of the project's performance.

Key Findings

3. The project aligns with the UNEP Programme of Work (PoW) Outcomes for 2020-2021 (a) & (b) and the PoW for 2022-2023 Outcomes 1 (A), 2 (A), 3 (A), 1 (B), 2 (B), 3 (B), 1 (C), 2 (C), and 3 (C), and is directly linked to Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) 17.14, 17.16, and 17.17.

4. The majority of planned outputs were successfully completed, including technical support to regional fora, enhanced participation in United Nations Environment Assembly (UNEA) processes, and the development of awareness tools for post-COVID recovery. It exceeded targets for several outputs. For instance, more than the targeted number of national stakeholders accessed guidance on integrating environmental considerations in post-COVID recovery (Output 1D). It also exceeded the targets for enhanced engagement of European countries and major groups in UNEA5 (Output 1C).

5. UNEP has utilized this project to create and enhance a successful model for engaging with the UN system at the grassroots level, thereby improving its capacity to address the environmental dimensions of the SDGs in a coordinated manner across multiple sectors regionally and nationally. The Issue-Based Coalition on Environment and Climate Change (IBC)

has enabled the participation of 18 UN agencies, spearheaded by UNEP, United Nations Economic Commission for Europe (UNECE), and United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation (UNESCO), to better integrate environmental and climate considerations into UN programming at the country level. For example, the project has strengthened individual country programming documents, and the Issue Based Coalition (IBC) has produced practical materials that have aided UN Country Team (UNCTs) in ensuring the integration of environmental issues across Sustainable Development Framework Strategies (SDFSs), Common Country Analysis (CCA), and joint programmes.

6. This initiative has also advanced the UN reform process by fostering a cohesive delivery system through collaborations with various UN agencies, particularly in efforts such as supporting regional environmental forums and the IBC on Environment and Climate Change. Furthermore, the project has informed the development of several Sustainable Development Cooperation Frameworks (SDCFs) and other country programming documents. It has established an effective model demonstrating that non-resident UN agencies can also contribute significantly to in-country delivery in a collaborative and transparent manner. For example, the project, trained several hundred UN personnel in integrating environment in sustainable development planning and implementation.

7. The initiative advanced inclusive and cohesive strategies aimed at enhancing the environmental aspect of sustainable development and the execution of Agenda 2030, both at the regional and national levels within the Pan-European region. It played a significant role in fortifying environmental policy across regional, sub-regional, and national tiers by ensuring the integration of environmental considerations into sustainable development policies. At the regional and sub-regional levels, the project facilitated the incorporation of contemporary environmental challenges into regional policy frameworks, such as the Regional Ministerial Confederacy “Environment for Europe” and the sub-regional policy platform of the Interstate Commission on Sustainable Development in Central Asia. Furthermore, it fostered alignment between the priorities established by the UNEA and the environmental policies and actions within the European Union (EU), promoting high-level collaboration and joint action with EU institutions.

8. The Geneva Environment Network (GEN) served as a platform for the project to connect with numerous essential stakeholders in Geneva. This opportunity was also leveraged to enhance GEN's outreach at both regional and global levels through the execution of online and hybrid events. Additionally, this initiative contributed to the promotion of significant objectives within the global environmental agenda to a wide array of audiences, including the diplomatic community, UN agencies, civil society organizations, businesses, governmental institutions, and academic entities. Some of the examples of some of these initiatives include the Pollution-Chemicals and Waste Negotiations Briefing, Science to Zero Pollution Actions, and International Legally Binding Instrument on Plastic Pollution.

9. The project faced some shortcomings. In the inception phase, a planned steering committee and inception workshop were never convened, potentially limiting coordination and early alignment. The initial Theory of Change did not include gender or human rights elements, and these aspects were not consistently mainstreamed in project activities. Although human rights and gender were not at the forefront of the project design, many of the project outputs promoted gender and human rights during implementation. While the project worked across 54 countries, tailored engagement could not be extended to all due to funding constraints. In

addition, COVID-19 and political circumstances led to postponements, which necessitated project extension from the initial timeline.

10. The sustainability of the project's results is assessed as likely. The institutional sustainability of the project is promising, as many outputs, such as regional platforms and policy frameworks, are embedded within ongoing UN processes, national strategies, and existing networks like the GEN. Socio-political sustainability is supported by strong government ownership and alignment with national priorities, though more comprehensive stakeholder engagement would strengthen long-term impact. In addition, the majority of the project activities are expected to persist beyond the project's conclusion, facilitated by the partners' ongoing initiatives,

11. In addressing the key strategic questions, the evaluator determined that the project's activities have been successfully completed and have played a significant role in improving the circumstances of environmental defenders within the project's governance area. This achievement was made possible through collaboration with partners and resources from Norway and Swiss International Development Cooperation Agency (SIDA) (Strategic Question 1). Concerning Strategic Question 2, the project has contributed to the integration of environmental considerations into Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) initiatives, aligning with the efforts of UNEP at both corporate and global levels through the Development Coordination Unit of the Policy and Programme Division. Furthermore, in relation to Strategic Question 3, the project leveraged UNEP's expertise and knowledge, as well as insights gained from the pilot activities conducted prior to the project's implementation, to inform its execution and adaptive management strategies.

Conclusion

12. Although the implementation of the project faced delays due to COVID-19 restrictions and various political factors, it successfully completed the majority of the planned activities, with only two being reprioritized. Some of the outcomes were achieved by the project. The partner organization (Interstate Commission on Sustainable Development (ICSD) and UNCT) promptly executed the prioritized activities following the conclusion of the project. In addition to fulfilling all targeted activities, the project also undertook additional initiatives (e.g. Outputs 1D & 2A). The project made a significant contribution to the development of policies and programs aimed at integrating environmental considerations into the execution of Agenda 2030. The forums established by this project will persist beyond its duration, offering knowledge-sharing opportunities to support countries. Furthermore, the partnerships formed will continue even after the project's conclusion. The primary factor behind the project's success is the commitment demonstrated by all team members from UNEP, other UN agencies, and partner organizations, including the governmental partners from the involved countries.

Table 2: Summary of project ratings

Criterion	Rating
Strategic Relevance	HS
Quality of Project Design	S
Nature of External Context	F
Effectiveness	S

Criterion	Rating
Financial Management	S
Efficiency	S
Monitoring and Reporting	S
Sustainability	L
Factors Affecting Performance	S
Overall Project Performance Rating	S

Lessons Learned

- Direct engagement of UNCTs to support country level interventions is essential. Since there will be large number of requests related to environmental inputs, clear prioritization should be maintained to enable effective intervention within available resources.
- Coordination and partnerships with relevant UN agencies will not only assure quality of outcomes but also best utilize resources and economies costs. But depending upon the nature of the activities, it may also be wise to build partnership with other agencies for outsourcing expertise.
- Activities with limited fund could not be run as project and also difficult to implement. When such small activities with small budget were brought under one umbrella and managed by a committed team helped implementation with limited budget successfully without compromising in quality of outputs.

Recommendations

Design

1. UNEP should develop a communications mechanism through which countries could bring issues, and UNEP could quickly access and initiate projects.
2. UNEP should provision sustainable funding in the projects which include mostly corporate activities.
3. UNEP should provision some budget to regional offices for corporate activities in the region.

Management

4. UNEP should disseminate knowledge gained from implementation of NbS to wide range of audiences so that large number of institutions working in such field could benefit.

Strategic

5. UNEP and its partners should continue cooperation and partnership in all future projects. This would help utilise known partners' expertise and could help reduce costs.

6. UNEP should consider designing and implementing a follow-up project to collaborate with the key project partners and governments to ensure that the project goals are fully achieved.
7. UNEP should enhance its project monitoring systems by revising project results frameworks to explicitly link outputs to outcomes, and by including mandatory gender- and stakeholder-disaggregated indicators.
8. UNEP should develop and implement a sustainability and exit strategy for each multi-stakeholder platform supported by the project including defined governance structures, long-term funding plans (e.g., through donor matchmaking or host country cost-sharing), and transition roadmaps to ensure that platforms can continue independently post-project.

Details of the recommendations are provided in the Conclusions Section.

1 INTRODUCTION

13. The project was implemented in the 54 countries, from West Europe, Eastern Europe, South-East Europe, South Caucasus and Central Asia. This project implementation started in October 2020 and ended in June 2023). The project implementation was overseen by the Project Manager with guidance from the Regional Director and Deputy Director and the support of the fund manager of UNEP. Individual components related to specific outputs were led by UNEP Europe Office staff. The UNEP Europe Office had established partnership with UNECE, UNESCO and other 17 organisations (see table 5). The Project Review Committee (PRC) approval date was 22 July 2020.

14. Following the adoption of the 2030 Agenda in 2015, nations and regions have begun to establish the necessary frameworks for the implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). However, a significant challenge they encounter is the application of a cohesive approach that encompasses all aspects of sustainable development. This project focused on strengthening the capacities of countries to incorporate the environmental dimension into sustainable development efforts.

15. The project was implemented by the UNEP Europe Office based in Geneva. It was implemented in 54 European countries (EU and West Europe: Andorra, Austria, Belgium, Bulgaria, Cyprus, Czechia, Denmark, Estonia, Finland, France, Germany, Greece, Hungary, Iceland, Ireland, Italy, Latvia, Liechtenstein, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Malta, Monaco, Netherlands, Norway, Poland, Portugal, Romania, San Marino, Slovakia, Slovenia, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland, United Kingdom; from East Europe: Belarus, Moldova, Ukraine ; from South-East Europe: Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia, Kosovo (UNMIK), Montenegro, North Macedonia, Serbia; from South Caucasus: Armenia, Azerbaijan, Georgia; and from Central Asia: Kazakhstan, Kyrgyz Republic, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan, Uzbekistan, Israel, Russian Federation, Turkey). However, due to funding constraints, it was not feasible to engage all stakeholders with tailored activities within the scope of this project. The project was implemented from October 2020 to June 2023. The approved project budget was US\$1,716,927, including funding from Norway, Switzerland, Israel, SIDA, OECD, and UNDA. The actual secured budget was US\$1,903,274, including with in-kind contributions of US\$957,494.

16. The project contributed to UNEP's Medium-Term Strategy (MTS) for 2018-2021 under the Environmental Governance Subprogramme. It was expected to contribute the Programme of Work 2019-2021, Environmental Governance expected accomplishment (a) The international community increasingly converges on common and integrated approaches to achieve environmental objectives and implement the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, and expected accomplishment (b) Institutional capacities and policy and/or legal frameworks enhanced to achieve internationally agreed environmental goals, including the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the Sustainable Development Goals.

17. In line with UNEP Evaluation Policy and the UNEP Programme and Project Management Manual, the evaluation was undertaken at operational completion of the project to assess performance (in terms of relevance, effectiveness and efficiency), and determine outcomes and impacts (actual and potential) stemming from the project, including their sustainability. The evaluation has two primary purposes: (i) to provide evidence of results to meet accountability requirements, and (ii) to promote operational improvement, learning and knowledge sharing through results and lessons learned. The main target audiences for the evaluation findings are UNEP, the 54 project countries and the EU.

2 EVALUATION METHODS

19. The Terminal Evaluation (TE) addressed pre-defined evaluation criteria as per UNEP's evaluation policy.

20. The TE also addressed three strategic questions (SQ), which are listed below:

- Q1. Were resources from Norway/SIDA secured to address the situation of environmental defenders in the region under the project area governance project portfolio Project Area 6 Environmental Rights Initiative? If so, how was this situation addressed?
- Q2. To what extent did this regional project feed into the work carried out by UNEP at corporate and global level through the Policy and Programme Division's Development Coordination Unit in relation to enhancing the integration of the environmental considerations into the SDG work?
- Q3. To what extent did the project include best practices from other UNEP regional offices implementing similar projects or activities during project implementation and adaptive management?

2.1 Data Collection Methods

21. The TE employed an evaluation design consisting of the following data collection methods: desk review and interviews.

22. The TE used a participatory approach whereby key stakeholders were kept informed and consulted throughout the evaluation process. The evaluation consultant maintained close communication with the project team and promoted information exchange throughout the evaluation implementation phase in order to increase their (and other stakeholder) ownership of the evaluation findings. Both quantitative and qualitative evaluation methods were used as appropriate to determine project achievements against the expected outputs, outcomes and impacts. The TE analysed progress made by the project and also analysed financial aspects of the project.

23. The findings of the evaluation were based on the following:

A desk review of (see Annex IV for a full list of documents consulted)

- Project Document and appendices, and project revisions
- Operational project closure report
- Project progress reports (IPMR), project concept note, country assessment reports, country program documents
- Annual workplans and budget information
- The logical framework and its budget, and revised budget information
- Reports, baseline papers, proposals developed by the implementing partners
- Gender round table discussion paper
- Georgia-UNSDCF- Declaration of Commitment

Interviews (individual and in group)

- UNEP Task Manager (TM), Fund Manager (FM)
- Project Manager (PM) and Coordinators of some programs
- Representatives from partner organizations
- Government representatives, consultants, municipality representatives,
- INGO, University representative

24. Individuals selected for interview included representatives from all sectors involved in the project implementation including the Implementing Agency, executing partners, supporting I/NGOs, university, consultants, municipalities, government ministries, etc. The evaluator requested virtual interviews from 43 individuals (the main stakeholders involved in the project) but only 18 individuals responded and were interviewed. One stakeholder was not available for interview but provided brief information by email.

Table 3: Evaluation respondents

Target Respondents - Individuals			A. # people involved in project Total (M/F)	B.# people contacted Total (M/F)	Sample size (% B/A) ⁵	C. # people responded Total (M/F)	Response rate (% C/B) ⁶
Project Team	Project Team those with management responsibilities	UNEP	28	28	100%	13	46.2%
Beneficiaries	Direct Beneficiaries: (e.g. duty bearers, gatekeepers, training participants, etc.)		12	12	100%	2	16.7%
	Indirect Beneficiaries: (e.g. household members, civil society representatives, group members, etc.)						
Target Respondents - Entities			A. # entities involved in project	B.# entities contacted	Sample size (% B/A) ⁷	C. # entities responded	Response rate (% C/B) ⁸
Partners	Project implementing/ executing partners (receiving project funds)		6	6	100%	0	0%
	Project collaborating/ contributing partners ⁹ (not receiving project fund)		7	7	100%	5	71.4%

Note: Implementing partners were: University of Geneva, Ministry of Education and Culture of Cyprus, Ministry of Ecology of Uzbekistan, Ministry of Ecology of Kazakhstan, Municipality of Belgrade, Municipality of Turkey and WECF. Project collaborating/contributing partners were: WHO, UNECE, UN DCO, UNDP (Turkey), Greater Amman Municipality and Gaziantep Municipality.

25. In the course of this evaluation and the preparation of the Final Evaluation Report, efforts have been undertaken to reflect the perspectives of both mainstream and marginalized groups. Data collection was conducted with a strong emphasis on ethical considerations and human rights. The evaluator ensured that discussions remained confidential, and that all data was gathered in accordance with the UN Standards of Conduct.

2.2 Data Analysis

26. The project's strategic importance was assessed to evaluate its alignment with the UNEP MTS, Programme of Work (PoW), and strategic priorities, as well as its compatibility with donor objectives and its relevance to environmental priorities at regional, sub-regional, and national levels. Furthermore, the project was analysed for its complementarity with ongoing initiatives. The design of the project was carefully examined to ensure it corresponds with the priorities of the country, donors, UNEP MTS, PoW, and strategic goals, while also taking into account its relevance

⁵ Calculated as the percentage of people who were contacted out of the total number of people involved in the project.

⁶ Calculated as the percentage of people who responded out of the total number of people contacted.

⁷ Calculated as the percentage of entities who were contacted out of the total number of entities involved in the project.

⁸ Calculated as the percentage of entities who responded out of the total number of entities contacted.

⁹ Contributing partners may be providing resources as either cash or in-kind inputs (e.g. staff time, office space etc.).

to environmental priorities across various levels, financial planning, risk identification, logical framework, monitoring plan, governance, supervision, partnerships, and communication and outreach strategies. Insights regarding the external context were collected from individuals involved in the project's execution mainly from UNEP, executing partners from Israel and Turkey and few consultants who were involved in the project activities, to identify any unexpected events that arose during implementation. The information on status of the progress of the project was collected from the Operational Project Closure Report, PIMS and other project related documents and verified from individuals from UNEP who were responsible supervising different activities and also from the few available experts and consultants of executing partners. To assess effectiveness, the outputs generated by the project were compared to the approved plans and budget, evaluating the nature and scale of these outputs against project indicators and targets, as well as their timeliness, quality, and usefulness for beneficiaries. Additionally, the outcomes were analysed by reviewing the adoption of outputs by beneficiaries, the nature, depth, and scale of outcomes in relation to project indicators and targets and discussing the contribution and credible association of changes at the outcome level to the project's activities. The potential for impact was evaluated through discussions with personnel from the implementing agency (i.e. UNEP) and consultants involved in the project regarding the drivers and assumptions involved, the emergence of causal pathways, and the roles of key actors and change agents. Financial management was assessed based on information provided by the finance manager and project staff concerning adherence to UNEP's policies and procedures, as well as the completeness of project financial documentation.

27. The consultant obtained documentary evidence, scheduled meetings with stakeholders with assistance from the Project Manager, Senior Evaluation Officer and Evaluation Manager. The Project Manager and the project team, where possible, provided information and documents allowing the Evaluation Consultant to conduct the evaluation as efficiently and independently as possible. The Evaluation Consultant was responsible, in close consultation with the Evaluation Manager, for overall management of the evaluation and timely delivery of following deliverables:

- Inception Report: containing confirmation of the results framework and Theory of Change of the project, project stakeholder analysis, evaluation framework and a tentative evaluation schedule.
- Preliminary Findings Note: typically, in the form of a PowerPoint presentation, the sharing of preliminary findings to support the participation of the project team, act as a means to ensure all information sources have been accessed and provide an opportunity to verify emerging findings. Due to time constraints this was not shared
- Draft and Final Evaluation Reports: containing an Executive Summary that can act as a stand-alone document; detailed analysis of the evaluation findings organized by evaluation criteria and supported with evidence; lessons learned and recommendations and an annotated ratings table.

2.3 Limitations

28. The evaluation consultant had difficulties finding several relevant persons involved in the project especially from the executing partners because the project had been completed two years prior, and many stakeholders had left the project and joined other offices. The consultant emailed all relevant stakeholders but only a few responded and were available for interviews. This limitation was discussed with the evaluation manager, and she asked for assistance from the Task Manager who contacted some of the stakeholders with a request to respond. This effort helped obtain responses from a few more stakeholders. Similarly, it was difficult to find several relevant documents for evaluation of the project. The Task Manager, who was given responsibility to support

evaluation was new as she joined after project completion and was not familiar with many of the project documents and processes. The project manager later provided some documents related to the project. In addition, some of the stakeholders that were interviewed had difficulty recalling project activities' details as it had been many years since their involvement. The evaluation consultant was only able to interview representatives from Turkey and Israel. Representatives from other implementing partner states were not available for interview. To compensate, information for other countries was obtained from reports, PIMS and information provided by UNEP team members.

3 THE PROJECT

3.1 Context

29. The Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) represent a global call to action aimed at eradicating poverty, safeguarding the planet, and enhancing the quality of life and opportunities for all individuals by the year 2030. These 17 Goals were endorsed by all United Nations Member States in 2015 as part of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, which outlines a 15-year framework for achieving these objectives. Consequently, the primary responsibility for executing the 2030 Agenda rests with the Member States. This Agenda is founded on the principle that the three critical dimensions of sustainable development—economic, social, and environmental—are interdependent. Recognizing the interconnected nature of the world, which is shaped by shared natural resources, historical relationships, and geopolitical influences at both regional and sub-regional levels, it promotes regional cooperation in advancing the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). This approach ensures that the environmental aspect is integrated into the development policies, plans, and programs across all sectors.

30. The coherent and integrated approach requires focused efforts to ensure that regional and sub-regional environmental priorities are consistently aligned with sustainable development initiatives and the goals established in relevant global processes. Achieving this alignment demands contributions from high-level experts and advocacy at all pertinent regional forums. It is also crucial to continually enhance the policy linkages between SDGs and global and regional Multilateral Environmental Agreements (MEAs). However, countries and regional platforms face challenges in implementing a comprehensive approach across all facets of sustainable development. Consequently, the overall effectiveness of achieving SDGs, including planning, is undermined, as the environmental aspect and related global environmental priorities and commitments are not sufficiently represented. This challenge is exacerbated by the fragility and lack of integration of national environmental authorities within national institutional frameworks, along with a general lack of awareness among other key stakeholders, such as legislators. Additionally, country teams often do not possess the necessary policy and technical expertise to adequately address the environmental dimension in their programming responses.

31. This initiative was developed based on the efforts undertaken in the Project Preparation Proposal that received approval in October 2019. Key areas of focus were determined at the regional level, particularly concerning the proposed platform for nature-based solutions. The project preparation phase also identified four priority countries (Turkey, Jordan, Uzbekistan, Kazakhstan) for targeted national assistance, aiming to pilot specific engagement methodologies and expand these efforts in a concentrated manner across a select yet representative group of countries within the region. There was significant collaboration with government entities and UN country teams to emphasize the environmental aspect in national programming. Various stakeholders, including the judiciary and civil society—especially environmental defenders—play a crucial role in the sustainable integration of environmental considerations into national development.

32. The pan-European region encompasses countries with varying levels of development, economic structures, cultural backgrounds, and governance systems. Effective environmental management and sustainability in this region can be achieved through multi-level governance frameworks that leverage shared river basins, ecosystems, and centres of expertise. A strategic development approach that adequately incorporates environmental and social factors is best facilitated through regional and sub-regional initiatives, which offer the necessary political impetus and oversight for national efforts. The countries in this region have a longstanding tradition of collaboration on economic, social, and environmental issues, creating a conducive environment

for the implementation of the 2030 Agenda through established institutional mechanisms such as regional forums and agreements at both regional and sub-regional levels.

33. To tackle the issues associated with environmental concerns countries and regions are making the necessary arrangements to implement the SDGs while facing the challenges of adopting an integrated approach across all facets of sustainable development. Consequently, this project has been designed with the aim of enhancing the capabilities of both national authorities and relevant regional forums and processes to incorporate the environmental dimension into the implementation of the 2030 Agenda. The mission of UNEP is to provide leadership and promote partnerships in protecting the environment, so its role in this project was to emphasize the importance of the environment in the coherent integration of environment within the 2030 Agenda at global, regional, and national levels

3.2 Results Framework

Table 4: Results Framework as presented in the approved Project Revision, 2021

Project Objective: To strengthen the capacities of both national authorities and the relevant regional fora and processes to integrate environmental dimension in the 2030 Agenda implementation.			
Intermediate Outcome 1: Coherent implementation of the environmental dimension of SDGs and MEAs at the regional, sub-regional and national levels.			
Intermediate Outcome 2: Informed decision making, communication and advocacy based on scientific evidence.			
Outcome 1	Indicators	Baseline	Target
Outcome 1: Decision makers at regional and sub-regional levels increasingly incorporate the environmental dimension, including goals established under global, regional and sub-regional MEAs and processes, in the regional sustainable development policies	Processes and their relevant output documents produced by policy makers at regional level have an enhanced integrated approach and better incorporate the environmental dimension into the implementation of the Agenda 2030 due to inputs under the project	0	4
Outputs	Indicators	Baseline	Target
Output 1A. Technical support provided to regional fora to integrate environmental considerations in sustainable development	Number of documents which are considered and/or agreed by the regional intergovernmental fora to which technical input is provided by UNEP to ensure that the environmental dimension is sufficiently addressed	0	6
	Enhanced expert and government representation at meetings of the Interstate Commission on Sustainable Development (ICSD) of Central Asia or its subsidiary bodies	10	20

Output 1 B: Technical support provided to establish or operationalize subregional or regional multi-stakeholder platforms to improve regional environmental governance	Number of established and operational regional platforms which provide policy or technical support to decision-makers.	2	3
Output 1 C: Technical support provided to enhance the participation and engagement of European Member States and stakeholders at UNEA and its associated processes.	Number of European countries actively engaged in the preparation of UNEA5	30	45
	Number of major groups and stakeholders' consultation for UNEA5	0	2
Output 1D: National stakeholders have increased awareness of the environmental dimension of sustainable development in the context of post-COVID19 recovery	Parliamentarians that have access to a guidance document demonstrate increased awareness on the environmental dimension of sustainable development in the context of post-COVID-19 recovery	0	>100
Outcome 2	Indicators	Baseline	Target
Outcome 2: National level policy makers and UN country teams increasingly and coherently incorporate environmental sustainability into policies and plans	Number of draft national strategies, assessments, country programming documents or processes which better incorporate environmental considerations.	0	3
Outputs	Indicators	Baseline	Target
Output 2 A: National mechanisms responsible for the coordination of the 2030 Agenda work and UNCTs receive advice and technical assistance on incorporating environmental considerations and reflecting internationally agreed goals under the relevant MEAs	34. Number of new Common Country Analysis/United Nations Sustainable Development Cooperation Framework (CCA/UNSDCF) processes that involve environmental authorities and other relevant stakeholders and incorporate environmental priorities drawing on MEAs, UNEA resolution and transboundary environmental issues with UNEP support.	0	3
	Number of UNEP virtual country teams that provide technical assistance to the national processes through engagement with both authorities and UNCTs established and operational	0	3

Output 2 B: Evidence- based and context- specific strategies, action plans and guidance for resilience, sustainable development and COVID-19 green recovery in urban areas hosting Syrian refugees integrated in the policies and processes of local, national and international actors in Turkey	Number of policy documents of local and national authorities responsible for the hosting of Syrian refugees integrate sustainable development and COVID-19 green recovery considerations.	0	3
	Number of multi-actor networks or platforms established to support the cooperation and coordination work for achieving climate change, resource efficiency and environmental objectives that are sensitive to the urban refugee challenge.	0	2
Output 2 C: Enhanced capacity of institutional actors in national and local government in Turkey to operationalize strategies, action plans and guidance for resilience, sustainable development and COVID -19 green recovery in urban areas, in an inclusive and gender -sensitive manner	Number of actions local, national and international actors take to apply their new capacity to operationalize strategic guidance and action plans for resilience and sustainable development in urban areas hosting refugees	0	3
	Number of country/city/sector specific presentations by local, national and international actors of entity -specific action plans to integrate sustainability and environmental objectives sensitive to the urban refugee challenge are given in regional or international Meetings	0	2

3.3 Stakeholders

35. Some of the stakeholders involved in the project implementation were recognized during the project formulation stage, with well-defined roles and responsibilities assigned to each, while remaining were identified latter during implementing phase based on their interest and relevant experiences. Comprehensive consultations took place with the pre-identified stakeholders during the Stakeholder and Partnership Workshop and rest identified during rigorous exercise in Turkey of UN organisations. A diverse array of stakeholders contributed to the project development process, and their roles and responsibilities were meticulously recorded in the project implementation plan (refer to page 3, Stakeholder and Partnerships of the ProDoc). Stakeholders identified at project development phase and latter during implementation phase are included in the table below:

Table 5: Stakeholder List

Stakeholder group	Stakeholder type	Influential power	Level of interest
Regional Fora	Regional Level Fora	High	High, involved in project design
Sustainable Development Mechanism at National level	National Level Development mechanism	High	High, Involved in project design

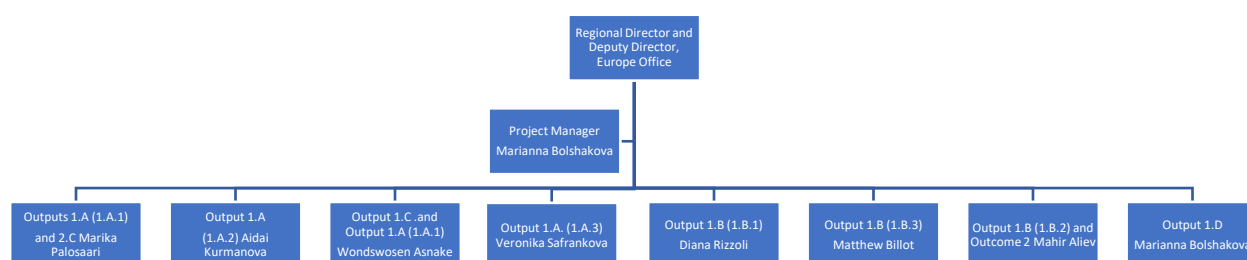
Stakeholder group	Stakeholder type	Influential power	Level of interest
UNCTs	UN Country Teams	High	High, Involved in project design
Parliamentarian	Potential partner	High	Low, Involved in project design
GEN	Partner (knowledge sharing)	High	High
Ministries of Environment of project country	Relevant partner	Low	High, Involved in project design
UN Economic Commission for Europe (UNECE)	Partner	High	High
Inter-parliamentary Union	Partner	High	High
UNESCO	Partner	High	High
UN Residence Coordinator	Partner	Low	Moderate
Government of Israel	Partner	High	High
European Union	Partner	High	High
CEP	Partner	High	High
UNDP	Partner	High	High
ICSD	Partner	High	High
WHO	Partner	High	High
WECF	Partner	High	High
MASHAV	Partner	High	High
Ministry of Ecology, Uzbekistan	Partner/beneficiary	High	High
Ministry of Ecology, Kazakhstan	Partner/beneficiary	High	High
Municipality of Belgrade	Partner/beneficiary	High	High
UN DCO	Partner	High	High
Gaziantep Metropolitan Municipality	Partner	High	High
Greater Amman Municipality	Partner	High	High
European Judges Network	Contributor in policy formulation	High	High
Government of Norway	Donor	Moderate	Moderate
Government of Switzerland	Donor	Moderate	Moderate
UNDA	Donor	Moderate	Moderate

3.4 Project implementation structure and partners

36. The project manager was tasked with overseeing the implementation of the project, while the Regional Director and Deputy Director provided overall supervision. They were supported by a fund manager and a team of topic coordinators, which included regional sub-program coordinators and personnel from the sub-regional offices. The Law Division offered comprehensive support for the project, complemented by thematic assistance from the Economy and Ecosystems Divisions. The project team engaged in regular coordination and review of the project's progress, making necessary adjustments as required.

37. Although a steering committee was intended to be established, it was not formed, nor were any inception workshops conducted. The project benefited from technical guidance provided by the technical staff of UNEP and partner agencies. Regular consultations regarding joint activities were held in conjunction with the implementation of the Environmental and Climate Change Integrated Business Case (ECIBC). In addition to UNEP personnel, the project engaged numerous UN agencies, fostered close collaboration with the Development Coordination Office (DCO), and built relationships with UN Resident Coordinators across 18 countries and territories, as well as with the staff of UN Development Teams (UNDTs).

38. The decision-making/organizational flowchart is presented below:



3.5 Changes in design during implementation

39. The project was reviewed in December 2021. The project review proposed the following changes: extension of the project implementation from December 2021 to April 2023 (extension was until June 2023), and the introduction of a new activity under the existing Outcome 2, Output 2.A to assist one of the countries in the governance arrangements to better address environmental considerations arising from migration related challenges.

Previously approved dates and duration:	Starting date: 09/2020	Planned Completion date: 12/2021	Total duration in Months: 18
Proposed completion date and duration	Actual start date: 10/2020	Revised completion date: 04/2023	Extended total duration in Months:34

3.6 Project financing

40. The total approved budget per the project document was US\$ 1,716,927 which included US\$ 1,320,147 in cash and US\$396,780 in-kind. The actual project funding was US\$ 2,212,458, including funds from the Environment Fund, Norway, Switzerland, Israel, OECD, SIDA, and UNDA. The project received US\$ 957,494 in in-kind contributions from the Environment Fund and the regular budget.

41. The project management costs (PMC) is not mentioned clearly neither in ProDoc nor in the financial statements. As such, the management cost-effectiveness could not be judged. Information on the cash and kind contribution figures are provided in tables 6 & 7.

Table 6: Total project budget as per the Project Document (in USD)

Type of Funding	Source of Funding	Details	Total
	Environment Fund Activity Budget	ICSD	20000
	Environment Fund Activity Budget	EF 2020 Non staff	25000

Type of Funding	Source of Funding	Details	Total
Cash	Extra budgetary Funding (posts + non-post+PMC)	Norway	130,130
		Switzerland	554,120
		OECD	125,746
		Germany	40,000
		Israel	425,150
		Total PSC on Secured Funds (1)	135127
		XB Sub-total	1,275,147
	Sub-total		1,320,147
Total project planned Budget (without EF & RB posts)			
	Environment Fund Post costs		45,940
	Regular Budget post costs		350,840
Total Project Planned Budget (with EF & RB posts)			
	Funding Secured		1,716,927
	Allocation to Regional Offices	N/A	N/A

Source: Project Document, 2020

Table 7: Total project costs as per the Project Closure Report (in USD)

Funding by source	Planned	Secured	Expended
Environment Fund	65,000	45,000	45,000
Regular Budget	-	-	-
Extra-budgetary (listed per donor):			
Norway	310,131	195,412	185,631
SIDA	61,246	60,000	59,983
Switzerland	1,049,548	1,049,548	1,044,760
OECD	125,746	125,746	125,746
Israel	425,150	425,150	422,338
UNDA	329,000	329,000	329,000
<i>Subtotal</i>	<i>2,365,821</i>	<i>2,229,856</i>	<i>2,212,458</i>
In-Kind Co-financing	Planned	Secured	Expended
Environmental Fund	80,394	80,394	80,394
Regular Budget	877,100	877,100	877,100
Staffing	Planned	Secured	Expended
Environment Fund staff-posts	(2 posts) 80,394	(2 posts) 80,394	(2 posts) 80,394
Regular Staff staff-posts	(7 posts) 877,100	(7 posts) 877,100	(7 posts) 877,100
Extra-budgetary staff posts	(1 post) 588,548	(1 post) 588,548	(1 post) 588,548
GRAND TOTAL	3,323,315	3,187,350	3,169,951.58

Source: Project Closure Report, 2024

4 THEORY OF CHAGE AT EVALUATION

42. The Theory of Change (ToC) for the project at the Evaluation Inception was formulated utilizing the project document, the revised project document, project progress reports, and the operational project closure report. An analysis of the ToC within the project document was conducted, along with an examination of the logical framework, to ensure that the outputs, outcomes, impacts, and causal pathways outlined in the ToC align with the logical framework. It was also confirmed that there were no alterations in activities, outputs, outcomes, assumptions, drivers, or causal pathways. Based on this analysis, the ToC was created for evaluation purposes, with no changes observed in outputs, outcomes, intermediate stages, impacts, or causal pathways.

43. The Theory of Change (ToC) demonstrates how the proposed outputs and outcomes contribute to the overall desired impact via intermediate states by ensuring that the implementation of SDGs at regional, sub-regional and national levels is carried out by the relevant stakeholders in a coherent and integrated manner. The project intended to contribute to the overall impact of establishing regional, sub-regional and national policies, programs and plans in the region that implement SDGs contributing to increased environmental protection. This impact is expected to be achieved through the intermediate state of coherent implementation of the environmental dimension of SDGs and MEAs at the regional, sub regional and national levels (Intermediate State 1) and informed decision making, communication and advisory based on scientific evidence (Intermediate State 2).

44. To achieve its goal, the project intended to strengthen the capacities of both national authorities and the relevant regional fora and processes to integrate environmental dimensions in the 2030 Agenda implementation. Its approach included eleven activities to provide with platforms, tools and advisory services and by building their capacities to assess and incorporate the relevant environmental considerations in the sustainable development planning of each country. There are two outcomes identified to achieve the above-mentioned intermediate state of impacts.

45. Under outcome 1, it was expected that the decision makers at regional and sub-regional levels would increasingly incorporate the environmental dimension in the regional sustainable development policies, including goals established under global, regional and sub-regional MEAs and processes. As explained by the ToC, this Outcome 1 would be achieved through the following 4 outputs:

- 1A) by providing technical support to the regional fora to integrate environmental consideration in sustainable development
- 1B) by providing technical support to establish or operationalize sub-regional or regional multi-stakeholder platforms to improve regional environmental governance
- 1C) by providing technical support to enhance the participation and engagement of European Member States and stakeholders at UNEA and its associated processes
- 1D) with increased awareness of national stakeholders on the environmental dimension of Sustainable development in the context of the post-COVID recovery.

46. The assumptions contributing output 1A in achieving Outcome 1 are: i) the Governments are committed to the implementation of the SDGs and also Stakeholders and ii) governments see the environmental dimension as integral to the development agenda. The drivers to support these achievements would be the UN reform process which enhances the integrated approach in the UN country level delivery and regional governance structure that support and monitor the implementation of the 2030 Agenda. The assumptions related to the contribution of output 1B to achieve Outcome 1 is that sufficient resources are mobilized and the driving force will be the multi-

stakeholder dialogues, partnerships and platforms support the SDGs process. The assumption related to contribution by the output 1C in achieving Outcome 1, is that the stakeholders and governments see the environmental dimension as integral to the development agenda and the driving force will be the UN reform process that enhances the integrated approach in the UN country level delivery. The assumption related to the contribution of output 1D, in achieving Outcome 1 and Outcome 2 is that the governments and regional fora use the opportunity of post-COVID recovery process to advance SD agenda, including its environmental dimensions.

47. Under the second outcome it was expected that the national-level policy makers and UN country teams would increasingly and coherently incorporate environmental sustainability into policies and plans. This outcome is expected to be achieved through the three outputs:

2A) National mechanisms responsible for the coordination of the 2030 Agenda work and UNCTs receive advice and technical assistance on incorporating environmental considerations and reflecting internationally agreed goals under the relevant MEAs in national plans and programs, including CCAs/UNSDCFs

2B) Evidence- based and context- specific strategies, action plans and guidance for resilience, sustainable development and COVID-19 green recovery in urban areas hosting Syrian refugees integrated in the policies and processes of local, national and international actors in Turkey

2C) Enhanced capacity of institutional actors in national and local government in Turkey to operationalize strategies, action plans and guidance for resilience, sustainable development and COVID -19 green recovery in urban areas, in an inclusive and gender -sensitive manner.

48. To facilitate the contribution of output 1D towards achieving Outcome 2, the assumption is that governments and regional forums will leverage the post-COVID recovery phase to promote the Sustainable Development (SD) agenda, including its environmental aspects. For outputs 2A, 2B and 2C to contribute to the achievement of Outcome 2, a necessary assumption is that a supportive environment exists due to the commitment of governments to implement the SDGs. Additionally, stakeholders and governments recognize the environmental dimension as a crucial component of the development agenda, with adequate resources mobilized to support this initiative. The key driving force behind output 2A, 2b AND 2c's contribution to Outcome 2 will be the "UN reform process that fosters an integrated approach in the delivery of services at the country level." There are eleven activities identified to achieve 5 outputs described above. Inputs to the overall process will be funding, human resources and in-kind contribution from partners and UNEP.

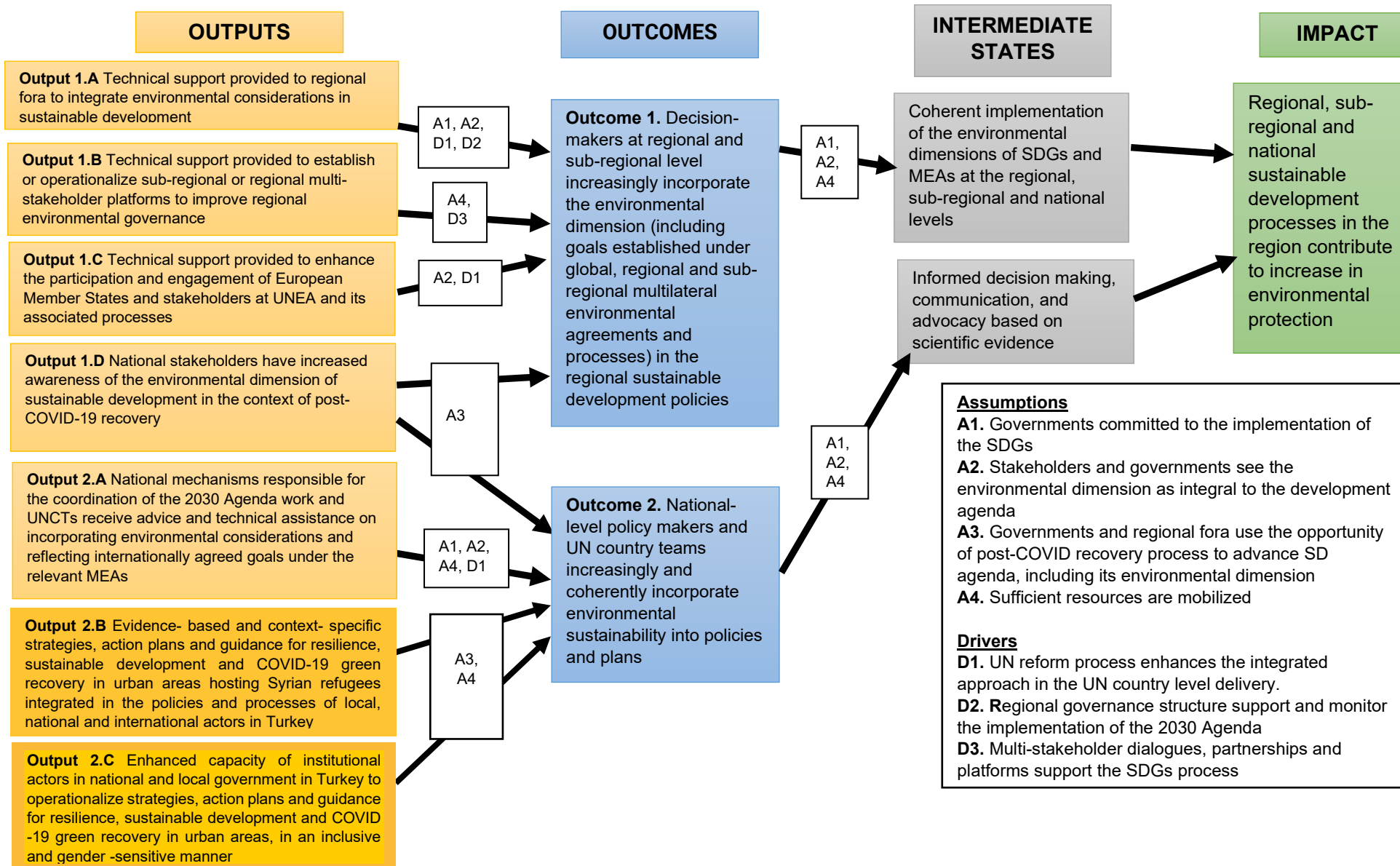
49. As per the vision of the ToC, activities like preparing background documents and other substantive inputs to the regional high-level fora and management of UNEP VCTs to enhance efficiency and providing of quality technical assistance to the countries will contribute to establishing or operationalizing sub-regional or regional multi-stakeholder platforms to improve regional environmental governance. Similarly, activities to support the operations of the GEN platform, addressing of emerging challenges through nature-based solutions and regional consultations and dialogues in preparation for and follow-up to UNEA, will contribute in integrating environmental considerations in sustainable development. Activities like supporting the ICSD for Central Asia and supporting operation of the Geneva Environment Network platform and regional consultations and dialogues, will enhance the participation and engagement of European Member States and stakeholders at UNEA and its associated processes. Activities to address the emerging challenges through Nature-based solutions and regional consultations and dialogues in preparation of and follow-up to UNEA will also support to produce output of increased awareness

of national stakeholders on the environmental dimension of Sustainable development in the context of the post-COVID recovery. Likewise, activities like addressing emerging challenges through Nature-based solutions, support to the establishment and operationalization of the Environment and Climate Change IBC, regional consultations and dialogues in preparation for and follow-up to UNEA and guidance for parliamentarians on post-COVID recovery will produce output like responsible National Mechanism for the coordination of the 2030 Agenda work and UNCTs receive advice and technical assistance on incorporating environmental consideration and reflecting internationally agreed goals under the relevant MEAs in national plans and programs, including CCAs/UNSDCFs.

50. Outcomes 1 and 2 will contribute to the achievement of intermediate state 1 of “coherent implementation of the environmental dimensions of SDGs and MEAs at the regional, sub-regional and national levels”. Outcome 2 will contribute to intermediate state 2 of “informed decision making, communicating and advocacy based on scientific evidence”. The assumptions supporting both of these processes are: i) Governments committed to the implementation of the SDGs, ii) Stakeholders and governments see the environmental dimension as integral to the development agenda, and iii) sufficient resources are mobilized. These two intermediate states will then contribute to the achievement of the results impact where Regional, sub-regional and national sustainable development processes in the region contribute to increase in environmental protection.

51. Although the ToC in the ProDoc mentioned gender as a key principle and indication of gender considerations in indicators, there is no assumption or drivers relating to human rights and gender equality. Since there were no changes in the reconstructed ToC from the original outputs, outcomes, intermediate stages, impact, assumptions and drivers, the table showing original and reconstructed is not presented in this report.

Reconstructed Theory of Change (For the purpose of Evaluation)



5 EVALUATION FINDINGS

5.1 Strategic Relevance

5.1.1 Alignment to UNEP MTS, POW and Strategic Priorities

52. The project is part of UNEP project #10 within the Environmental Governance portfolio, focusing on the coherent implementation of the environmental dimension of the sustainable development goals. It was designed to contribute to and align with the MTS for 2018-2021, specifically under the sub-programme on Environmental Governance, and subsequently to align with the MTS for 2022-2023 and MTS 2022-2025, also under Environmental Governance. It is also in line with the Sendai Framework which focuses on improving disaster risk governance.

53. After the adoption of the 2030 Agenda in 2015, countries and regions have initiated arrangements necessary for the implementation of the SDGs. But, one of the challenges they faced is the application of an integrated approach across all dimensions of sustainable development. This project designed to help enhance their capacity to integrate the environmental dimension in sustainable development. The project is in line with the PoW 2020-2021: EA (a) and EA (b) (ii). Relevant PoW outcome EA (a): The international community increasingly converges on common and integrated approach to achieve environmental objectives and implement the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable development, and indicators of this is “uptake by United Nations entities, international organisations and forums of environment policy issues or approaches emerging from UNEP policy advice”.

54. The significant result of the PoW EA (b) (ii) is the strengthening of institutional capacities alongside the formulation of policy and legal frameworks designed to meet internationally acknowledged environmental goals, such as the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the SDGs. A primary measure of this outcome is the integration of environmental factors into sustainable development planning, supported by UNEP. For the PoW covering 2022-2023, Outcomes 1A, 2A, 2B, and 2C are relevant to this effort. Specifically, Outcome 1A demonstrates that decision-makers at all levels are embracing strategies for decarbonization, dematerialization, and resilience. Outcome 2A establishes a sustainable economic and social framework aimed at halting and reversing biodiversity loss and ecosystem degradation, with indicators reflecting the number of plans, strategies, policies, action plans, or budgeting processes at national, regional, and global levels that incorporate environmental objectives as a result of UNEP support. Outcome 2B concentrates on the adoption and execution of sustainable nature management within development frameworks, while Outcome 2C highlights the improvement of nature conservation and restoration initiatives. Furthermore, Outcome 3C focuses on minimizing pollutant emissions into air, water, soil, and oceans. The indicators for these PoWs include the number of entities at national, regional, or global levels that UNEP has assisted in developing integrated approaches and tools to enhance coordination, cooperation, and synergies for the effective implementation of multilateral environmental agreements.

55. The interrelated nature of the SDGs indicates that the execution of this project contributes to the achievement of all SDGs, with particular emphasis on the following: SDG 17.14, which focuses on enhancing policy coherence for sustainable development; SDG 17.16, which aims to bolster the Global Partnership for Sustainable Development through collaborative efforts among multiple stakeholders to mobilize and share knowledge, expertise, technology, and financial resources, thereby supporting the realization of the SDGs globally; and SDG 17.17, which promotes and nurtures effective partnerships among public institutions, the private sector, and civil society, leveraging the experiences and resource strategies of these collaborations. This project is directly aligned with the Expected

Accomplishments of the Environmental Governance sub-programme as outlined in the UN Environment Programme's work plan for 2019-2021.

56. Furthermore, the project is in alignment with the United Nations reform process by fostering a unified delivery system through partnerships with multiple UN agencies. This is particularly evident in initiatives such as support for regional environmental forums and the Inter-Agency Body on Environment and Climate Change.

57. The project has not considered gender mainstreaming in depth but mentioned of promoting gender balance in few indicators at the design. But in several products of GEN and other project documents gender issues were considered. Also, a round table discussion was organised by UNEP and UN Women on 10th November 2021. Similarly, an analytical report was also developed on gender participation in the use and protection of water resources in Central Asian countries. But there were no outcomes incorporating human rights.

*Rating for alignment to UNEP MTS, PoW and Strategic Priorities is rated: **Highly Satisfactory***

5.1.2 Alignment to Government and Donor Strategic Priorities

58. The environmental dimension of development is of paramount importance, as it directly influences the sustainability of outcomes and the overall quality of achievements. This is priority of UNEP and also donor's strategic priorities. UNEP has played a pivotal role in addressing environmental challenges since its establishment, significantly contributing to the enhancement of national capabilities to reduce the environmental consequences of humanitarian actions.

59. Appendix 1 of the project document details the environmental, economic, and social priorities for Programme Countries in the Pan-European Region, derived from an analysis of Strategic Cooperation Frameworks. The project aims to incorporate environmental considerations into the execution of the 2030 Agenda at global, regional, and local levels, making it pertinent for all countries. Nonetheless, the successful integration of environmental aspects is often obstructed by insufficient representation of the environmental sector within national sustainable development frameworks and a lack of expertise or institutional backing in regional initiatives. Consequently, UNEP's provision of tools and knowledge services to bolster capacities for evaluating and integrating critical environmental factors into national sustainable development planning is essential. Previous engagements with donors have underscored their priority areas, and this project reflects those interests. The Government of Switzerland has supported GEN activities for two decades and continues to back this initiative. Likewise, Israel possesses expertise in the water sector and is eager to assist in water management efforts. Other donors have also expressed interest in their specific priority areas. This project is aligned with the donors' priority areas. The UNDA is a program for capacity development initiated by the United Nations Secretariat, designed to enhance the abilities of nations in key areas of the UN development agenda. This initiative also seeks to bolster the capacity of countries to incorporate environmental considerations into Sustainable Development efforts. In a similar vein, the OECD assists nations in strengthening their governance frameworks to tackle complex and interconnected global issues such as climate change, biodiversity decline, food and energy shortages, and pollution. Additionally, SIDA provides support to countries in their efforts to reduce greenhouse gas emissions and pollution, combat biodiversity loss, and enhance resilience to the impacts of climate change. The integration of environmental factors into sustainable development aligns with the priorities set forth by these donor organizations.

60. The project is aligned with the government's strategic priorities of the participating countries. All UN member states committed to SDGs Agenda 2030. As a result of this, this

project held the countries' commitments as an assumption for the achievement of project results. Part of the aim of this project was to enhance the capabilities of national authorities to incorporate the environmental dimension into the implementation of the 2030 Agenda.

61. The project has also played a role in shaping several SDCFs and other country programming documents, while being guided by the priorities established in the SDCFs of the beneficiary nations.

Rating for the Alignment to Donors Strategic Priorities: *Highly Satisfactory*

5.1.3 Relevance to Global, Regional and Sub-regional Priorities

62. The project was developed to address the challenges identified in the region with respect to integrating environmental considerations into sustainable development programming at regional, sub-regional and national levels. The fourth session of the Regional Forum on Sustainable Development for the UNECE region that took place in Geneva on 19 March 2020 discussed and noted that while policy-makers and societies as a whole are becoming more aware of the need for sustainable development, the broad and deep transformative change that the 2030 Agenda promised has not happened yet and action in three areas (Economical, Social and Environmental) in particular will be instrumental (https://unece.org/fileadmin/DAM/SPECA/documents/ecf/2016/Sessions_IV_Background_paper_English.pdf).

63. The need for an integrated and cooperative approach to regional and national policy-making to integrate environment has been consistently emphasized in regional and sub-regional priority setting. For example, the Central Asian Regional Environmental Programme on Sustainable Development 2030 sets out as one of the region's priorities the regional cooperation and global partnerships (coordination on NEAs; development of national and regional strategies; cooperation with UN and other international organisations; South-South cooperation; joint campaigns and awareness raising activities). At the same time, environmental sustainability and integrity in enhancing policy planning and implementation has been consistently identified as not only policy challenges but also a significant gap in governance arrangements in some parts of the region (2016 SPECA Economic Forum "Enhancing Implementation of SDGs through Cooperation" Ganja, Azerbaijan, 20-23 November 2016). This project was designed to address these gaps at regional, sub-regional and national levels.

64. At the national level, the pan-European region includes 18 UNCT that are actively engaged in the creation of UNSDCFs. The development of the UNSDCF is preceded by a CCA, which involves a collaborative assessment by various agencies to identify development challenges and evaluate potential responses from the UN country team within the UNSDCF framework. Although the UNEP is not a member of the UNCTs, it will collaborate directly with these teams and Resident Coordinators on national initiatives. The UNSDCF processes offer UNEP a platform to engage at the country level, particularly in linking relevant outcomes and resolutions from the UNEA to country programming. Additionally, these processes provide a vital source of relevant national data concerning social, economic, and environmental priorities. Appendix 1 of Annex E in this document details the priorities of the 18 program countries within the pan-European region, based on an analysis of UN strategic cooperation frameworks.

65. This project is based on the insights and lessons gained from earlier efforts to support governments across the pan-European region, including initiatives like the Caspian Sea Framework Convention, the Carpathian Mountain Convention, and the Geneva Environment

Network. It leverages practices of interagency collaboration and ongoing support for regional environmental and sustainable development forums, such as the European Environment and Health Initiative, the Environment for Europe process along with its Committee on Environmental Policy (CEP), the Regional Sustainable Development Forum, and the Interstate Commission for Sustainable Development in Central Asia. Additionally, the project takes into account and builds upon high-level dialogues concerning collaborative engagement with the European Union, particularly in connection with the European Green Deal, the Neighbourhood Policy, and EU assistance frameworks, as well as experiences in creating and supporting global and regional platforms that promote technical cooperation.

Rating for Alignment to Global, Regional, Sub-regional and National Priorities: *Highly Satisfactory*

5.1.4 Complementarity with Existing Interventions/Coherence

66. This initiative plays a significant role in advancing all activities related to the SDGs, with a particular emphasis on SDG 17.14, which aims to enhance policy coherence for sustainable development; SDG 17.16, which seeks to strengthen the Global Partnership for Sustainable Development through multi-stakeholder collaborations that mobilize and share knowledge, expertise, technology, and financial resources to support the attainment of the SDGs across all nations; and SDG 17.17, which encourages the promotion of effective partnerships among public entities, private sectors, and civil society, leveraging the experiences and resource strategies of these collaborations. Additionally, various activities within the project contribute to other SDGs, notably SDGs 4, 15, and 16.

67. The project builds on experiences gained and lessons learned from the implementation of activities to support governments in the pan European region such as the Caspian Sea Framework Convention, the Carpathian Mountain Convention, the GEN interagency cooperation practice, and the standing engagement with and support to the regional environmental and sustainable development fora, such as the European Environment and Health initiatives, the Environment for Europe process and its CEP, the Regional Sustainable Development Forum and the Interstate Commission for Sustainable Development in Central Asia.

Rating for Complementarity/Coherence with existing Interventions: *Highly Satisfactory*

Rating for Strategic Relevance: *Highly Satisfactory*

5.2 Quality and Revision of Project Design

68. The situation arising from COVID-19 presented both challenges and opportunities in the project's design, allowing for activities to be tailored to align with countries' priorities. The incorporation of COVID-19 response measures was integrated into various initiatives at both national and regional levels. This included the work planning for the IBC, the themes of events organized under the GEN, and collaboration with UNCTs, especially concerning the national socio-economic analysis.

69. This project was created through a comprehensive process that included assessing needs, commitments, priorities, and shortcomings in existing policies and practices, along with collecting feedback from various countries during global, regional, and sub-regional discussions pertinent to the project's objectives. Furthermore, engagements at both national and regional levels were undertaken to identify deficiencies and set priorities. The importance of a unified and collaborative approach to policy-making at both regional and national levels was consistently emphasized in the context of establishing regional and sub-regional

priorities. For example, the Central Asian Regional Environmental Programme on Sustainable Development 2030 underscored the significance of regional collaboration and global partnerships—such as South-South cooperation, coordination on MEAs, the formulation of national and regional strategies, joint initiatives, and awareness-raising efforts—as essential priorities for the region. At the same time, the necessity for environmental sustainability and integrity in policy development and execution were acknowledged, not only as policy challenges, but also as notable governance shortcomings in certain areas of the region.

70. The project was based on the efforts conducted under the Project Preparation Proposal, which received approval in October 2019. The work led to formulation of definitions of priority interventions under the project and consultations on a number of such interventions with the key partners, including UNECE, UNESCO, and UN country teams in the relevant nations. Later, during implementation, the project established partnerships (described in the stakeholders section) with several other institutions for effective implementation of activities. This demonstrates the project utilizing strategic partnerships to produce effective and quality results. As per the information provided in the project document and also by the project team, the project also drew upon insights (lessons) gained from the pilot implementation of certain activities in these countries and continued those initiatives within this framework. Examples of such initiatives include the Caspian Sea Framework Convention, the Carpathian Mountain Convention, and the Geneva Environment Network. Additionally, there are practices of interagency cooperation and ongoing support for regional environmental and sustainable development forums, such as the European Environment and Health initiative, the Environment for Europe process along with its CEP, the Regional Sustainable Development Forum, and the Interstate Commission for Sustainable Development in Central Asia. Furthermore, it considered and built upon discussions, including high-level dialogues, regarding mutual engagement within the European Union, particularly in relation to the European Green Deal, the Neighbourhood Policy, and the EU assistance framework.

71. Preparatory consultations were conducted to establish several regional platforms, such as the Environment and Climate Change IBC. At the regional level, priority areas of focus were identified, particularly concerning the proposed platform for nature-based solutions. Besides, GEN platform was identified and included in the plan to enhance communication between participating countries on environmental issues. Besides, these platforms, the project design also provisioned activities of bringing law-makers and judges from all project countries to make them aware on environmental issues and also need of integration of environment in the development plans. These provisions contributed to communication of and dissemination of information to target audiences. Throughout the project preparation phase, four priority countries were chosen for targeted national assistance, allowing for the piloting of specific engagement methodologies aimed at making a significant impact in a select yet representative group of countries within the region. To emphasize the environmental dimension in country programming, the project actively collaborated with governments and UN country teams. A coherent and integrated approach was adopted to ensure that regional, sub-regional, and national environmental priorities are consistently aligned with sustainable development initiatives and the objectives outlined in relevant global frameworks. All above activities indicates that the project was formulated with the participation of national, regional, sub-regional and global counterparts and was demand driven. It incorporated the priority and needs of the participating countries.

72. The project was formulated based on the results framework approach. The result framework of the project comprises two Outcomes and eight Outputs, along with established baselines and targets. It also outlines the means of verification and milestones for monitoring progress, as well as assumptions. The project included a structured monitoring and reporting process. Each report type has a defined reporting schedule and procedure. Given the short duration of the project, a Mid-term Review (MTR) was not included; instead, a Terminal

Evaluation (TE) was outlined in the implementation plan, complete with a dedicated budget allocation.

73. However, an assessment of risks is limited to financial shortage, COVID19, priority shift from environmental dimension of SDCs and weakening of environmental safeguards. It has overlooked issues of migration, conflicts and change in donor's priority, political instability in the countries etc. While the project does not explicitly focus on human rights, the Project Document discusses the exploration of gender equality and women's empowerment within the environmental sector. It mentions the integration of gender-environment linkages, yet there is minimal explicit analysis or introduction of gender issues concerning the project's scope. Activity 2C of the result framework refers to capacity building with a focus on gender sensitivity, but other outputs do not address gender or social inclusion. Furthermore, none of the indicators within the result framework are disaggregated by gender. The project had budget plan for the activities outlined in the project documents but there was no resource mobilisation plan in the project document to ensure the implementation of planned activities and due to this project has difficulties to conduct some of the activities due to budget constraints owing to delay from COVID-19 and post COVID situations. There is no exit strategy in place, as it is stated that this policy-related project does not require one, and several activities will continue under the auspices of the implementing partners.

74. On December 20, 2021, the project review team implemented certain modifications to the project design and approaches and adjusted budgetary issues, but other shortfalls of the project design were not addressed in the revision.

Table 8: Summary of Quality of Project Design Ratings

	SECTION	SELECT RATING	SCORE (1-6)	WEIGHTING	TOTAL (Rating x Weighting/10)
A	Operating Context	Satisfactory	5	0.4	0.2
B	Project Preparation	Satisfactory	5	1.2	0.6
C	Strategic Relevance	Highly Satisfactory	5.5	0.8	0.44
D	Intended Results and Causality	Satisfactory	4.5	1.6	0.72
E	Logical Framework and Monitoring	Satisfactory	5	0.8	0.4
F	Governance and Supervision Arrangements	Satisfactory	4.5	0.4	0.18
G	Partnerships	Highly Satisfactory	5.5	0.8	0.44
H	Learning, Communication and Outreach	Satisfactory	4.5	0.4	0.18
I	Financial Planning / Budgeting	Moderately Satisfactory	5	0.4	0.2
J	Efficiency	Highly Satisfactory	5	0.8	0.4
K	Risk identification and Social Safeguards	Satisfactory	5	0.8	0.4
L	Sustainability / Replication and Catalytic Effects	Satisfactory	4.5	1.2	0.54
M	Identified Project Design Weaknesses/Gaps	Satisfactory	4.5	0.4	0.18
				TOTAL SCORE (Sum Totals)	4.88

Rating for Project Design Quality: Satisfactory

5.3 Nature of External Context

75. 59. The initiation of the project experienced delays during 2020-2021 as a result of the Covid-19 pandemic, necessitating an extension from December 2021 to June 2023 (implementation ended in April 2023).

76. Throughout the project, the ICSD meeting faced disruptions. This caused data collection challenges and as a result, the project had to allocate more time and a clear coordination strategy. The transition of governance arrangement between countries led to loss of institutional memory and required closer work with the new presidency in Kyrgyzstan, who's participation was delayed due to elections in 2021. UNEP collaborated with the ICSD secretariat to reallocate resources towards the development of the ICSD strategic roadmap, aimed at planning the Commission's future work to support the implementation of sustainable development strategies in Central Asia. Despite all this, the development of the ICSD roadmap was successfully finalized. Its adoption occurred only a month after the project's completion, as the ICSD postponed its membership meeting due to challenges associated with COVID and the subsequent recovery period.

77. In Israel, the implementation of activities was rescheduled for 2022 due to logistical difficulties faced by both UNEP and Israel in executing on-the-ground initiatives amid pandemic-related restrictions. The project could not proceed in April 2022 due to internal administrative hurdles in securing a suitable framework for a fully funded GEN activity, which, despite being a flagship initiative of UNEP in the region, could not be integrated within UNEP's administrative framework, necessitating the identification of a special solution.

78. Furthermore, one of the activities under 2.A.3 experienced considerable delays due to COVID restrictions, as it required knowledge-sharing visits among several countries. Additionally, activities in Jordan and Turkey were somewhat hindered by language barriers, as refugees were unable to communicate in Turkish. The earthquake on February 6, 2023, along with the influx of Afghan refugees into Turkey, shifted the focus of the Gaziantep Metropolitan Municipality, adversely affecting project operations and delaying the implementation of remaining activities.

Rating for Nature of the External Context: Favorable

5.4 Effectiveness

79. The Theory of Change outlines the necessary activities, outputs, and outcomes required to achieve the project's objectives. Given that this project is policy-oriented, project risk log has not accounted for potential risks like political unrest, migration of refugees, effect of natural calamities (other than COVID) etc. and has assumed that all activities will proceed as planned. The connections and methodologies are articulated clearly.

80. The project concluded on 30 June 2023, with the majority of targeted output indicators successfully met, while only two activities were reprioritized. The project timeline was extended due to the reform of the UNEP delivery model, as well as the impacts of COVID-19 and the subsequent post-COVID environment. The evaluator also discussed with the stakeholders on potential impacts of this project's activities to gender, human rights, impact to vulnerable groups and disadvantaged groups. In the outputs and outcomes explained below, positive and negative effects on the disadvantaged groups, gender, vulnerable or marginalised from the project activities are described briefly because only IBC and NBS had some immediate impacts while the impact of the policy related activities that considered environmental threats of development in various aspects of human lives, could only be seen in the future. Some events that included gender and human rights are also described in the relevant section of this report.

5.4.1 Availability of Outputs

81. The outputs of the project are appropriate and sufficient to produce anticipated outcomes and are consistent with the overall project goal and objectives. Output statements are logical, clearly articulated and consistently formulated.

82. Output 1A focuses on delivering technical support to regional forums aimed at incorporating environmental factors into sustainable development. The target for this output was to produce seven documents that were reviewed and approved by the regional intergovernmental forums, with technical contributions from UNEP, for seven events to ensure adequate attention to the environmental aspect. The project successfully achieved the established target with the assistance of the Regional Sustainable Development Forum and the Environment for Europe process. Examples of documents that were produced are: i) The Strategic Guidance on Nature-based Solutions in Urban Context, ii) The implementation plan for the urban community garden at Sezai Karakoc Park in Gaziantep, iii) The Climate Change Risk Assessment, iv) The updated Climate Action Plan (CAP) for Amman, v) The Guidebook and Operational Manual for Establishing an Urban Community Garden, vi) Turkey Country Assessment Report, and vii) The Climate Change Risk Assessment (CCRA) for Amman.

83. The project's extended timeline allowed for the adjustment of the revised dates for the Environment for Europe (EfE) Ministerial Conference in October 2022, as well as the meetings of the Regional Forum on Sustainable Development in 2022 and 2023. UNEP, in collaboration with UNECE, convened a colloquium (Geneva, 22-23 June 2022) that engaged senior judiciary members from the region to discuss the practical dimensions of climate change and air pollution litigation. This event brought together 40 justices from Supreme or Constitutional Courts across 34 countries, enhancing their understanding of emerging trends in environmental litigation while providing valuable networking opportunities. The sessions were focused on thematic areas like: access to justice in cases related to spatial planning and access to justice in energy-related cases. The sessions also had activities of stock taking of recent and upcoming developments and tools to promote effective access to justice. As a result, connections were established among the justices and with both regional and global judicial networks, leading to the initiation of sub-regional environmental litigation initiatives in Central Asia and the Western Balkans, which were subsequently implemented with UNDP's assistance because UNEP could not co-organize these later events due to funding constraints, it contributed substantive inputs through technical knowledge sharing and providing resource materials to the seminars.

84. The second indicator of this output was, "enhanced expert and government representation at meetings of the Interstate Commission on Sustainable Development of Central Asia or its subsidiary bodies". The target was 20, but this indicator was reprioritised due to COVID-related measures and other geopolitical challenges, therefore, the ICSD did not conduct any in-person meetings during the project period. Instead, UNEP maintained engagement with the ICSD and its secretariat throughout the project, assisting in the development of the regional ICSD Roadmap providing expert support that was successfully ratified by the Commission at a meeting held two months after the project's completion and approved by the EU council in September 2023. The roadmap will help to plan the commission's work related to sustainable water resource management in the Central Asia in the coming years, facilitated by UNDP and UNECE with support from UNEP. Thus, resources were reprioritize to the Roadmap at the ICSD's request. Since the ICSD meeting occurred post-project completion, alternative funding sources were utilized to support country participation in the meeting.

85. Output 1B focused on providing technical support to establish or operationalize sub-regional/regional multi-stakeholder platforms to improve regional environmental governance.

The target was 2 platforms. The project established 2 operational regional platforms which provided policy or/and technical support to decision-makers. One example of this is the creation of the IBC by UNEP, UNECE, and UNESCO, focused on Environment and Climate Change. This initiative allowed 18 agencies within the UN System to enhance the integration of environmental and climate change considerations into country-level UN programming, which has persisted beyond the project's completion. The model could be sustainable as it relies on minimal core funding from the participating UN Agencies. This initiative benefits the participating agencies, particularly those like UNEP that lack a country presence, by enhancing their engagement with UNCTs. It effectively contributes to the UN Reform process by facilitating a coordinated response from UN agencies to priorities identified in UN country engagement, thereby strengthening the environmental aspect of UN involvement at the national level and benefiting local stakeholders.

86. IBC on Environment and Climate Change was liaised with the RCO of Montenegro to facilitate mainstreaming of environmental considerations in Montenegro 2023-2027 SDCF (signed in June 2022). During the period January-June 2022, the UNEP Europe Office worked closely collaborating with Serbia RC Office in supporting National Statistical Office to increase the availability of environment –related SDG indicators and enhance cooperation with national data providers. The publication entitled “Progress in monitoring environment-related SDGs in Serbia” was launched on 27 June 2022 and presented to the UNSDCF Result Group 1 on Green Transformation and to UNCT Montenegro and Evaluation Group. This is the results of the joint effort of UNEP Europe Office and Serbia RC Office. The IBC on Environment and Climate Change has consistently garnered very positive feedback from the DCO, RCs, and UNCTs.

87. The GEN is a cooperative partnership of more than 100 environmental and sustainable development organisations and was established in 1999. The secretariat of GEN is supported by the Swiss Federal Office for the Environment and is administered by the UNEP. This platform is used by the project for conducting multilateral activities, conferences, promoting awareness on environmental issues and has also continued its operations throughout the project. The GEN very successfully raised to the challenge of supporting international Geneva at the time of the pandemic and creating a virtual platform with a much broader outreach than before. Dozens of events and information have been organised during pandemic and post pandemic situation. Due to its effectiveness, the government of Switzerland provided additional USD 350,000 over the originally projected USD 300,000. During this period, stakeholders from governments, the diplomatic community, intergovernmental institutions, civil society, and the private sector participated in and benefited from over 150 multi-stakeholder events addressing various issues aligned with UNEP's MTS priorities. This engagement has resulted in increased awareness, more informed negotiating positions in intergovernmental forums, stronger networks, and improved decision-making. But the plan of establishing an additional formal NBS platform was dropped after consultations with regional stakeholders. Nevertheless, several deliverables were produced to support expertise development and networking in the field of nature-based solutions, including the mapping of a strategic approach for connectivity and the development of several local-level NBS assessments.

88. Output 1.C focused on providing technical support to enhance the participation and engagement of European Member States and stakeholders at UNEA and its associated processes. The project targeted to engage 45 European countries actively the preparation of UNEA5 and was able to achieve the target successfully. This output involved systematic collaboration with the European Union (outlined in 1.A.3), stakeholder engagement (detailed in 1.C.1), and regional coordination for Major Groups and Stakeholders, along with GEN information events for governments and stakeholders under IBC (explained in 1.B.1). During UNEA 5.1, as part of UNEP/EU engagement, Global Alliance for Circular Economy and Resource Efficiency - GACERE (EC-UNEP-UNIDO) was launched in February 2021. These

efforts facilitated the active participation of governments and stakeholders from the majority of countries in the region in the preparations for UNEA 5.1, 5.2, and UNEA6.

89. Three high-level briefings and de-briefings on UNEA 5.2, as well as 3 events on Stockholm +50, were also organized. Other briefings and multi-stakeholder dialogues organized under GEN included topics such as gender and the environment, peace building and the environment and health and environment. The IBC convened three sub-regionally based training webinars on: (1) Mainstreaming environment and climate change into UNSDCF processes - approaches and tools for mainstreaming; (Convened -Central Asia 13 January 2022; (2) South-Eastern Europe 20 January 2022; and (3) Eastern Europe & the Caucasus 27 January 2022). The training was based on the IBC's Guidance on Mainstreaming Environment and Climate Change in UNSDCFs published in June 2021 and build on the first part of the mainstreaming training held in December 2021. Overall, 120 people took part in the three subregional virtual training workshops in January 2022. The IBC Mainstreaming Guide describes a suite of approaches and tools for mainstreaming environment and climate change and a summary of these was provided during the training session, including identifying synergies using matrix analysis, undertaking multidimensional risk analysis during the CCA stage at a high level as well as during implementation at a programme and project level, and the identification of indicators for tracking progress on key environment and climate change issues as part of results frameworks and monitoring and evaluation. The engagement processes not only provided essential information to relevant stakeholders regarding the key issues to be addressed at UNEA but also aided in identifying their priorities concerning the UNEA agenda, thereby enhancing their preparedness for discussions at the assembly.

90. Output 1.D focused on increasing awareness of national stakeholders on environmental dimension of sustainable development in the context of post-COVID-19 recovery. The target of reaching 150 parliamentarians with a guidance document aimed at increasing awareness of the environmental aspects of sustainable development in the context of post-COVID-19 recovery has been met. A draft policy note for parliamentarians prepared in December 2021 by UNEP and IPU was translated into Russian and was circulated to national parliaments in over 170 countries with the letter from the Secretary General of the IPU and UNEP Executive Director. This policy note for Parliamentarians on green post-COVID recovery had generated interest among parliamentarians in other regions too, hence at the request of the Parliaments of the Seychelles and Zimbabwe, two tailored webinars on post-COVID recovery were organised jointly with UNEP Africa Office and in collaboration with the IPU. The considerations raised in the policy note were also highlighted to several hundred speakers and member of parliaments from across the globe at the high-level parliamentary meeting organised in preparations for COP-26 (<https://comunicazione.camera.it/eventi/precop26>). More than 100 parliamentarians and their staff from Europe and Central Asia Region participated in a webinar organized by UNECE and IPU on the margins of the Regional Sustainable Development Forum in March 2021, which was informed by the note developed under the project. Additionally, over 50 members of parliament from the Central Asia region received tailored knowledge and engaged in discussions regarding sub-regional priorities and challenges for parliaments in the context of sustainable recovery post-COVID during a webinar co-organised by UNEP and IPU in June 2021. Overall, the guidance note reached hundreds of parliamentarians worldwide, with over 200 MPs from Europe and Africa gaining enhanced knowledge through the webinars where the note was presented.

91. Output 2.A focused on providing advice and technical assistance to national mechanisms responsible for the coordination of the 2030 Agenda work and UNCTs on incorporating environmental considerations and reflecting internationally agreed goals under the relevant MEAs in national plans and programs, including CCAs/UNSDCFs. The goal was to establish five new CCA/UNSDCF processes. This goal was met, and an additional 2 processes were done by engaging environmental authorities and other relevant stakeholders,

incorporating environmental priorities based on MEAs, UNEA resolutions, and trans-boundary environmental issues with support from UNEP. SDCFs for Kyrgyzstan, Georgia, and Montenegro, along with CCA and programming documents for Turkmenistan, Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, and Kosovo, were developed with UNEP's assistance, reflecting national environmental priorities. These documents guide UN engagement at the country level and facilitate the integration of environmental considerations into national actions.

92. IBC on Environment and Climate Change liaised with the RCO of Montenegro to facilitate mainstreaming of environment considerations in Montenegro 2023-2027 SDCF which was signed in June 2022. Between January to June 2022, UNEP Europe Office had closely collaborated with Serbia RC Office in supporting National Statistical Office to increase the availability of environment-related SDG indicators and enhance cooperation with national data providers. As a result, this joint effort had captured in the publication Progress in monitoring environment-related SDGs in Serbia launched on 27 January 2022 and presented to the UNSDCF Result Group 1 on Green Transformation and UNCT Monitoring and Evaluation Group.

93. Furthermore, with technical support of local implementing partner Belgrade Open School, an analysis of localization of Agenda 2030 was developed aimed to present the current state in Serbia, highlighted key challenges and define recommendations/opportunities for future interventions in this area, especially key challenges and define recommendations/opportunities for future interventions in this area, mainly with regards to biodiversity conservation, sustainable food-systems and circularity-related topics. Another IBC activity was related to clean water management with the help of Isreal, which included study visits to facilities in Israel and a training workshop held in Central Asia in 2023. In this workshop, representatives from Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan received training in clean water management practices. They were expected to apply the knowledge gained in their respective countries, and discussions were held to address specific challenges faced in their nations, thereby equipping them with tailored expertise. As part of this plan, an expert team from Israel travelled to Uzbekistan to observe the application of the learned concepts and to offer on-site technical assistance. However, Kazakhstan was unable to host the team due to internal issues. Moreover, the individuals involved from these countries under this activity of the project were not in decision-making positions, so they may not assure implementation of the knowledge they received.

94. Another target under this output involved the establishment of three UNEP virtual country teams to provide technical assistance to national processes through collaboration with both authorities and UNCTs. This target was successfully achieved, and the teams are now operational. The internal coordination of delivery across sub-programmes and topics was effectively managed through the pilot approach of Virtual Country Teams (VCTs) for Kazakhstan, Turkey, and Serbia in December 2020. The VCTs fostered a more coherent and consistent strategy and delivery for work with national-level policy makers and the UN country team in these three countries, informing the transition to a new delivery model focused on country-specific needs. As a result of this, a new partnership was designed to strengthen capacities of local and national authorities to pursue inclusive, safe, resilient and sustainable development in urban areas and in case of Turkey contributed to hosting Syrian refugees appropriately. Throughout the project period, in addition to the ongoing operation of the three VCTs, a coordination team provided substantial support to the UNCT in Ukraine regarding environmental matters. In Ukraine, UNEP responded to a request for support from the government on methodology monitoring environmental damage, best practices, and international standards on adapting current policy to the disastrous condition and built a strategy on sustainable food systems management including solution for energy crisis. This study and strategy development was jointly conducted by FAO, UNECE and UNEP.

95. Output 2.B focused on integrating evidence-based and context-specific strategies, action plans and guidance for resilience, sustainable development and COVID-19 green recovery in urban areas hosting Syrian refugees in the policies and processes of local, national and international actors in Turkey. Three policy documents by local and national authorities responsible for hosting Syrian refugees have been successfully developed with a focus on sustainable development and considerations for a green recovery from COVID-19. A country assessment report has been produced jointly by UNDP and UNEP, detailing a country-specific analysis aimed at identifying needs, opportunities, and gender considerations for the formulation of new strategic guidance, action plans, and networks. This report has been disseminated to local, national, and international stakeholders. Following the draft Türkiye Country Assessment report preparation, a Strategic Prioritization workshop was conducted in March 2023 involving various related government offices of the Turkish government, UNEP staff from various divisions and Europe office and members of the UNCT Türkiye. Additionally, this report was validated through a validation workshop involving several Turkish municipalities convened, providing a robust evidence base and country-specific analysis. A draft of strategic guidance on the selection and implementation of nature-based solutions has also been created. To develop these report and guidelines, three experts hired by the project were involved. This guidance is intended to assist municipalities in the identification, selection, implementation, and maintenance of nature-based solutions (NbS) to tackle local challenges while achieving desired social, environmental, and economic outcomes. Based on this report, Gaziantep municipality, jointly with UNDP initiated NbS activities. The development of this guidance as part of the project work, involved collaboration with local authorities, civil society organizations, and experts with experience specific to Turkey.

96. Furthermore, another objective under this output, which involved the establishment of two multi-actor networks or platforms to enhance cooperation and coordination in addressing climate change, resource efficiency, and environmental goals sensitive to the challenges faced by urban refugees, has also been accomplished. The project has identified relevant networks and platforms that align with its objectives. The activities completed include: 1) disseminating project results and guidance documents to members of the FAO Food, Security and Agriculture Working Group; 2) sharing project results and guidance documents with all municipalities through the Municipalities Union; 3) distributing project results and guidance documents to members of the Climate Resilient Agriculture Network of Turkey (DKM); and 4) integrating the project results into the Climate Change Adaptation Action Plan of the Gaziantep Project Team. As described in 2B above, the UNEP VCT role in strengthening collaboration with national-level policy makers and the UN country team was very important in achieving this output.

97. Output 2.C focused on enhancing the capacity of institutional actors in national and local government in Turkey to operationalize strategies, action plans and guidance for resilience, sustainable development and COVID -19 green recovery in urban areas, in an inclusive and gender -sensitive manner. The target of 3 actions taken by local, national and international actors to apply their new capacity to operationalize strategic guidance and action plans for resilience and sustainable development in urban area hosting refugees was achieved. To achieve this target, the project established a demonstration of urban nature-based solutions and multifunctional green infrastructure in Jordan and Turkey that not only benefits the local community and vulnerable groups but also serves as a platform for knowledge sharing and capacity building. The inclusive site for refugees comprises: 1) the establishment of an urban gardening park; 2) a training and rehabilitation center for children; and 3) composting initiatives utilizing organic waste from the parks. Implementation of IBC program faced challenge due to COVID restrictions in the early stages but latter they were accomplished.

98. Additionally, another target of this output was to facilitate two presentations specific to countries, cities, or sectors by local, national, and international actors, showcasing entity-specific action plans that integrate sustainability and environmental considerations relevant to the urban refugee context at regional or international forums was successfully achieved. In this regard, a capacity-building workshop on Nature-based Solutions in Urban Areas Hosting Syrians under Temporary Protection was held in early January 2023 in Gaziantep, featuring the following presentations: 1) the Climate Change Adaptation Action Plan of Gaziantep and 2) the Green City Action Plan of Gaziantep. The role of UNEP VCT in these activities is described in output 2B above. The activities planned for Ukraine were assessed and delivery calibrated to support food and energy in this country which is described in output 2A.

Rating for Availability of Outputs: Satisfactory

5.4.2 Achievement of Project Outcomes

99. The outcome statements are coherent and well-articulated. They are suitable and adequate to achieve the desired impacts while aligning with the overarching goals and objectives. The assumptions and drivers mentioned in the ToC were in place and no change was made.

100. Outcome 1: Decision makers at regional and sub-regional levels increasingly incorporate the environmental dimension, including goals established under global, regional and sub-regional MEAs and processes, in the regional sustainable development policies.

Indicator/Target: 4 processes and their relevant output documents produced by policy makers at regional level have an enhanced integrated approach and better incorporate the environmental dimension into the implementation of the Agenda 2030 due to inputs under the project.

101. Some of the initiatives undertaken to realize this outcome include the Ninth Environment for Europe Ministerial Conference, held from October 5 to 7, 2022, in Nicosia, which served as the third High-level Meeting of Education and Environment Ministries (https://unece.org/sites/default/files/2024-11/ECE_NICOSIA.CONF_2022_2_E.pdf). The conference was attended by 42 member states of the United Economic Commission for Europe (ECE)¹⁰ and 10 non-member States of the ECE¹¹. During this conference, the Nicosia Ministerial Statement on Education for Sustainable Development was drafted, with ministers reaffirming their dedication to prioritizing education and environmental considerations in sustainable development efforts. Similarly, the Ninth Environment for Europe Ministerial Conference acknowledged the adverse effects of exceeding ecological limits due to rising energy demands, significant waste generation, excessive water consumption, uncontrolled wastewater discharges, and increasing global greenhouse gas emissions, particularly in relation to the application of circular economy principles to sustainable tourism (file:///C:/Users/aronr/OneDrive/Desktop/TE%20Pan-Euro%20project/Sust_Tourism_ECE_NICOSIA.CONF_2022_5_E.pdf). The documents provided by UNEP to this Ministerial Conference not only informed discussions at the conference but also led to priority setting for deliverables under the EfE process which are already driving individual country's commitments in the areas of Tourism and Infrastructure in the period of 2022-2026.

¹⁰ Albania, Andorra, Armenia, Austria, Azerbaijan, Belgium, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Bulgaria, Croatia, Cyprus, Czechia, Estonia, Finland, France, Georgia, Germany, Greece, Hungary, Italy, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Latvia, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Malta, Montenegro, Netherlands, North Macedonia, Portugal, Republic of Moldova, Romania, San Marino, Serbia, Slovakia, Slovenia, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland, Tajikistan, Ukraine, United States of America and Uzbekistan

¹¹ Bahrain, Egypt, Iraq, Jordan, Lebanon, Morocco, Oman, Qatar, Tunisia and United Arab Emirates

102. UNEP also presented its “circularity approach”, incorporating the “R” principles and the Governments of France and Spain have already started to pilot initiatives focusing on a circular economy of plastics in close collaboration with UNEP.
103. A regional strategy document has also been created to outline UNEP's support for the implementation of UN Reform and the SDG framework in the Pan-European Region (<https://sdgs.un.org/goals>). The One Health Joint Plan of Action was collaboratively created with the FAI, WOA, and WHO, incorporating enhanced environmental considerations (<https://www.who.int/publications/i/item/9789240059139#:~:text=Responding%20to%20international%20requests%20to%20prevent%20future%20pandemics,Health%20Joint%20Plan%20of%20Action%20%282022%E2%80%932026%29%20%28OH%20JPA%29>).
104. With contributions from the UNEP, the UNECE Strategy on ESD has been fortified, guiding national ministries of education and environment across the region in executing the strategy through 2030 (<https://unece.org/esd-strategy>). UNEP's involvement in formulating the Ministerial Statement from the Environment and Education ministers in 2022 further reinforced the document's focus on environmental issues, thereby influencing ESD policy development and priority setting in the region. Additionally, UNEP facilitated peer learning sessions and roundtable discussions, offering recommendations and insights for the reports of the Regional Sustainable Development Forum in 2021, 2022, and 2023, which subsequently contributed to the region's input for the High-Level Political Forum (HLPF).
105. Outcome 2: National level policy makers and UN country teams increasingly and coherently incorporate environmental sustainability into policies and plans.
106. Indicator/Target: 3 draft national strategies, assessments, country programming documents or processes which better incorporate environmental considerations.
107. In Serbia, a thematic subgroup focused on air pollution from domestic heating was formed under the UN Country Team Results Group on Environment and Climate Change. This task team, part of the IBC on Environment and Climate Change, assessed the impacts, challenges, and potential solutions related to air pollution from domestic heating in Serbia. This subgroup is pioneering in its approach to address a specific issue and aims to initiate discussions on a cohesive joint program designed collaboratively to assist the people and government of Serbia in addressing the challenges of clean and efficient home heating throughout the nation.
108. A project concept note has been created to improve governance and the sustainable management of natural resources in Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan by fostering transboundary cooperation in the Aral Sea region. The SDCFs for Kyrgyzstan, Georgia, and Montenegro, along with the Climate Change Adaptation (CCA) and programming documents for Turkmenistan, Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, and Kosovo, were developed with the support of UNEP and reflect national environmental priorities. These documents guide UN activities at the country level and facilitate the integration of environmental considerations into national initiatives.
109. Strategic advice on the selection and execution of nature-based solutions was collaboratively developed with national and local authorities, alongside UNDP, to enhance local involvement in the project's activities. These initiatives resulted in several actions taken by local authorities that directly benefit both the communities and the environment, including the establishment of an Urban Gardening Park, a training and rehabilitation center for children, and composting initiatives utilizing organic waste from the parks.
110. In the post project period, there should be follow-up programs to assure that the result from this project is progressing and maturing to produce desired outcomes. For further

maturation of the outcomes, all drivers need to remain supporting, and assumptions should not change. Most important assumptions like government's commitments, prioritising environment by governments, and sufficient resources allocation by governments are crucial to continue further progress outcomes. Political instability in some countries is a risk to the sustainability of the outcomes.

Rating for Achievement of Project Outcomes: "Satisfactory"

5.4.3 Achievement of Likelihood of Impact

111. The High-Level Ninth Environment for Europe Ministerial Conference, attended by Education and Environment Ministers, resulted in the drafting of the Nicosia Ministerial Statement on Education for Sustainable Development. During this conference, ministers reiterated their dedication to prioritizing education and environmental considerations within sustainable development initiatives. A thematic subgroup focused on air pollution from domestic heating, under the UN Country Team Results Group on Environment and Climate Change, assessed the impacts, challenges, and potential solutions related to air pollution from domestic heating in Serbia. Additionally, a project concept note was created to enhance governance and sustainable management of natural resources in Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan through transboundary cooperation concerning the Aral Sea. In a similar vein, the Ninth Environment for Europe Ministerial Conference on sustainable tourism acknowledged the adverse externalities associated with the sector and resolved to implement circular economy principles that incorporate environmental considerations to ensure the sustainability of tourism. The country assessment report from UNDA (2023) by UNDP Turkey and UNEP focused on NbS aimed at mitigating and adapting to climate change. A joint study conducted by UNEP, FAO, and UNECE has developed a program strategy to evaluate life cycle-wide environmental impacts (LCEI) and greenhouse gas emissions, recommending suitable programs to tackle the food and energy crisis. These decisions, along with others at regional, sub-regional, and national levels, suggest a promising future impact. To further advance these outcomes, UNEP and other UN partners must monitor the results of this project. The active participation of the UNEP team and successful collaborations have been instrumental in achieving targeted activities that contribute to meaningful impact.
112. It has been noted by the project team that reports from EU parliamentarians have highlighted concerns regarding plastic pollution and broader environmental issues, with a consistent emphasis on environmental priorities throughout their reports. These developments are encouraging signs of progress towards impactful change. But a political shift occurred in June 2024 and new EU parliamentarians joined EU. Hence may need follow up program to make new parliamentarians aware on environmental issues.
113. All the four assumptions (A1- Governments committed to the implementation of the SDGs; A2-Stakeholders and governments see the environmental dimension as integral to the development agenda; A3- Governments and regional fora use the opportunity of post-COVID recovery process to advance SD agenda, including its environmental dimension and A4-Sufficient resources are mobilized) held and all three drivers (D1- UN reform process enhances the integrated approach in the UN country level delivery; D2- Regional governance structure support and monitor the implementation of the 2030 Agenda and D3- Multi-stakeholder dialogues, partnerships and platforms support the SDGs process) were in place to support transition from project output to outcome stage. The outlined outcomes are most important to attain the intermediate states. The outcome 1, expect decision makers at regional and sub-regional levels increasingly incorporate the environmental dimension but does not specify areas of development sectors where these effects will take place. Similarly, outcome 2 expect national level policy makers and UN country teams increasingly and coherently incorporate environment sustainability into policies and plans but here also it has

not indicated areas very clearly. Therefore, it is difficult to explain extent of achievement of outcomes.

Similarly, regarding intermediate stage, it does not specify any sector where environmental dimensions of SDGs and MEAs at the regional, sub-regional and national level take place and also decision making, communication and advocacy will be evidence based but does not specify any specific section. Hence, it could be said that in few sectors this is initiated and could expect influencing other sectors of sustainable development and also assume that assumptions A1, A2, A4 will hold and also drivers D1, D2 and D3 remain in place to support the process in the coming days too. For attaining impact from the intermediate stage, it is expected that all these assumptions will remain (hold) and drivers will continue supporting the processes.

Rating for Likelihood of Impact: *Likely*

Rating for Effectiveness: *Satisfactory*

5.5 Financial Management

5.5.1 Adherence to UNEP's Financial Policies and Procedures

114. The disbursements and project expenditures were in line with the available budget. Transaction processes were undertaken and completed in a prompt and consistent manner. The project financing has been executed in accordance with the policies and procedures established by UNEP. Budget releases were conducted using the available cash received from donors. Due to delays in the project, the budgeted amounts for several categories became inadequate, particularly for operating costs, which increased beyond the initially planned timeframe. Adjustments were made to some program costs by reallocating additional resources from another project to facilitate the participation of extra delegates in the meeting. The total planned project cost, as outlined in the project document, was US\$1,716,927, comprising US\$1,320,147 in cash and US\$396,780 in kind contributions.

115. As of June 30, 2023, the actual amount received from donors was US\$ 957,494. The previously secured budget was US\$1,320,147, resulting in a difference of US\$583,127 between the planned and secured budgets. The committed funds from Germany were not received. The revised total budget is now US\$1,903,274, with an unsecured budget of US\$320,999. The total secured budget, combining cash and in-kind contributions, is US\$3,187,350. Detailed information regarding committed and received cash contributions from donors and co-financers is available in table 8 below. A few activities, particularly those implemented by the Israeli partner in Israel-based initiatives and UNDP in Turkey, saw an increase in scope. The costs associated with these additional activities were covered by the respective implementing partners.

Rating for Adherence to UNEP's/Donor Financial Policies and Procedures: *Satisfactory*

5.5.2 Completeness of Financial Information

116. The financial figures were not structured by outcome or outputs in the system and other than this, the financial documents were accurate and complete. The implementing agency has diligently monitored financial transactions and the processes of program implementation. In accordance with UNEP policies, the project underwent annual audits of its financial transactions, and no significant issues or delays in fund disbursements were

reported. Day-to-day financial transactions were managed by the Finance department of UNEP. Switzerland, OECD, UNDA made available committed amount (planned funding) while Environment Fund, Norway, SIDA provided less than committed amount. Israel contributed more than the planned funding which was due to the increase in their part of the project. As the financial information was not structured by outcome or output in the system, it is not possible to analyse expenditure ratios or change in budgeted figures by project component during project implementation. Grouping of funds from different donors to specific outcomes/outputs was a difficult task. To keep programs within budget, proposals/plans exceeding budgeted amount were not entertained. The Program Officer/coordinator of each country submitted progress reports, including financial information, to the Project Manager. This information was reviewed by the Project Manager and forwarded to Finance Officer to check the financial details. However, before submitting to Project Manager, the financial information of the reports was verified by the finance officer of the partner agencies. UNEP also had an auditing system which analysed financial statements tallying with the progress of activities. As per requirements of the partners, external auditors in the project countries were also involved to evaluate account and activities.

Table 9: Project co-financing

Funding by source (Life of project)	Planned funding	Secured funding	Expended
<i>All figures as USD</i>			
Funds from the Environment Fund	65,000	45,000	45,000
Funds from the Regular Budget	-	-	-
Extra-budgetary funding (listed per donor):			
Norway	310,131	195,412	185,631.35
SIDA	61,246	60,000	59,983.09
Switzerland	1,049,548	1,049,548	1,044,759.63
OECD	125,746	125,746	125,746
Israel	425,150	525,150	422,337.51
UNDA	329,000	329,000	329,000
<i>Sub-total: Project Funding</i>	<i>2,365,821</i>	<i>2,229,856</i>	<i>2,212,457.58</i>
Co-financing¹² (Cash and in-kind contributions)	Planned contributions	Secured contributions	Verified contributions
<i>All figures as USD</i>			
Co-financing cash contribution (listed by source):			
Environment Fund	80,394	80,394	80,394
Regular Budget	877,100	877,100	877,100
<i>Sub-total: in kind contribution</i>	<i>957,494</i>	<i>957,494</i>	<i>957,494</i>
Staffing (Total throughout the project)	Planned posts	Filled posts	-
<i>All figures as Full Time Equivalents</i>			
Environment Fund staff-post costs	(2 posts) 80,394	(2 posts) 80,394	(2 posts) 80,394
Regular Budget staff-post costs	(7posts) 877,100	(7posts) 877,100	(7posts) 877,100
Extra-budgetary funding for staff-posts (listed per donor)	1 post) 588,548	(1 post) 588,548	(1 post) 588,548
<i>Grand Total</i>	<i>3,323,315</i>	<i>3,187,350</i>	<i>3,169,951.58</i>

Source: Operational Project Closer Report, UNEP, 2024.

Rating for Completeness of Financial Information: Satisfactory

¹² Co-financing is understood as funding from a donor to a partner which is not received into UN Environment accounts but is used by a UN Environment partner or collaborating centre to deliver the results in a UN Environment – approved project.

5.5.3 Communication Between Finance and Project Management Staff

117. The communication between finance and project management staff was very cordial. During interviews, none of the staff either management, finance or executing partners had complaints regarding payments, communication or any other aspects related to finance or management. The evaluation also learned that there was regular communication between Project Manager, Finance Officer and staff from the executing agencies on progress of the project activities, fund management and reporting. Such communication helped to resolve the issues observed while implementing activities. Moreover, partners contributed to the implementation of some of the activities that had financial constraints.

*Rating for Communication Between Finance and Project Management Staff: **Satisfactory***

Rating for Financial Management: Satisfactory

5.6 Efficiency

118. The project paid attention to minimise UNEP's environmental footprint at the design phase as well as during implementation of every activity. As large number of activities were implemented during COVID pandemic phase, it also by restricting travel, minimised climate footprint. The project was not able to accomplish planned activities within the timeframe outlined in the project document due to delays associated with restrictions related to COVID-19 and also due to reform of the delivery model of UNEP. It was also affected by internal administrative difficulties with securing a suitable framework for the fully funded GEN activity.
119. The initial project implementation plan was created in September 2020, following the approval from the CEO and the commencement of the project on September 30, 2020. Despite being a flagship initiative of UNEP in the region, it could not be integrated into existing administrative structures, necessitating the development of a special solution. By June 2022, the project successfully established an administrative framework, allowing activities to resume thereafter. This overall process resulted in increased administrative costs associated with operating the project beyond the originally planned timeframe. The rise in costs led to a funding shortfall for certain activities; however, this was effectively addressed through collaboration with various organizations, which provided support from their projects. For instance, funding from the UN Development Account facilitated the joint implementation of Nature-based Solutions (NbS) activities in Turkey alongside UNDP Turkey. Likewise, Israel played a role in managing the increased expenses associated with the clean water program. Although the Project Document included plans for an inception workshop and a steering committee to guide the project strategically, neither the workshop was conducted nor was the steering committee formed. Instead, guidance was provided by the Regional Director and Deputy Director. The evaluation learned that the regional office was conducting meetings couple of times each year and through that provided technical and policy advice to the project team as well the governments of the countries of the region.
120. The project used pre-existing institutions for implementation of activities. In addition, the project successfully forged partnerships within the United Nations system, including UNEP, UNECE, UNESCO, Resident Coordinator's Office (RCO), UNCTs, WHO, UNDP, and Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD), with the backing of the DCO regional office. UNEP's partnership with UNECE, Inter-parliamentary Union, UNESCO, UNRC, Government of Israel and EU, for implementing various activities was planned at the project development phase and included in the ProDoc with details on division responsibilities and partnership with other organisation was established at the implementation phase based

on their expertise and experiences for effective implementation and quality of the results. These collaborations proved to be both effective and efficient in executing project activities. The partnerships also contributed to a reduction in implementation costs, enhancing the project's overall cost-effectiveness.

121. The Issue-Based Coalition on Environmental and Climate Change (IBC) enabled UN agencies involved with the leadership of UNEP, UNECE and UNESCO, improved environmental and climate considerations in the country-level UN programming. Similarly, the engagement with UNECE, particularly through the CEP secretariat, facilitated meaningful participation in the Commission's work. The establishment of closer connections among senior justices across the region during the execution of activities under 1A.1 significantly supported the judiciary and is expected to yield sustainable results beyond the project's duration. Operational-level collaboration with the European Commission and other EU institutions was initiated to carry out activities under 1.A.3, further strengthening UNEP's partnerships and ensuring the continuation of joint efforts after the project's conclusion. Additionally, a closer relationship with the Inter-Parliamentary Union (IPU) during the implementation of 1.D not only aided the project during its active phase but also led to the development of a multi-year cooperation Memorandum of Understanding. Several of the activities were a continuation of the ongoing program of either UNEP (e.g. GEN) or partners which also supported easier implementation and sustainability. The project also utilized UNEP's database and data belonging to partners and project countries to help formulate and implement the project activities. The project's activities were designed to help minimize UNEP's carbon footprint.
122. Partnerships were cultivated among stakeholders in Israel, Kazakhstan, and Uzbekistan, focusing on knowledge and technology sharing for water management to combat water scarcity under Output 2, which included study visits to facilities in Israel and a training workshop held in Central Asia in 2023. Nevertheless, throughout the project, several strategic deliverables related to NbS were developed, informing subsequent actions at the local level, particularly in Azerbaijan and Serbia. Due to COVID-19 restrictions, activities under 2.A.3, which involved experience exchange visits, were impacted.
123. The project has significantly enhanced the efficiency of participating countries to incorporate environmental considerations into their development planning and execution, while also bolstering policy support. This advancement aligns with the UNEP Medium-Term Strategy (MTS) for 2022-2025, particularly in strengthening disaster risk governance. The coordination and synergy with other programs and initiatives sharing similar goals was seamless and consistent, contributing to the coherent implementation of multilateral environmental agreements. Through the Global Environment Network (GEN), UNEP successfully engaged thousands of key stakeholders across diverse fields, including biodiversity, environment, education, health, and peacebuilding, providing a platform for knowledge sharing that maintained synergies and integrated environmental considerations into their respective programs. The project management team made every effort to ensure the successful completion of the project while upholding the quality of the results. Due to team approach, the project was also able to raise significant additional budget at project revision and extension phase. This role is now transferred to the UNEP Head Quarters.

Rating for Efficiency: Satisfactory

5.7 Monitoring and Reporting

5.7.1 Monitoring Design and Budgeting

124. The monitoring and reporting plan was established in accordance with UNEP standards and evaluation policies. The project included a logframe that outlined outcomes, outputs, and activity indicators, complete with timelines to track the implementation progress. Indicators of outputs and outcomes did not specify any specific sector of sustainable development, so it was difficult to judge the level of achievement of outcomes and other states. The TE utilized the indicators from the project logframe to assess progress and achievements. A budget of USD 22,970 was designated for regular monitoring activities, while an additional USD 27,750 was allocated for the terminal evaluation, indicating that sufficient funds were allocated for monitoring and reporting purposes. The monitoring plan underwent a review during the project assessment in December 2021, but no changes were made in the monitoring design. The document review revealed that regular monitoring was done to identify risks and adopt mitigation action (adaptive management), but the evaluator did not find reports on risk monitoring in any documents or indicated by informants.
125. The indicators outlined in the project result framework are generally characterized as SMART, quantifiable, and realistic. The monitoring and evaluation budget, along with the work plan, is detailed in Table 5 of the Project Document. Given that this project is not funded by the GEF, there is no established tracking tool. Additionally, the ToC diagram does not address risks, nor does it include information regarding gender, disadvantaged, or indigenous communities. Furthermore, the result framework lacks gender-disaggregated indicators¹³. Considering that women, disadvantaged groups, and indigenous communities are particularly vulnerable to environmental and climate change impacts, it is essential that they are prioritized in development policies and environmental strategies. Since the project focuses on policy development, it is imperative that gender-disaggregated indicators are incorporated into training sessions, workshops, and policy formulation processes.

*Rating for Monitoring and Evaluation Design: **Satisfactory***

5.7.2 Monitoring of Project Implementation

126. Ongoing project monitoring was conducted by the Project Manager, with support from Task Managers in each country. However, there was no provision for periodic assessment of risks and assumptions. Nevertheless, the NbS program, among other things, had a process for identifying and mitigating risk factors at development and implementation phases. Similar to other UNEP projects, a Project Steering Committee was not established, despite being included in the ProDoc, which would have facilitated monitoring and strategic guidance. Many activities were corporate in nature, with some implemented early while others awaited partner involvement. Of these, certain activities were focused on specific countries, while others operated at a regional level. All these initiatives were consolidated under a single umbrella project, making it impractical to form a steering committee to provide strategic oversight for such diverse activities across different countries. Although a technical committee was not formed, the technical teams from partner organizations and UNEP provided technical assistance, overall supervision, and guidance from the regional director. Meetings involving sub-regional and country offices were held biannually to address challenges and offer strategic support. Financial monitoring was overseen by the Finance Manager based in Geneva, with assistance from the task manager in each country. Implementing partners in each country, also monitored their activities on regular basis. Due to the absence of gender-disaggregated indicators in the logframe, no gender-disaggregated data was gathered. The

¹³ Disaggregation by gender was not a requirement of the project design at the time

project did not consistently update the risk log and lessons learned log. However, the project utilized monitoring information for adaptive management; for instance, it coordinated with partners to assist programs experiencing funding challenges and implemented virtual communication and meetings to adjust to the circumstances arising from COVID-19.

Rating for Monitoring of Project Implementation: Satisfactory

5.7.3 Project Reporting

127. The task manager in each country reported to coordinators of each thematic areas who then reported to Project Manager. The financial reports also followed the same route. Reports were generated quarterly, which were subsequently updated in the Project Implementation Manual (PIM) and IPMR. Project information was also posted on the webpages of UNEP and partners. After review of the financial information by UNEP Europe Office (Geneva), it was reported to finance officer in Nairobi. The IBC also established strong communication channels through DCO to RCs and with the RCs directly and reports on all activities carried out during the project were also communicated formally through IBC's annual reporting via DCO. The project monitoring reports were prepared and submitted in timely manner and no complaints about late reporting was learned from the project team or the partners. The PIMS/donor reporting adequately reflected the project scope of work and also there were consistency between PIMS and donor reports and available evidence.

Rating for Project Reporting: Satisfactory

Rating for Monitoring and Reporting: Satisfactory

5.8 Sustainability

128. An exit strategy was not established due to the fact that the project activities were carried out by various partners, who will maintain these activities following the conclusion of the project. Consequently, the majority of these initiatives will persist under the regular programs of other partners. Many of these activities have been in progress for several years prior to the initiation of this project and are expected to continue in the future. Additionally, some activities were piloted even before the project's inception, and the insights gained from these pilots informed the development of several project activities. Therefore, there is no necessity for an exit strategy; rather, the strategy is to sustain these activities through the partners involved in their implementation.
129. The commitment of governments to the implementation of Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and the recognition by stakeholders of the environmental dimension as a crucial element of development agendas will ensure that environmental considerations remain integral to their development activities and the 2030 Agenda. Consequently, the sustainability of project outcomes is anticipated. Furthermore, project partners, including the Brussels office of the EU, IBC, GEN, SDCFs, CCAs, and Turkey ODA, have been actively engaged prior to the initiation of this project and will continue their efforts beyond its conclusion, thereby facilitating the realization of the results. Additionally, collaboration with ministerial processes will further enhance the continuity of the project's outcomes.

5.8.1 Socio-political Sustainability

130. In terms of Socio-political impact, the project has established policies for governments and regional forums, providing technical support to these forums to incorporate

environmental considerations into sustainable development. It has also raised awareness among national stakeholders regarding the environmental aspects of sustainable development in the context of post-COVID-19 recovery. The policies and processes developed by local, national, and international actors are based on evidence and tailored to specific contexts, resulting in action plans and guidance aimed at fostering resilience, sustainable development, and a green recovery from COVID-19 in urban areas hosting Syrian refugees. Moreover, the project has strengthened the capacity of institutional actors within national and local governments in Turkey to implement these strategies, action plans, and guidance effectively. These initiatives are likely to promote the integration of environmental considerations in sustainable development activities beyond the project's duration.

*Rating of Socio-political Sustainability: **Likely***

5.8.2 Financial Sustainability

131. The majority of the project activities are expected to persist beyond the project's conclusion, facilitated by the partners' ongoing initiatives, which include engagement with ministerial processes, interactions with the Brussels office regarding EU matters, and involvement with IBC, GEN, SDCFs, CCAs, and Turkey ODA. The availability of funding for these activities suggests a strong likelihood of financial sustainability. Various components of this project are being executed through the partners' regular projects and programs, which will extend beyond the project's duration, thereby continuing to support its outcomes. Furthermore, UNEP Regional offices have extensive programs in place, and the results of this project will be integrated into these ongoing initiatives. Funding is also allocated for GEN activities, ensuring its continuation as a corporate endeavour of UNEP.

*Rating of Financial Sustainability: **Likely***

5.8.3 Institutional Sustainability

132. From an institutional perspective, technical support has been provided to establish or operationalize sub-regional and regional multi-stakeholder platforms aimed at enhancing regional environmental governance. This support also includes efforts to improve the participation and engagement of European Member States and stakeholders at UNEA and its associated processes. Additionally, technical assistance has been offered to incorporate environmental considerations and align with internationally agreed goals under relevant MEAs within the national mechanisms responsible for coordinating the 2030 Agenda. These efforts, along with the partnerships formed during the project's implementation among various institutions and UN agencies, will contribute to the sustainability of the project's results and facilitate future activities. The new project outline proposed by UNEP to strengthen collaboration between Israel and the governments of Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan has received approval from stakeholders, serving as a foundation for further discussions and the development of a comprehensive project document. Several products developed under this project have been disseminated to all participating countries.

*Rating of Institutional Sustainability: **Likely***

Rating for Sustainability (Likelihood): **Likely**

5.9 Factors Affecting Performance and Cross-Cutting Issues

5.9.1 Preparation and Readiness

133. The project had to establish various arrangements and partnerships to implement the project activities and that caused some delay in initiating the implementation process. As part of preparation for implementing project activities, the project had to address UNEP's internal administrative challenges in securing a suitable framework for the fully funded activities of the GEN, which, despite being a flagship initiative of the UNEP in the region, could not be integrated into UNEP's existing administrative structures. Besides, COVID restrictions, reform of the delivery model of UNEP also delayed implementation process. A tailored solution was developed, allowing activities to resume only after the administrative framework was established in June 2022. The project did not conduct an inception workshop nor produced an inception report. The Project Document (ProDoc) included a preliminary workplan that was utilized to commence the implementation of activities. In December 2021, this work plan was revised to incorporate requests for additional activities. Although the ProDoc included a provision for a steering committee, which was intended to be established during the initial phase of project preparation, no such committee was actually formed. Instead, policy and technical guidance were provided through the regional office, and a structured approach for monitoring project implementation was established (refer to the Monitoring Design section above) as part of the project preparation process. Additionally, partnerships were formed with relevant institutions to garner their support for the implementation of project activities, with some partnerships being established during the implementation phase.
134. To support the execution of various activities, arrangements were made in 2020. The Issue Based Coalition (IBC) on Environment and Climate Change was created in that year, with UNEP acting as one of the three core coordinating agencies alongside UNECE and UNESCO. The IBC's membership included representatives from 18 UN agencies. Additional details regarding the project inception can be found in the sections titled "C: Nature of External Context" and "F: Efficiency."

*Rating for Project Preparation and Readiness: **Moderately Satisfactory***

5.9.2 Quality of project Management and Supervision

135. Project Management is further described above in the Project Design Assessment Section and Project Supervision is also explained in the Project Monitoring and Reporting Section. The collaboration between UNEP's Project Management Unit (PMU) and implementing partners was characterized by a strong and cooperative spirit, which facilitated their engagement in project execution and helped address financial challenges. This positive relationship enabled the arrangement of necessary technical support related to various NbS activities, as well as the mobilization of funds and human resources from partners, thereby ensuring the effective achievement of targeted activities. As a result, the project yielded outcomes that exceeded the initial expectations outlined in the ProDoc.

5.9.2.1 UNEP/Implementing Agency

136. The project was implemented by the UNEP's Regional Office for Europe, with additional collaboration from UNECE, UNESCO, the European Commission, and the IPU. A Project Manager located in Geneva, Switzerland, supervised this project alongside several others. This Project Manager was tasked with monitoring both the technical and financial aspects of the project, ensuring compliance with UNEP and donor implementation requirements, participating in partner meetings, coordinating project evaluations, and conducting reviews.

Semi-annual expenditure reports submitted by partner organizations are assessed by the National Task Managers prior to being forwarded to the Fund Management Officer.

137. The UNEP's Europe Office Unit supervised the Project Manager, evaluated essential reports and documents, and offered additional support as required by the project. The Financial Management Officer (FMO), situated in Nairobi, was responsible for approving all expenditure reports, endorsing the semi-annual financial reports, and authorizing subsequent budget allocations.

5.9.2.2 Partners/Executing Agency

138. The project was overseen by the Project Manager (UNEP), with the regional Deputy Director of UNEP providing overall supervision. It included a team of topic coordinators, which comprised regional sub-program coordinators and personnel from the sub-regional offices. The implementation of the project was supported by the Law Division, along with thematic assistance from the Economy and Ecosystems Divisions. In addition to the involvement of UNEP staff, the project required close collaboration with various UN agencies, strong cooperation with the DCO, and established connections with UN Resident Coordinators across 18 countries and territories, as well as with UNCT staff. These collaborations were instrumental in executing activities 1.A.1, 1.B.1, 1.B.3, and 2.A.1. Health-related initiatives were carried out with the assistance of WHO. Furthermore, UNDP played a significant role in several project activities, including the implementation of nature-based solutions and fostering connections between judicial systems and sub-regional initiatives focused on environmental litigation in Central Asia and the Western Balkans.

Technical Committee

139. No technical committee was formed in this project. The PM was calling meetings of all coordinators including technical staffs which used to analyse the progress and provide technical inputs to the project. In addition, technical staff of the partner organizations also provided technical support to the project.

*Rating for Quality of Project Management and Supervision: **Satisfactory***

5.9.3 Stakeholders Participation and Cooperation

140. The implementation structure of the Project, along with the anticipated involvement of stakeholders in various activities such as piloting, training, seminars/workshops, and the development of plans, policies, and guidelines, is detailed in Table 9 below. An analysis of the actual stakeholders engaged in the project implementation was conducted based on their participation in different activities and their contributions. The partners were selected based on their strengths, interests and needs, e.g. Gaziantep Metropolitan Municipality and Greater Amman Municipality were selected because they were interested in Nature Based Solution to address refugee problems. The collaboration among stakeholders was commendable, as they actively engaged in their designated project activities and fostered strong cooperation both among themselves and with UNEP Europe Regional.
141. The project formed partnerships with ministries and municipalities across multiple countries. It also established effective collaborations within the UN system, which significantly contributed to its success. During the project's implementation, a close working relationship with UNECE and the CEP secretariat was cultivated, proving to be beneficial for the Commission's operations.
142. The actual stakeholders involved are listed in the following table:

Table 10: Project stakeholders by responsibility and level of involvement

Name of the stakeholder	Responsibilities	Level of involvement
UNECE	Implementation of certain activities	Moderate
CEP	Contributed in policy formulation	High
UN DCO	Contributed in coordination	
UNDP	Executing partner	High
GEN	Contributed in knowledge sharing	High
UNCT	Contribution in coordination	High
UNESCO	Contribution in implementation of education program	High
RCO	Contribution in coordination	High
ICSD	Developed roadmap and Conducted Meetings	High
WHO	Executing agency for health program	High
WECF	High	High
Ministry of Environment, Israel	Donor as well as executing agency of water program.	High
MASHAV	Contribution in program implementation	High
Ministry of Ecology, Uzbekistan	Implemented Water management program	High
Ministry of Ecology, Kazakhstan	Implemented Water management program	High
Municipality of Belgrade	Implemented Nature-based solution program.	High
UN DCO	Assisted in program implementation	High
Gaziantep Metropolitan Municipality	Implemented Nature-based solution program	High
Greater Amman Municipality	Implemented Nature-based solution program	High
European Judges Network	Contributed to policy formulation	High
Government of Norway	Donor.	Moderate
Government of Switzerland	Donor	Moderate
UNDA	Donor	Moderate

Rating for Stakeholders Participation and Cooperation: Satisfactory

5.9.4 Responsiveness to Human Rights and Gender Equality

143. Human rights and gender considerations were not systematically integrated into the project design. However, project activities indirectly promoted human rights through various events related to human rights and environmental issues organized by GEN. Numerous side events during different sessions of the Human Rights Council (HRC) provided updates on environmental matters. Additionally, there were side events focused on the negative impacts of climate change on the full and effective realization of human rights. Discussions were also held regarding the right to science in relation to toxic substances, plastic waste, mercury, small-scale gold mining, and the challenges posed by economic, social, cultural,

environmental, and conflict-related issues. Furthermore, side events addressing the rights of women and girls in relation to a healthy environment were organized. Throughout the project duration, GEN issued several hundred weekly newsletters that included updates on significant topics in international Geneva, encompassing human rights and environmental concerns. The materials developed under section 1.B.3 and the policy note for parliamentarians under section 1.D by IBC effectively integrated human rights considerations. The preparatory work for the UNEA with stakeholders under section 1.C.1 involved discussions on human rights, while the colloquium for senior judiciary under section 1.A also included dialogues on participatory rights.

144. Although gender is not explicitly referenced in the results framework, various activities undertaken by the project and its partners have taken gender aspects into account. The policy note on Green approaches to COVID-19 recovery outlined several potential actions for parliaments to facilitate a sustainable recovery process, which included a dedicated section on gender considerations related to this recovery and potential parliamentary actions. This note was distributed to over 170 parliaments worldwide and presented at multiple events attended by several hundred parliamentarians from 55 countries, including two from Africa. The briefings and multi-stakeholder dialogues organized under the 1.B.1 activities by GEN encompassed topics such as gender and the environment, peace building and the environment, as well as health and the environment. Additionally, the GEN dialogue on Nature-based Solutions and People, held in 2021, addressed gender-responsive approaches to Nature-based Solutions that benefit both people and the environment. These discussions underscored the significant role of gender in influencing the management of natural resources, including access, control, and utilization of resources, as well as the diversity of knowledge. The Country Assessment Report, prepared in 2022 by UNEP and UNDP under section 2.C, provides a detailed country-specific analysis as part of the UNDA 2023H project, aimed at identifying needs, opportunities, and gender considerations for the development of new strategic guidance, action plans, and networks in Turkey, along with disseminating this information to local, national, and international stakeholders.
145. The project also engaged youth through engagement with Major Groups and Stakeholders under activity 1.C.1, 1.A.3, 1B.1. UNEP together with UNESCO and UNECE organized a side event at the High-level meeting of Mediterranean Ministers of Education of ESD, where creating resilience through the power of education for sustainable development was discussed to highlight the role of education for sustainable development in building resilience in society. These events also shared policy recommendations on how ESD can be utilized for the transformation needed to respond challenges and how stakeholders, within or outside of the education system can help to build resilience of our societies, economies and planet. In an event organized at the UN House in Brussels on October 21st, 2022, officially launched the Toolkit on Pro-environmental Youth engagement. UNEP Brussels Office supported the organization of a UN team Brussels pre-European development Days event with European Commission DG International Partnerships (DG Intpa) brining youth together to discuss how they think the Global Gateway can help boost sustainable development worldwide. UNEP also contributed to the European Youth Event (EYE) in Strasbourg organized by the European Parliament to engage a wide representation of European youth and was able to bring together 10,000 youth (both online and in person in Strasbourg). The sideline event organized by the European Economic and Social Committee (EESC) in COP26 in Glasgow was also supported by UNEP where youth and high-level decision-makers engaged in a dialogue on opportunities, challenges and ways to make climate and sustainability policies. A virtual round-table Regional Forum on Sustainable Development organized on 11 March 2021 by UNWTO and UNEP in collaboration with UNESCO and UNECE on Transforming Tourism for a sustainable, prosperous, and inclusive post-COVID-19 world shared knowledge and experience on role of tourism in building prosperous, resilient and inclusive societies in line with the targets of the 2030 Agenda and climate imperatives. Similarly, NbS activities in

Turkey and Jordan contributed to vulnerable communities like Syrian refugees which included large number of women.

146. Though the project is policy related and not directly related to Human Rights or Gender, but several right related to environment and health and role of gender and youths were considered in activities of the project. Human Right and Gender Equality is rated as **“Satisfactory”**

Rating for Human Right and Gender Equality: Satisfactory

5.9.5 Environmental and Social Safeguards

147. Given the policy-oriented nature of the project, no adverse unintended consequences of the project activities were anticipated during its development, and no negative impacts were reported during the implementation phase. A substantial portion of the project was carried out during the COVID pandemic, a period characterized by travel restrictions, which precluded the likelihood of any environmentally detrimental effects. Furthermore, there were no reports of negative social or economic repercussions from any participating country.

Rating for Environmental and Social Safeguards: Satisfactory

5.9.6 Country Ownership and Driven-ness

148. The pan-European region is home to 18 UNCT that are actively involved in the development of United Nations Sustainable Development Cooperation Frameworks (UNSDCFs). Prior to the formulation of the UNSDCF, a CCA was conducted, representing a collaborative effort among agencies to assess various development challenges and evaluate potential responses from the UN country team within the UNSDCF framework. This initiative was informed by prior experiences and lessons learned from supporting governmental activities in the pan-European region, including the Caspian Sea Framework Convention, the Carpathian Mountain Convention, and the Geneva Environment Network, which exemplifies interagency cooperation. Additionally, ongoing engagement with regional environmental and sustainable development forums, such as the European Environment and Health Initiative, the Environment for Europe process and its CEP, the Regional Sustainable Development Forum, and the Interstate Commission for Sustainable Development in Central Asia, was integral to the project. The initiative also considered high-level discussions regarding collaboration with the European Union, particularly in relation to the European Green Deal, the Neighbourhood Policy, and EU assistance frameworks, as well as experiences gained from establishing and supporting global and regional platforms aimed at enhancing technical cooperation and advocacy efforts in the region. NbS were developed through pilot projects in Azerbaijan, Georgia, and Ukraine to tackle environmental challenges identified by the UN system and national governments, in partnership with agencies such as UNDP. The UNEP Europe Office worked closely with the Serbia Resident Coordinator Office to assist the National Statistical Office in improving the availability of environment-related Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) indicators and to foster enhanced collaboration with national data providers.
149. Since, regional and national level stakeholders are involved in development of the project using information from the past experiences and lessons and implemented by themselves, this project has strong country ownership and driven-ness.

Rating for Country Ownership and Driven-ness: Satisfactory

5.9.7 Communication and Public Awareness

All project deliverables have been successfully uploaded to the Project Information Management System (PIMs). The system currently contains over 300 deliverables that are consistently updated. These deliverables have also been made accessible on the websites of various organizations participating in the project. Specifically, the deliverables for 1.A.1 are available on the UNECE webpage, ensuring access for all stakeholders and participants in the regional forums. The deliverable for A.1.2, known as the Roadmap, has been uploaded to PIMs and can be accessed through the Europe Office (Central Asia Sub-regional Office), in addition to being distributed to all members of the ICSD. Similarly, deliverables and information regarding activities with the EU (1A.3) have been posted on PIMs and are also accessible via the Brussels Office website. Information, materials, and events related to GEN can be found on the GEN webpage. Documents and strategies concerning Nature-Based Solutions (NBS) produced under 1.B.2, along with outlines of local projects and studies developed in Serbia and Azerbaijan, have been shared with local stakeholders and are available on PIMs, as well as through the activity lead in the Europe Office. Information and deliverables pertaining to the IBC have been posted on the website managed by DCO, making them publicly accessible, particularly to UNCTs. Previous IBC materials were also available on a dedicated webpage maintained by UNECE. Information related to meetings under 1.C.1 has been organized and is accessible on PIMs. Likewise, the Police Guidance developed under 1.D.1 has been distributed to over 170 parliaments and is available on the UNEP and IPU webpages. UN country programme documents, developed with the support of UNEP under 2.A.1, have been uploaded to PIMs and can be found on the webpages of the respective countries' Resident Coordinators' Offices (RCOs). Internal reports from VCT meetings are available on PIMs and are managed by the activity lead for 2.A.2. Additionally, materials related to 2.A.3 have been provided to all relevant local stakeholders.

Rating for Communication and Public Awareness: Satisfactory

Rating for Factors Affecting Performance and Cross-Cutting Issues: Satisfactory

6 CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

6.1 Conclusions

150. The project was developed to contribute to the integration of environmental issues in Agenda 2030. It was focused on addressing the gaps that were hindering integration of environmental issues in sustainable development activities in Pan-European countries with active participation of relevant partners. The project involved relevant government institutions from project design through implementation, therefore, there was strong ownership from the project countries' governments. The results framework had SMART indicators to follow the project's progress. Since this project was mostly policy-oriented, only a few activities had gender-disaggregated indicators. Through implementation, the project increased some of the activities at the request of some countries and the increased costs were borne by the implementing partners. The project implementation was affected due to COVID restrictions and that delayed the project implementation and extended the timeframe. The project was developed by combining several small, scattered activities with a limited budget, and several activities were added during implementation (e.g., two outcomes—2B and 2C—were added in the sole project revision). Due to the diverse nature of the activities and wide range of geographical areas it covered, the project did not have a steering committee. But technical inputs and strategic guidance was provided through the UNEP technical team and fora

represented by the partners which meet twice a year to discuss challenges and identify solutions. The project was revised once to include additional activities and also to adjust budgets.

151. The project included the participation of other UN agencies, indicating strong partnerships. It also partnered with the government institutions of the project countries and other agencies, and this helped to leverage the budget as well as the technical expertise of those agencies.
152. The project successfully leveraged resources from Norway to tackle the challenges faced by environmental defenders within the governance framework of Project Area 6, specifically through Output 1A and Output 2A of the Environmental Rights Initiative (SQ1). Many activities associated with this regional project are extensions of efforts previously undertaken by various organizations, including the UNEP. These activities also encompass corporate initiatives executed by UNEP's Policy and Programme Division, both regionally and globally, thereby contributing to UNEP's mission of integrating environmental considerations into SDGs (SQ2). The project facilitated discussions with stakeholders, including representatives from other regions, allowing it to benefit from best practices shared by other UNEP regional offices (SQ3). Furthermore, the project aligns with UNEP's Medium-Term Strategy (MTS), Programme of Work (PoW), and strategic priorities, as well as those of donor countries. It is pertinent to regional, sub-regional, and national environmental priorities.
153. The project incorporated lessons learned from UNEP initiatives in the region. Various UN agencies participated to provide their expertise and financial resources to support the project's activities. The project built upon several initiatives that were previously established by its partners. A diverse array of stakeholders participated in the implementation of the project, and collaboration among these stakeholders was effective. Each partner was responsible for executing their designated activities.
154. Although gender and human rights considerations were not systematically integrated¹⁴, the project activities indirectly supported the protection of human rights. Side events were organized to address the impact of climate change on human rights, particularly concerning women and girls. The newsletters published by GEN provided updates on significant issues in international Geneva, including human rights and environmental matters. Discussions held by GEN and other seminars focused on the influence of gender in the management of natural resources.
155. Given that this is a policy-oriented project, no negative unintended consequences from the project activities were anticipated during either the development or implementation phases. None of the countries involved reported any adverse social or economic impacts resulting from the project. In terms of knowledge management, all project deliverables have been uploaded to the Project Information Management System (PIMs), with over 300 deliverables regularly added and also made available on the websites of various organizations participating in the project.
156. It was a challenging project, but with partnership development, it was able to implement all activities with a limited budget. The project accomplished almost all the targeted activities and only two activities were reprioritized and those were also accomplished by the partner immediately after official closer of this project. The significant contributions made by UNEP, including the provision of informational documents and the preparation of ministerial declarations at two regional ministerial conferences (EfE and ESD), have been crucial in not only facilitating policy implementation at the regional level but also in aligning

¹⁴ Gender and Human right was not a project design requirement

with the global priorities established through UNEA. Additionally, UNEP's leadership in organizing various events at the three RFSDs has fostered knowledge exchange and influenced the outcomes of the Forum, as well as its contributions to the global HLPF. Another notable achievement of the project is the establishment and successful advancement of the IBC on Environment and Climate Change. Furthermore, the development of SDCFs for Kyrgyzstan, Georgia, and Montenegro, along with the CCA and programming documents for Turkmenistan, Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, and Kosovo, reflects the incorporation of these countries' environmental priorities, representing just a few of the project's outcomes.

157. The project had a standard monitoring plan and structure. The project activities were monitored by the Project Manager with the help of Program Officer in each country and who received report from implementing partners. The reports also included financial reports which were monitored by the Finance Manager. The dedication of governments to the execution of SDGs and the acknowledgment by stakeholders of the environmental aspect as a vital component of development agendas will guarantee that environmental factors remain central to their development initiatives and the 2030 Agenda. Furthermore, the project partners, which include the Brussels office of the EU, IBC, GEN, SDCFs, CCAs, and Turkey ODA, have been actively involved prior to the project's launch and will persist in their efforts even after its completion, thus aiding in the achievement of the desired outcomes. Additionally, collaboration with ministerial processes will further strengthen the sustainability of the project's results. This ensures the enduring impact of the project outcomes.

Table 11: Summary of project findings and ratings

Criteria	Main Finding/Comments	Rating
A. Strategic Relevance		HS
Alignment to MTS, PoW and strategic priorities	Aligned with MTS, PoW and strategic priorities	HS
Alignment to Donor/Partner Strategic priorities	Aligned to donor and partner's strategic priorities	HS
Relevance to global, regional, Sub-regional and national environmental priorities	Relevance to global, regional and national environmental priorities	HS
Complementarity with existing interventions/coherence	Complemented many activities conducted by UNEP and partners	HS
B. Quality of Project Design	Designed to address the needs and following the standard format of the UNEP	S
C. Nature of External context	Initially affected due to Covid-19, project activities in Jordan and Turkey were hindered for some time but later resolved	F
D. Effectiveness		S
i. Availability of outputs	Most of the outputs were completed within the project life. Two reprioritized outputs were also completed by partners after the end of the project.	S
ii. Achievement of project outcomes	Outcomes were achieved. Majority of planned outputs were successfully completed. Some of the outputs were limited to certain countries. Per the	S

Criteria	Main Finding/Comments	Rating
	log frame, outcome results were expected in most of the countries in the region.	
iii. Likelihood of impact	Likely to reach the impact statement in the future	L
E. Financial Management		S
Adherence to UNEP's financial policies and processes	Adhered to UNEP's Financial policies and processes.	S
Completeness of project financial information	Completeness of project financial information	S
Communication between finance and project management staff	Good communication between finance and project	S
F. Efficiency		S
Efficiently implemented project activities		
G. Monitoring and Reporting		S
Monitoring design and budgeting	Monitoring design follows standard UNEP provision and budget allocated sufficiently	S
Monitoring of project implementation	Monitoring conducted through the executing partners and also country team	S
Project reporting	Reporting through the channel developed for implementing purposes	S
D. Sustainability		L
Socio-political Sustainability	Trained and enhanced knowledge of key people from each country	L
Financial Sustainability	UNEP and partners' ongoing and future initiatives will carry on some of the results of this project	L
Institutional Sustainability	Platforms continue functioning	L
E. Factors and Processes Affecting Project performance		S
Preparation and readiness		MS
Quality of project management and supervision	Manager supervised through coordinators of each thematic area and also through the officers from the executing partners	S
UNEP/Implementing Agency	UNEP Europe Office implemented project satisfactorily	S
Partners/Executing Agency	Partners executed activities as per provisioned	S
Stakeholder participation and cooperation	Stakeholders actively participated and cooperated with each other	S
Responsiveness to human rights and gender equity	Not integrated into the project but activities indirectly promoted human rights. Some side	S

Criteria	Main Finding/Comments	Rating
	events focused on human rights. Some events addressed rights of women and girls.	
Country ownership and drive-ness.	IBC identified activities based on country's need and executed with their active involvement so strong ownership and drive-ness.	S
Communication and public awareness	Project deliverables were uploaded to the PIMs. It contains over 300 deliverables. Information is also disseminated through partners webpages.	S
Overall Project Performance Rating		S

6.2 Lessons Learned

Lesson Learned #1:	Direct engagement of UNCTs to support country level interventions is essential in a multi-country and/or regional project. Since there will be large number of requests related to environmental inputs, clear prioritization should be maintained to enable effective intervention within available resources.
Context/comment:	Partnership with relevant partner is important and, in this project, it was well demonstrated. It became easier to coordinate with the government and also facilitate the activities within country with the help of UNCT.

Lesson Learned #2:	Coordination and partnerships with other relevant UN agencies will not only assure quality of outcomes but also best utilise resources and economise costs. But depending upon the nature of the activities, it may also be wise to build partnership with other agencies for outsourcing expertise.
Context/comment:	Benefits of Partnership. More than 100 UN staff gathered in Turkey and formulated a model to conduct the project with a limited budget. This is one example of effective partnership with other UN agencies.

Lesson Learned #3:	Project planning and revisions should be done properly so that time and resources will be managed realistically, and also appropriate partnership is made to achieve the target within the timeframe.
Context/comment:	Timely revision of project document helps to address financial as well as technical problem. The review of the project document facilitated an evaluation of the available budget and activities, which in turn allowed for the realignment of activities. Additionally, it provided an opportunity to identify partners to support the activities that were underfunded.

Lesson Learned #4:	Projects with limited funding will be difficult to implement and will be costly. However, when small activities or projects with small budgets are brought under one umbrella and managed by a committed team, it will
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	help implementation, even with limited resources and without compromising in quality of outputs.
Context/comment:	Merging small programs into one broad project will reduce administration costs and implement effectively. This project brought several activities under one umbrella of this project and implemented efficiently and cost wise also effectively.

6.3 Recommendations

Recommendation #1:	UNEP should develop a communications mechanism through which countries could raise issues that they would like UNEP to help address and UNEP could quickly access these issues and initiate projects.
Challenge/problem to be addressed by the recommendation:	Communication gaps. Some activities to influence policy for all countries was mentioned in the project documents. But no specific activities or specific training was initially identified in this project. Even other than Uzbekistan and Kyrgyzstan, other countries were not identified. The specific issues and needs related information of each of the participating countries was missing in the project document. If there will be a mechanism through which counties could bring their issues or need then it will be easier for UNEP also to develop project with specific activities to address the issues or fulfil needs of the country.
Priority Level:	Critical
Type of Recommendation	UNEP-wide
Responsibility:	UNEP
Proposed implementation time-frame:	12 months

Recommendation #2:	It is recommended that UNEP provide sustainable funding in the projects which include mostly corporate activities.
Challenge/problem to be addressed by the recommendation:	Fund constraints and sustainability issues. In this project, funds were pulled from partners and accomplished activities, but this will not be easy all the time. This kind of project which include 90% of corporate activities needs sustainable funding.
Priority Level:	High
Type of Recommendation	UNEP-wide
Responsibility:	UNEP
Proposed implementation time-frame:	In future projects

Recommendation #3:	To continue corporate activities, UNEP Regional Offices need funds. Hence, it is recommended that UNEP provision some budget to regional offices for such corporate activities in the region.
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Challenge/problem to be addressed by the recommendation:	Fund shortage problem to corporate activities was learned from informants. Regions with least developed countries receive money from donors but for the Europe Regional Office it is difficult to raise money so UNEP should consider this situation. It is learned from the informants that the UNEP Regional Office has limited money to support corporate activities.
Priority Level:	High
Type of Recommendation	UNEP-wide
Responsibility:	UNEP
Proposed implementation time-frame:	In future projects

Management

Recommendation #4:	UNEP should disseminate knowledge gained from implementation of Nature-based solutions (NbS) to a wide range of audiences through its network and partner networks so large numbers of institutions working in this field could benefit from this knowledge.
Challenge/problem to be addressed by the recommendation:	Knowledge gap. Projects such as this one need assistance in disseminating knowledge related to addressing various challenges or implementation of NbS for the benefit of a wide range of people or institutions who are interested or are working in similar programs.
Priority Level:	High
Type of Recommendation	Project-Level
Responsibility:	UNEP/Regional Office for Europe with the help of partners
Proposed implementation time-frame:	3 months

Strategic

Recommendation #5:	UNEP and its partners should continue cooperation and partnership in all future projects. This would help utilise known partners' expertise and could help reduce costs.
Challenge/problem to be addressed by the recommendation:	Potential gap in partnership. Partners are interested to continue partnership. Gaps may weaken the interest of the partners.
Priority Level:	High
Type of Recommendation	Project-Level
Responsibility:	UNEP/Regional Office for Europe

Proposed implementation time-frame:	In future projects
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Recommendation #6:	It is recommended that UNEP consider designing and implementing a follow-up project to collaborate with the key project partners and governments to ensure that the project goals are fully achieved. The Regional Office of UNEP could coordinate with partners to conduct awareness initiatives for ministers as in EU new parliamentarians entered in 2024 and focus on countries where governments perspectives changed on environment aspects.
Challenge/problem to be addressed by the recommendation:	As the project concluded, it was not possible to monitor the impact of the activities implemented. If new EU parliamentarians and other countries are not made aware of the importance of the environmental aspects of Sustainable Development, then all the efforts may be in vain.
Priority Level:	Critical
Type of Recommendation	Project-Level
Responsibility:	UNEP/Regional Office for Europe and partners
Proposed implementation time-frame:	12 months

Recommendation #7:	UNEP should enhance its project monitoring systems by revising project results frameworks to explicitly link outputs to outcomes, and by including mandatory gender- and stakeholder-disaggregated indicators. Monitoring templates should be updated to reflect these changes and guide partners during implementation.
Challenge/problem to be addressed by the recommendation:	The result frameworks of this project did not have gender and stakeholder-disaggregated indicators.
Priority Level:	Critical
Type of Recommendation	UNEP-wide
Responsibility:	UNEP
Proposed implementation time-frame:	3 months

Recommendation #8:	UNEP should develop and implement a sustainability and exit strategy for each multi-stakeholder platform supported by the project. This should include defined governance structures, long-term funding plans (e.g., through donor matchmaking or host country cost-sharing), and transition roadmaps to ensure that platforms can continue independently post-project.
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Challenge/problem to be addressed by the recommendation:	No exit strategy was developed in this project with long term sustainability plan.
Priority Level:	Critical
Type of Recommendation	Project-level
Responsibility:	UNEP/Regional Office for Europe
Proposed implementation time-frame:	12 months

ANNEX I. EVALUATION FRAMEWORK

Criteria	Guiding Questions and sub questions	Means of assessment
A. Strategic Relevance		
1. Alignment to UNEP's MTS, POW and strategic Priorities	Is the Project aligned with UNEP's MTS, POW and strategic priorities? Is the Project aligned with the objective of the project SDG Agenda 30, and other relevant multilateral Environmental Agreements (MEAs)? Did the Project consider gender mainstreaming at design? Do the products, processes and outcomes incorporate human rights and gender equality issues?	Desk review, Interview
2. Alignment with government and Donors' strategic priorities	Is the project aligned with the strategic priorities of the donors and Government of implementing countries?	Desk review, interview
3. Relevance to regional, sub-regional and national environmental priorities	Is the project aligned with national priorities and strategies of each of the participating countries? To which extent are the project priorities still valid in today's context for all the beneficiary countries?	Desk review, interview
4. Complementarity with relevant existing interventions	Is the project being implemented with knowledge of/communication with other relevant projects?	Desk review
B. Quality of Project Design	Was the project formulated with the Participation of national counterparts/was it demand driven? Was the project formulated based on the results framework approach? Did the project's result framework adequately incorporate the priority needs of the participating countries? Has the project established strategic partnerships with stakeholders to produce quality of results effectively? Has the Project developed an effective monitoring and reporting process throughout the implementation period?	Desk Review

Criteria	Guiding Questions and sub questions	Means of assessment
	Has the Project developed a communications plan to produce and disseminate qualified information to target audiences? Did the Project have feasible resource mobilisation plan to ensure the implementation of planned activities? Does the project have an exit strategy?	
C. Effectiveness		
1. Availability of outputs	Are the Outputs of the project consistent with the overall goal and objectives attainment? Is the identified progress result of the project attributable to the intervention rather than to external factors? What can be done to make the project more effective? Have there been any unplanned effects (positive /negative)?	Desk review, interview
2. Achievement of project outcomes	What has been done so far to achieve the project outcomes? What needs to be done in the post project period to ensure the remaining outcome is achieved?	Desk review, interviews, observation
3. Likelihood of impact	What are the early indications of the project's impact? What can be done in the remainder of the project to strengthen the impact? Describe any catalytic or replication actions that the Project carried out and if any, catalytic or replication effect both within and outside the Project?	Desk review, interview
D. Financial Management		
1. Adherence to UNEP's policies and procedures	Have the disbursements and project expenditures been in line with the budgets? Was there transaction process undertaken and completed in prompt and consistent manner?	Desk review
2. Completeness of project financial information	Has the financial documentation been accurate and complete? Was the information available in timely manner?	Desk review
3. Communication between finance and	Were there issues arisen on financial management which are resolved/unresolved by the communication between finance and project management staff?	Desk review.

Criteria	Guiding Questions and sub questions	Means of assessment
project management staff		
E. Efficiency	Were the results produced within the expected time frame defined by the work plans? Were there any quality concerns to the products and services delivered by the Project? (If project implementation was delayed), did that affect cost effectiveness or results? Have the reasons for delay been identified? To what extent, does the UNEP's transition to MTS 2022-2025 affected the project implementation, both positively and negatively? Were the coordination and cooperation between UNEP (PMU) and implementing partners adequate? Were the coordination and synergies with other programmes and initiatives with similar objectives smooth and consistent?	Desk review, interview
F. Monitoring and Reporting		
1. Monitoring design and budgeting	Were there any adjustments made for the initial monitoring design?	Desk review
2. Monitoring of project implementation	Did the Project Steering Committee (PSC) provide strategic direction to the Project? Are the risk log and lessons learned log updated regularly? Did the Project monitoring collect gender disaggregated data as appropriate?	Desk review, interview
3. Project reporting	Have the project monitoring reports prepared and submitted in timely manner?	Desk review
G. Sustainability		
1. Socio-political sustainability	Is there sufficient public/stakeholder awareness in support of the Project's long-term objectives? Are there any social or political risks that may jeopardize sustainability of the Project outcomes?	Interview, Desk review

Criteria	Guiding Questions and sub questions	Means of assessment
2. Financial Sustainability	Are there any financial risks that may jeopardize sustainability of project Outcomes? To what extent will the benefits of the project continue after the project ends?	Desk review, Interview
3. Institutional Sustainability	Are any positive results likely to be sustained? In what circumstances? Are there examples of innovation from the project in design, in addressing issues, or engaging countries and partners?	Interview, Desk review
H. Factors Affecting Performance and Cross-cutting Issues		
1. Preparation and readiness	Did the project pay sufficient precaution and countermeasures in addressing challenges faced by the project?	Desk review
2. Stakeholders participation and cooperation	Did the stakeholders take any measures to ensure the continuation of the benefits after the end of the assistance?	Desk review, Interview
3. Responsiveness to human rights and gender equality	To what extent does the project align the activities through human right and gender viewpoints?	Desk review
4. Environmental and social safeguard	Are there any environmental factors that the project may influence positive or negatively?	Desk review
5. Country Ownership and driveness	What was the level of ownership in each country?	Desk review, interview
6. Communication and public awareness	What is the visibility of the Project? Are messages visible to the stakeholders and decision makers? Does the Project have a visibility / communications strategy which works as intended?	Desk review, interview

ANNEX II. PEOPLE CONSULTED DURING THE EVALUATION

Organisation	Position	Role in Project	Gender (M/F)
UNEP Europe Office	Project Manager and also Coordinator of Output 1.D		F
UNEP Europe Office	Current PM (UNEP Sub-programme Coordinator)		F
UNEP Evaluation office	Head of the Evaluation Office.	Final Evaluation of the project	F
UNEP Europe Office	Regional Coordinator Europe Office, Coordinator of Output 1B (1B2) Outcome 2	Overseeing	M
UNEP Europe Office	Member of the Project Team	UNEA regional outreach and for One Health, and ESD-related activities under regional forums	F
UNEP Europe Office	Coordinator of Output 1A (1A1)	Contacts for the UNCTs in the project countries that worked on IBC activities, and Turkey UNDA activities.	M
UNEP Europe Office	Fund Manager	Fund Management Officer	F
UNEP	Coordinator of Output 1.B (1B1)		F
UNEP	Coordinator of Output 1A (1A3)		F
Azerbaijan	Coordinator of Output 1C+ 1A (1A1)		M
UNEP	FMO		M
Ministry of Environment, Israel	Clean water in Central Asia program	Clean water in Central Asia program implementation	M
Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Israel	Clean water in Central Asia program	Clean water in Central Asia program implementation	F
Consultant	Clean water in central Asia program	Clean water in central Asia program	F
Consultant	Consultant for Turkey and Jordan NBS program	Implementation of NbS program in Turkey and Jordan	F
Serbia	EBC and NbS program in Serbia	<u>EBC and NbS program in Serbia</u>	M
Consultant	EBC and NbS program, Serbia	<u>EBC and NbS programs in Serbia</u>	F
UNEP Evaluation office	Evaluation Manager		F

Note: For confidentiality of the informants, their names and contact addresses are not presented in the table.

ANNEX III. KEY DOCUMENTS CONSULTED

Project Document

1. Project Document
2. Annex 4, Analytical Review of Water Resources
3. Revised Project Document
4. Annex 10, Project Proposal (water resources in Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan)
5. Baseline Paper Turkey
6. Belgrade Executive Summary
7. RFSD 2021/ Peer Learning Segment
8. Draft Nicosia Ministerial Statement on Education for Sustainable Development
9. PIMS
10. Final Financial Statement
11. Final Report for the 12th Tranche of the development account - UNDA 2023H
12. Gender Action 2021 (Roundtable Discussion Document)
13. Gender Action 2022 (Gender status report)
14. Georgia-UNSDCF- Declaration of Commitment
15. IBC Environment and Climate Change –Regional groups on 2023 results
16. IBC-Environment and Climate Change- Key Result 2021
17. IBC Environment and climate change –Key results September 2020
18. Information leaflet-Supporting Serbia's transition to a green economy
19. Certified Funded Program Report (09.07.2024)
20. Memo to Director PPD requesting for extension of project.
21. Operational Project Closer Report
22. Outreach Brochure –Together for warm homes and clean air
23. Project progress report IPMR
24. Project Concept Note (Natural Resource Management in Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan)
25. Regional Strategy Implementation of UN Reform
26. 2022 System-wide Results Report of the Regional Collaborative Platform for Europe and Central Asia
27. Applying principles of circular economy to sustainable tourism (Ninth Environment for Europe Ministerial Conference, Nicosia 5-7 October 2022)
28. Territorial Analysis and Guide for Comprehensive Strategy on Introduction of Green Infrastructure (GI) and Nature-based solutions.
29. Country Assessment Report, UNDA 2023H, UNDP Turkey
30. Terms of Reference Result Group 1, Thematic Sub-group on Air Pollution from Domestic Heating. (UN Serbia).
31. Joint Programme Document and Fund Transfer Request. Development Emergency Modality-Response to the Global Crisis on Flood, Energy, Finance.
32. UNEP Country programming Document, Turkey 10 August 2022
33. UNEP NBS Presentation 2020

ANNEX IV. FINANCIAL MANAGEMENT

Financial management components:		Rating	Evidence/ Comments
1. Adherence to UNEP's policies and procedures:		HS:HU	
Any evidence that indicates shortcomings in the project's adherence ¹⁵ to UNEP or donor policies, procedures or rules		No	
Was first disbursement carried out within 9 months of UNEP's project approval date.		Yes	Project information table in the beginning of this report.
2. Completeness of project financial information¹⁶:			
Provision of key documents to the reviewer (based on the responses to A-H below)		HS:HU	
A.	Co-financing and Project Cost's tables at design (by budget lines)	Yes	Yes, Financial table is included in this report.
B.	Revisions to the budget	Yes	PRC report
C.	All relevant project legal agreements (e.g. SSFA, PCA, ICA)	Yes	All in place.
D.	Proof of fund transfers	No	Could see in the financial statement.
E.	Proof of co-financing (cash and in-kind)	Yes	Project information table in the beginning of this report.
F.	A summary report on the project's expenditures during the life of the project (by budget lines, project components and/or annual level)	Yes	Provided report is annexed in this report.
G.	Copies of any completed audits and management responses (where applicable)	Yes	
H.	Any other financial information that was required for this project (list):	No	
3. Communication between finance and project management staff		HS:HU	
Project Manager and/or Task Manager's level of awareness of the project's financial status.		S	Reporting mechanism made PM aware of the financial status
Fund Management Officer's knowledge of project progress/status when disbursements are done.		S	Reporting mechanism made FMO aware on progress and status of project activities.
Level of addressing and resolving financial management issues among Fund Management Officer and Project Manager/Task Manager.		S	Learned that it was addressed immediately.
Contact/communication between Fund Management Officer, Project Manager/Task Manager during the preparation of financial and progress reports.		S	Good communication.
Project Manager, Task Manager and Fund Management Officer responsiveness to financial requests during the review process		S	All informants mentioned that they were responsive.
Overall rating		S	

¹⁵ If the review raises concerns over adherence with policies or standard procedures, a recommendation maybe given to cover the topic in an upcoming audit, or similar financial oversight exercise.

¹⁶ See also document 'Criterion Rating Description' for reference

ANNEX V. BRIEF CV OF THE EVALUATOR.

Name: Arun Rijal, PhD.

Profession	Senior International Consultant
Nationality	Nepalese
Country experience	• Europe: Germany, Netherlands, Denmark, Norway, Finland, Sweden. North Macedonia, • Africa: South Africa, Kenya, Uganda, Sierra Leone, Sudan, Gambia, Zambia, Lesotho, Botswana, Namibia, • Americas: USA, Suriname, Uruguay, Colombia, Guatemala, • Asia: Nepal, India, Pakistan, Bangladesh, China, Cambodia, Laos, Thailand, Viet Nam, Cambodia, China, Bhutan, Indonesia, Singapore, Mongolia, Philippines, Uzbekistan, Kyrgyzstan, • Middle East: Lebanon, Qatar, UAE, Iran • Oceania: Cook Islands, Tonga, Papua New Guinea, East Timor, Marshal Islands, Federal States of Micronesia, Fiji, Kiribati, Nauru, Niue, Palau, Samoa, Solomon Islands, Tuvalu, Vanuatu.
Education	MSc (Botany), MSc (Natural Resource Management), PhD (Forestry)

Short biography

Dr. Arun Rijal

Key specialties and capabilities cover:

Training: Project Monitoring and Evaluation Technique; Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA); PRA & RRA and other socio-economic studies tools; Laboratory methods to study Chemicals and Microorganism from air, water and soil ; GIS Arcview and Camris.

SOFTWARE SKILL: MS Word, MS Excel, Minitab, Graphics, Quick stat, SAS, SPSS, Photo shop, GIS-software (CAMRIS and ARCVIEW).

Field of Expertise: Natural Resource Management /advocacy for policy and practices; Disaster Risk Reduction / Climate Risk Reduction; Protected area/Buffer Zone Management/watershed management; Climate Change: Adaptation/Mitigation; Project Monitoring and Evaluation; Ecosystem services and poverty reduction; Economic development for poverty alleviation; Biodiversity Conservation/Wetland management; Community forestry / participatory management/Forest and Natural Resource Policy; Non-Timber Forest Products (NTFP) and its socio-economic aspects; Invasive Species management; Environment Impact Assessment (EIA); Technical Review of manuscripts for international peer review journals; Project proposal development; Botanical studies/Biometrics/Ethnobotany

Peer Reviewer:

Journal of Medicinal Plant Research (Academic Journals) Science Publication, USA

Ethnobotany Research and Applications Journal, Department of Ethnobotany, Institute of Botany, Ilia State University.

Selected assignments and experiences

Independent reviews/evaluations:

Rijal A. **Mid-term Review** of UNEP Project “Mainstreaming climate change and ecosystem-based approaches into the sustainable management of the Living Marine Resources of the WCPFC”, UNDP BRH, 2024.

Rijal A. **Mid-term Review** of UNDP/EU project “Resilience building through integrated water resource management, sustainable use and coastal ecosystem management”, UNDP Suriname 2022.

Rijal A. **Terminal Evaluation** of the UNDP/GEF project “Securing multiple ecosystems benefit through SLM in the productive but degraded landscape of South Africa”. UNDP South Africa 2022.

Rijal A. **Terminal Evaluation** of the **FAO/GEF** project “Climate Change Adaptation in Wetlands Areas (CAWA) in Lao PDR” FAO Lao PDR 2022.

Rijal A. **Mid-term Review of the UNDP/GEF project** “Support to the Orange-Senqu River Strategic Action Programme Implementation”. UNDP South Africa 2022.

Rijal, A. 2021. **Mid-term Review** of the project “Sustainable management of forests in Mountain and Valley areas in Uzbekistan” **FAO Uzbekistan** 2021.

Terminal Evaluation of the UNEP Project: Coherent implementation of the environmental dimension of Sustainable Development Goals at the regional and national levels in the Pan-European Region

Rijal, A. 2021. **Final Evaluation of the project** "Contribution to Restoration of Lake Urmia via Local Community Participation in Sustainable Agriculture and Biodiversity Conservation" and "Local community participation in sustainable agriculture and biodiversity conservation for Lake Urmia Restoration", **UNDP Iran** 2021.

Rijal A. 2021. **Terminal Evaluation of the project** "Reducing vulnerability from climate change in the Foothills, Lowlands and the Lower Senqu River Basin" **UNDP Lesotho** 2021.

Rijal A. **Mid-term Review of GEF funded project** "Biodiversity Conservation and Sustainable Land Management in the Soda Saline-Alkaline Wetlands and Agro-Pastoral Landscapes in Western Jilin. **FAO China** 2021.

Rijal A. **Terminal Evaluation of UNDP/GEF project** EPASS. **UNDP CO Indonesia** 2021.

Rijal A. The **Evaluation of FAO contributions to the SDG13** (Climate Action) in Nepal and Vietnam. **FAORome**, 2020.

Rijal A., S. Mugabe, E. Bretan. **The Final Evaluation** of the UNDP/FAO project "Supporting developing countries to integrate the agricultural sector in National Adaptation Plans (NAPs) UNFA/GLO/616/UND (or NAP-Ag)", **FAO Rome** 2020

Rijal A. **Interim Evaluation of the UNDP/GCF project** "Improving the resilience of vulnerable coastal communities to climate change related impacts in Viet Nam". **UNDP Vietnam** 2019

Rijal A. **Terminal Evaluation of the UNDP/GEF Project** "Strengthening Community Resilience to Climate-induced Disasters in the Dili to Ainaro Road Development Corridor, Timor-Leste (DARDC)", **UNDP Timor Leste**, 2019

Rijal A. **Mid-term Review of the UNDP/GEF Project** "Integrating Community-based Adaptation into Afforestation and Reforestation Programmes in Bangladesh" **UNDP Bangladesh** 2019

Rijal, A. **Mid-term Review Report** of the Project "Energy Efficient Production and Utilisation of Charcoal through Innovative Technologies and Private Sector Involvement in Sierra Leone", **UNDP Sierra Leone** 2018

Rijal, A. **Terminal Evaluation Report** of the project "Integrated Environment Management of the Fanfa'uta Lagoon Catchment", Tonga, **UNDP MCO Fiji** 2018.

Rijal, A. **Terminal Evaluation Report** of the project "Strengthen the Resilience of our Island and our Communities to Climate Change (SRIC-CC)", Cook Islands, **UNDP MCO Samoa** 2018.

Rijal, A. 2017. **Project Concept Note of Ecosystem Based Adaptation project**. **UNDP, Mongolia**, 2017. Rijal, A. 2017, **Mid-term Review** of the Project "Climate Risk Finance for Sustainable and Climate Resilient Rain-fed Farming and Pastoral Systems. **UNDP Sudan** 2017.

Rijal, A. 2017, **Terminal Evaluation** of "Ecosystem Based Adaptation Approach to Maintaining Water Security in Critical Water Catchment in Mongolia". **UNDP Mongolia** 2017.

Rijal, A. 2017, **Terminal Evaluation of the Project** "Institutional Strengthening and Coherence for Integrated Natural Resources Management", **UNDP Iran** 2017.

Rijal, A. 2016, **Mid-term Review** of the project "The Third National Communication to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change", **UNDP Indonesia** 2016.

Rijal, A. 2016, **Monitoring and Evaluation Framework** for the project entitled "Enhancing Sustainability and climate resilience of forest and agriculture landscape and community livelihoods in Bhutan." **UNDP Bhutan** 2016.

Rijal, A. 2016. **Terminal Evaluation** of the project entitled "Enabling Environment for SLM to Overcome Land Degradation in the Uganda Cattle Corridor Districts of Uganda" **UNDP Uganda** 2016

Rijal. A. 2015. **Terminal Evaluation** of the project entitled "Reducing Risks & Vulnerabilities from Glacial Lake Outburst Floods in Northern Pakistan" **UNDP Pakistan** 2015.

Rijal, A. 2014. **Terminal Evaluation** of the project entitled "Capacity Building for Sustainable Land Management in Papua New Guinea". **UNDP CO Papua New Guinea**.

Rijal, A. & Dickson, L. C. 2014. **Terminal Evaluation** of project entitled "Territorial Approach to Climate Change (TACC) Project for the Mbale Region of Uganda". **UNDP CO Uganda**.

Rijal, A. & Try, T. 2013. **Mid-Term Review** of Strengthening Sustainable Forest Management and Bio-Energy Markets to Promote Environmental Sustainability and to Reduce Greenhouse Gas Emissions in Cambodia. **UNDP Cambodia** 2013.

Rijal, A. 2013. **Terminal Evaluation** Report of **UNDP/GEF Project** entitled "Mainstreaming Biodiversity Management into Medicinal and Aromatic Plants Production Processes in Lebanon Project", **UNDP CO Lebanon**.

Rijal, A. 2013. **Final Evaluation** of DANIDA supported programs of CARE Nepal. **DANIDA, Copenhagen, Denmark**.

Rijal, A. Edward P., Nepali S. 2012. **Terminal Evaluation** of Western Terai Landscape Complex Project (WTLCP). **UNDP Nepal** 2012.

Rijal, A. 2012. **An Evaluation** of Development Plans and Policies in terms of DRM/CRM Mainstreaming. **UNDP Nepal** 2012.

Rijal, A. 2010. **Mid-Term Evaluation** of the **UNDP/GEF Project** "Capacity Building for Improved National Financing of Global Environmental Management in Kyrgyzstan". **UNDP Kyrgyzstan**, 2010.

Publications/Reports

Rijal, A. 2012. **Strategy Document of Nepal on Sustainable Development for RIO+20**. Reports submitted to National Planning Commission, Singhadurbar, Nepal.

Rijal, A. 2012. Is the life-supporting capacity of forests in the lower Mid-Hills of Nepal threatened? "Forest Ecology and Management" Elsevier 283 (2012) 35–47, <http://dx.doi.org/10.1016/j.foreco.2012.07.007>

Rijal, A. 2011. Climate Change Status of Nepal. Ministry of Environment, Kathmandu, Nepal.

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Rijal, A. 2010. **Conservation Strategy for Ethno-medicinal Plants**. In: Rai, M., Acharya, D. and Rios, J.L. edited "Ethno-medicinal Plants". Science Publishers, Enfield, New Hampshire, p458-487.

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Rijal, A. 2009. **Encouraging participatory forest Management by policy improvement to address climate change issues**. Copenhagen Climate Congress, March 10-12, 2009, Copenhagen.

Rijal, A. 2009. **Climate Change Mitigation in the Forestry Sector of Nepal. National Paper Submitted to UNDP, New York**. <http://www.undpcc.org/content/nepal-en.aspx>

Rijal, A. 2008. A Quantitative Assessment of Indigenous Plant uses among two Chepang Communities in the Central Mid-hills of Nepal. *Ethnobotanical Research and Application*, 2008. www.ethnobotanyjournal.org/vol6/i1547-3465-06-395.pdf

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Rijal, A. 2007. Vegetation analysis of Doti, Dadheldhura, Kailali and Kanchanpur district of Nepal, Environment assessment of potential damage from transmission line of west Seti Hydro project on forest and local communities, Kathmandu.

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- Rijal, A. 1989. Pollution due to Urbanization. Report submitted to National Planning commission for the preparation of 8th five year plan of Nepal.
- Rijal, A. 1988. Impact of Industrial Effluent on River Water and Adjoining Land of Kathmandu Valley. Report submitted to National committee for Man and Biosphere (MAB)/UNESCO, Nepal.

ANNEX VI. QUALITY ASSESSMENT OF THE EVALUATION REPORT

All UNEP evaluations are subject to a quality assessment by the Evaluation Office. This is an assessment of the quality of the evaluation product (i.e. evaluation report) and is dependent on more than just the consultant's efforts and skills.

	UNEP Evaluation Office Comments	Final Report Rating
Report Quality Criteria		
Quality of the Executive Summary <i>Purpose:</i> acts as a stand-alone and accurate <u>summary</u> of the main evaluation product, especially for senior management. To include: • concise overview of the evaluation object • clear summary of the evaluation objectives and scope • overall evaluation rating of the project and key features of performance (strengths and weaknesses) against exceptional criteria • reference to where the evaluation ratings table can be found within the report • summary response to key strategic evaluation questions • summary of the main findings of the exercise/synthesis of main conclusions • summary of lessons learned and recommendations.	<i>Final report (coverage/omissions):</i> All required elements are addressed <i>Final report (strengths/weaknesses):</i> The Executive Summary is concise and summarizes key elements of the report well. The key findings were mostly focused on strengths and weaknesses related to project outputs, outcomes and sustainability. It could have discussed findings related to other evaluation criteria, such as monitoring and reporting.	5
Quality of the 'Introduction' Section <i>Purpose:</i> introduces/situates the evaluand in its institutional context, establishes its main parameters (time, value, results, geography) and the purpose of the evaluation itself. To include: • institutional context of the project (sub-programme, Division, Branch etc.) • date of PRC approval, project duration and start/end dates • number of project phases (where appropriate) • results frameworks to which it contributes (e.g. POW Direct Outcome) • coverage of the evaluation (regions/countries where implemented) • implementing and funding partners • total secured budget • whether the project has been evaluated in the past (e.g. mid-term, external agency etc.) • concise statement of the purpose of the evaluation and the key intended audience for the findings.	<i>Final report (coverage/omissions):</i> All required elements are addressed. <i>Final report (strengths/weaknesses):</i> The section is concise and complete.	5
Quality of the 'Evaluation Methods' Section <i>Purpose:</i> provides reader with clear and comprehensive description of evaluation methods, demonstrates the <u>credibility</u> of the findings and performance ratings. To include: • description of evaluation data collection methods and information sources • justification for methods used (e.g. qualitative/ quantitative; electronic/face-to-face) • number and type of respondents (see table template)	<i>Final report (coverage/omissions):</i> Most required elements are addressed. <i>Final report (strengths/weaknesses):</i> The section describes most of the evaluation methodology well, such as limitations and strategies used to mitigate them.	4

	UNEP Evaluation Office Comments	Final Report Rating
Report Quality Criteria		
- selection criteria used to identify respondents, case studies or sites/countries visited - strategies used to increase stakeholder engagement and consultation - methods to include the voices/experiences of different and potentially excluded groups (e.g. vulnerable, gender, marginalised etc.) - details of how data were verified (e.g. triangulation, review by stakeholders etc.) - methods used to analyse data (scoring, coding, thematic analysis etc.) - evaluation limitations (e.g. low/ imbalanced response rates across different groups; gaps in documentation; language barriers etc.) - ethics and human rights issues should be highlighted including: how anonymity and confidentiality were protected. Is there an ethics statement? E.g. <i>'Throughout the evaluation process and in the compilation of the Final Evaluation Report efforts have been made to represent the views of both mainstream and more marginalised groups. All efforts to provide respondents with anonymity have been made.'</i>	The section could have benefited from providing more details on certain aspects of the methodology. For example, on how the evaluation worked to include diverse voices (including from marginalized groups).	
Quality of the 'Project' Section <u>Purpose:</u> describes and <u>verifies</u> key dimensions of the evaluand relevant to assessing its performance. To include: <i>Context:</i> overview of the main issue that the project is trying to address, its root causes and consequences on the environment and human well-being (i.e. synopsis of the problem and situational analyses) <i>Results framework:</i> summary of the project's results hierarchy as stated in the ProDoc (or as officially revised) <i>Stakeholders:</i> description of groups of targeted stakeholders organised according to relevant common characteristics <i>Project implementation structure and partners:</i> description of the implementation structure with diagram and a list of key project partners <i>Changes in design during implementation:</i> any key events that affected the project's scope or parameters should be described in brief in chronological order <i>Project financing:</i> completed tables of: (a) budget at design and expenditure by components (b) planned and actual sources of funding/co-financing	Final report (coverage/omissions): All the required elements are covered. Final report (strengths/weaknesses): The section comprehensively describes key aspects of the project, such as the financing details. The context subsection could have been more concise.	5
Quality of the Theory of Change <u>Purpose:</u> to set out the TOC at Evaluation in diagrammatic and narrative forms to support consistent project performance; to articulate the causal pathways with drivers and assumptions and justify any reconstruction necessary to assess the project's performance.	Final report (coverage/omissions): All the required elements are covered. Final report (strengths/weaknesses): The section comprehensively describes all aspects of the TOC.	6

	UNEP Evaluation Office Comments	Final Report Rating
Report Quality Criteria		
To include: - description of how the <i>TOC at Evaluation</i>¹⁷ was designed (who was involved etc.) - confirmation/reconstruction of results in accordance with UNEP definitions - articulation of causal pathways - identification of drivers and assumptions - identification of key actors in the change process - summary of the reconstruction/results re-formulation in tabular form. <i>The two results hierarchies (original/formal revision and reconstructed) should be presented as a two-column table to show clearly that, although wording and placement may have changed, the results 'goal posts' have not been 'moved'.</i> This table may have initially been presented in the Inception Report and should appear somewhere in the Main Evaluation report.		
Quality of Key Findings within the Report <u>Presentation of evidence:</u> nature of evidence should be clear (interview, document, survey, observation, online resources etc) and evidence should be explicitly triangulated unless noted as having a single source. <u>Consistency within the report:</u> all parts of the report should form consistent support for findings and performance ratings, which should be in line with UNEP's Criteria Ratings Matrix. <u>Findings Statements (where applicable):</u> The frame of reference for a finding should be an individual evaluation criterion or a strategic question from the TOR. A finding should go beyond description and uses analysis to provide insights that aid learning specific to the evaluand. In some cases a findings statement may articulate a key element that has determined the performance rating of a criterion. Findings will frequently provide insight into 'how' and/or 'why' questions.	Final report (coverage/omissions): It does not contain explicit finding statements. Final report (strengths/weaknesses): The nature of the evidence is clear and consistent throughout the report. It could have better presented triangulation efforts.	4
Quality of 'Strategic Relevance' Section <u>Purpose:</u> to present evidence and analysis of project strategic relevance with respect to UNEP, partner and geographic policies and strategies at the time of project approval. To include: Assessment of the evaluand's relevance vis-à-vis: - Alignment to the UNEP Medium Term Strategy (MTS), Programme of Work (POW) and Strategic Priorities - Strategic Alignment to Donor/GEF/Partners Priorities	Final report (coverage/omissions): All the required elements are covered. Final report (strengths/weaknesses): The section clearly and credibly explains the evaluand's alignment with key strategic priorities.	6

¹⁷ During the Inception Phase of the evaluation process a *TOC at Evaluation Inception* is created based on the information contained in the approved project documents (these may include either logical framework or a TOC or narrative descriptions), formal revisions and annual reports etc. During the evaluation process this TOC is revised based on changes made during project intervention and becomes the *TOC at Evaluation*.

	UNEP Evaluation Office Comments	Final Report Rating
Report Quality Criteria		
- Relevance to Regional, Sub-regional and National Environmental Priorities - Complementarity with Existing Interventions: complementarity of the project at design (or during inception/mobilisation¹⁸), with other interventions addressing the needs of the same target groups.		
Quality of the 'Quality of Project Design' Section <u>Purpose</u>: to present a summary of the strengths and weaknesses of the project design, on the basis that the detailed assessment was presented in the Inception Report.	Final report (coverage/omissions): All the required elements are covered. Final report (strengths/weaknesses): The section comprehensively describes the project design and revision process and clearly discusses strengths and weaknesses.	5
Quality of the 'Nature of the External Context' Section <u>Purpose</u>: to describe and recognise, when appropriate, key <u>external</u> features of the project's implementing context that limited the project's performance (e.g. conflict, natural disaster, political upheaval¹⁹), and how they affected performance. While additional details of the implementing context may be informative, this section should clearly record whether or not a major and unexpected disrupting event took place during the project's life in the implementing sites.	Final report (strengths/weaknesses): The section adequately describes the effects that the Covid-19 pandemic had on project implementation.	5
Quality of 'Effectiveness' Section (i) Availability of Outputs: <u>Purpose</u>: to present a well-reasoned, complete and evidence-based assessment of the outputs made available to the intended beneficiaries. To include: - a convincing, evidence-supported and clear presentation of the outputs made available by the project compared to its approved plans and budget - assessment of the nature and scale of outputs versus the project indicators and targets - assessment of the timeliness, quality and utility of outputs to intended beneficiaries - identification of positive or negative effects of the project on disadvantaged groups, including those with specific	Final report (coverage/omissions): All the required elements are covered. Final report (strengths/weaknesses): The section adequately discusses each output and their related indicators and targets and provides evidence-supported assessments of the evaluand's output delivery, with credible examples. In many instances it describes the timeliness and utility of outputs to beneficiaries. In addition, where information is available, it	6

¹⁸ A project's inception or mobilization period is understood as the time between project approval and first disbursement. Complementarity during project implementation is considered under Efficiency, see below.

¹⁹ Note that 'political upheaval' does not include regular national election cycles, but unanticipated unrest or prolonged disruption. The potential delays or changes in political support that are often associated with the regular national election cycle should be part of the project's design and addressed through adaptive management of the project team.

	UNEP Evaluation Office Comments	Final Report Rating
Report Quality Criteria		
needs due to gender, vulnerability or marginalisation (e.g. through disability).	identifies effects on women and disadvantage groups.	
ii) Achievement of Project Outcomes: <u>Purpose:</u> to present a well-reasoned, complete and evidence-based assessment of the uptake, adoption and/or implementation of outputs by the intended beneficiaries. This may include behaviour changes at an individual or collective level. To include: - a convincing and evidence-supported analysis of the uptake of outputs by intended beneficiaries - assessment of the nature, depth and scale of outcomes versus the project indicators and targets - discussion of the contribution, credible association and/or attribution of outcome level changes to the work of the project itself - any constraints to attributing effects to the projects' work - identification of positive or negative effects of the project on disadvantaged groups, including those with specific needs due to gender, vulnerability or marginalisation (e.g. through disability).	Final report (coverage/omissions): All the required elements are covered. Final report (strengths/weaknesses): The section provides an adequate analysis of the uptake of outputs by beneficiaries, and comparison to the outcome indicators and their targets. It also mentions effects on gender. It could have benefitted from the presentation of more evidence of beneficiaries' uptake of outputs, and of the presence of drivers and assumptions.	5
(iii) Likelihood of Impact: <u>Purpose:</u> to present an integrated analysis, guided by the causal pathways represented by the TOC, of all evidence relating to likelihood of impact, including an assessment of the extent to which drivers and assumptions necessary for change to happen, were seen to be holding. To include: - an explanation of how causal pathways emerged and change processes can be shown - an explanation of the roles played by key actors and change agents - explicit discussion of how drivers and assumptions played out - identification of any unintended negative effects of the project, especially on disadvantaged groups, including those with specific needs due to gender, vulnerability or marginalisation (e.g. through disability).	Final report (coverage/omissions): All the required elements are covered. Final report (strengths/weaknesses): The section discusses the presence of key drivers and assumptions to support the transition between the TOC results. It also discusses the emergence of evidence that the evaluand's initiatives are having an effect beyond the outcome level. It could have benefitted from a more detailed description of how the causal pathways emerged.	5
Quality of 'Financial Management' Section <u>Purpose:</u> to present an integrated analysis of all dimensions evaluated under financial management and include a completed 'financial management' table (may be annexed). Consider how well the report addresses the following: <i>adherence</i> to UNEP's financial policies and procedures <i>completeness</i> of financial information, including the actual project costs (total and per activity) and actual co-financing used	Final report (coverage/omissions): All the required elements are covered. The financial management table is in annex V. Final report (strengths/weaknesses): The section addresses all aspects of financial management adequately.	5

	UNEP Evaluation Office Comments	Final Report Rating
Report Quality Criteria		
communication between financial and project management staff		
Quality of 'Efficiency' Section <u>Purpose:</u> to present an integrated analysis of all dimensions evaluated under efficiency (i.e. the primary categories of cost-effectiveness and timeliness). To include: - time-saving measures put in place to maximise results within the secured budget and agreed project timeframe - discussion of making use, during project implementation, of/building on pre-existing institutions, agreements and partnerships, data sources, synergies and complementarities with other initiatives, programmes and projects etc. - implications of any delays and no cost extensions - the extent to which the management of the project minimised UNEP's environmental footprint.	Final report (coverage/omissions): All the required elements are covered. Final report (strengths/weaknesses): The section presents the implications of the project delays, as well as strategies the evaluand utilized to mitigate these. It provides a comprehensive assessment—with many examples—of the evaluand's use of pre-existing partnerships to increase efficiency.	5
Quality of 'Monitoring and Reporting' Section <u>Purpose:</u> to present well-reasoned, complete and evidence-based assessment of the evaluand's monitoring and reporting. Consider how well the report addresses the following: - quality of the monitoring design and budgeting (<i>including SMART results with measurable indicators, resources for MTE/R etc.</i>) - quality of monitoring of project implementation (<i>including use of monitoring data for adaptive management</i>) - quality of project reporting (<i>e.g. PIMS and donor reports</i>) \	Final report (coverage/omissions): All the required elements are covered. Final report (strengths/weaknesses): The section presents an adequate assessment of the evaluand's monitoring and reporting, noting strengths (e.g. adaptive management) and weaknesses (e.g. risk monitoring) in these processes. It could have included a more detailed assessment of the quality of project reporting.	5
Quality of 'Sustainability' Section <u>Purpose:</u> to present an integrated analysis of all dimensions evaluated under sustainability (i.e. the endurance of benefits achieved at outcome level). Consider how well the report addresses the following: - socio-political sustainability - financial sustainability - institutional sustainability	Final report (coverage/omissions): All the required elements are covered. Final report (strengths/weaknesses): The section presents a convincing assessment of each dimension of sustainability.	5
Quality of Factors Affecting Performance Section <u>Purpose:</u> These factors are not always discussed in stand-alone sections and may be integrated in the other performance criteria as appropriate. However, if not addressed substantively in this section, a cross reference must be given to where the topic is addressed and that entry must be sufficient to justify the performance rating for these factors.	Final report (coverage/omissions): All the required elements are covered. Final report (strengths/weaknesses): The section presents an assessment of each cross-cutting issue well, including referring to previous section that discuss the issues at-hand. It could	5

	UNEP Evaluation Office Comments	Final Report Rating
Report Quality Criteria		
Consider how well the evaluation report, either in this section or in cross-referenced sections, covers the following cross-cutting themes: • preparation and readiness • quality of project management and supervision²⁰ • stakeholder participation and co-operation • responsiveness to human rights and gender equality • environmental and social safeguards • country ownership and driven-ness • communication and public awareness	have presented more detail related to Environmental and Social Safeguards.	
Quality of the Conclusions Section (i) Conclusions Narrative: <u>Purpose:</u> to present summative statements reflecting on prominent aspects of the <u>performance of the evaluand as a whole</u> , they should be derived from the synthesized analysis of evidence gathered during the evaluation process. To include: • compelling narrative providing an integrated summary of the strengths and weakness in overall performance (achievements and limitations) of the project • clear and succinct response to the key strategic questions • human rights and gender dimensions of the intervention should be discussed explicitly (e.g. how these dimensions were considered, addressed or impacted on)	Final report (coverage/omissions): All the required elements are covered. Final report (strengths/weaknesses): The Conclusion provide a compelling summary of key findings on the performance of the evaluation as presented in the body of the report. It tells the story of the evaluand from design to project closure. It could have benefitted from presenting deeper conclusionary statements (beyond summarizing findings) on the significance of the evaluand with respect to the project objective.	5
ii) Utility of the Lessons: <u>Purpose:</u> to present both positive and negative lessons that have potential for wider application and use (replication and generalization) Consider how well the lessons achieve the following: • are rooted in real project experiences (i.e. derived from explicit evaluation findings or from problems encountered and mistakes made that should be avoided in the future) • briefly describe the context from which they are derived and those contexts in which they may be useful • do not duplicate recommendations	Final report (strengths/weaknesses): The lessons presented represent both positive and negative evaluation observations and can have wider application.	5
(iii) Utility and Actionability of the Recommendations: <u>Purpose:</u> to present proposals for specific action to be taken by identified people/position-holders to resolve concrete problems affecting the project or the sustainability of its results.	Final report (strengths/weaknesses): The recommendations mostly represent proposals for specific action that the Evaluation Office can monitoring within	5

²⁰ In some cases 'project management and supervision' will refer to the supervision and guidance provided by UNEP to implementing partners and national governments while in others, specifically for GEF funded projects, it will refer to the project management performance of the executing agency and the technical backstopping provided by UNEP. This includes providing the answers to the questions on Core Indicator Targets, stakeholder engagement, gender responsiveness, safeguards and knowledge management, required for the GEF portal.

	UNEP Evaluation Office Comments	Final Report Rating
Report Quality Criteria		
Consider how well the lessons achieve the following: - are feasible to implement within the timeframe and resources available (including local capacities) and specific in terms of who would do what and when - include at least one recommendation relating to strengthening the human rights and gender dimensions of UNEP interventions - represent a measurable performance target in order that the Evaluation Office can monitor and assess compliance with the recommendations. NOTES: (i) In cases where the recommendation is addressed to a third party, compliance can only be monitored and assessed where a contractual/legal agreement remains in place. Without such an agreement, the recommendation should be formulated to say that UNEP project staff should pass on the recommendation to the relevant third party in an effective or substantive manner. The effective transmission by UNEP of the recommendation will then be monitored for compliance. (ii) Where a new project phase is already under discussion or in preparation with the same third party, a recommendation can be made to address the issue in the next phase.	a specified timeframe. However, there are some recommendations with no specified timeframe (e.g., timeframe is "future projects"), and some may be difficult to track (e.g., additional funding allocated to UNEP Regional Offices for corporate activities or continued cooperation between UNEP and project partners, beyond project completion).	
Quality of Report Structure and Presentation (i) Structure and completeness of the report: To what extent does the report follow the Evaluation Office structure and formatting guidelines? Are all requested Annexes included and complete?	Final report (coverage/omissions): All the required elements are covered. Final report (strengths/weaknesses): The report follows the Evaluation Office guidelines and structure, and it is complete.	6
(ii) Writing and formatting: Consider whether the report is well written (clear English language and grammar) with language that is adequate in quality and tone for an official document? Do visual aids, such as maps and graphs convey key information?	Final report (coverage/omissions): All the required elements are covered. Final report (strengths/weaknesses): The report tone is professional and appropriate, and it is written well. It does not include many visual aids.	5
OVERALL REPORT QUALITY RATING		5.1

A number rating 1-6 is used for each criterion: Highly Satisfactory = 6, Satisfactory = 5, Moderately Satisfactory = 4, Moderately Unsatisfactory = 3, Unsatisfactory = 2, Highly Unsatisfactory = 1. The overall quality of the evaluation report is calculated by taking the mean score of all rated quality criteria.

At the end of the evaluation, compliance of the evaluation process against the agreed standard procedures is assessed, based on the table below. *All questions with negative compliance must be explained further in the table below.*

Evaluation Process Quality Criteria	Compliance	
	Yes	No
Independence:		
1. Were the Terms of Reference drafted and finalised by the Evaluation Office?	X	
2. Were possible conflicts of interest of proposed Evaluation Consultant(s) appraised and addressed in the final selection?	X	
3. Was the final selection of the Evaluation Consultant(s) made by the Evaluation Office?	X	
4. Was the evaluator contracted directly by the Evaluation Office?	X	
5. Was the Evaluation Consultant given direct access to identified external stakeholders in order to adequately present and discuss the findings, as appropriate?	X	
6. Did the Evaluation Consultant raise any concerns about being unable to work freely and without interference or undue pressure from project staff or the Evaluation Office?		X
7. If Yes to Q6: Were these concerns resolved to the mutual satisfaction of both the Evaluation Consultant and the Evaluation Manager?		NA
Financial Management:		
8. Was the evaluation budget approved at project design available for the evaluation?	X	
9. Was the final evaluation budget agreed and approved by the Evaluation Office?	X	
10. Were the agreed evaluation funds readily available to support the payment of the evaluation contract throughout the payment process?	X	
Timeliness:		
11. If a Terminal Evaluation: Was the evaluation initiated within the period of six months before or after project operational completion? Or, if a Mid Term Evaluation: Was the evaluation initiated within a six-month period prior to the project's mid-point?		X
12. Were all deadlines set in the Terms of Reference respected, as far as unforeseen circumstances allowed?	X	
13. Was the inception report delivered and reviewed/approved prior to commencing any travel?	NA	
Project's engagement and support:		
14. Were the project team, Sub-Programme Coordinator and identified project stakeholders given an opportunity to provide comments on the evaluation Terms of Reference?	X	
15. Did the project make available all required/requested documents?	X	
16. Did the project make all financial information (and audit reports if applicable) available in a timely manner and to an acceptable level of completeness?	X	
17. Was adequate support provided by the project to the evaluator(s) in planning and conducting evaluation missions?	NA	
18. Was close communication between the Evaluation Consultant, Evaluation Office and project team maintained throughout the evaluation?	X	
19. Were evaluation findings, lessons and recommendations adequately discussed with the project team for ownership to be established?	X	
20. Were the project team, Sub-Programme Coordinator and any identified project stakeholders given an opportunity to provide comments on the draft evaluation report?	X	
Quality assurance:		
21. Were the evaluation Terms of Reference, including the key evaluation questions, peer-reviewed?	X	

Evaluation Process Quality Criteria	Compliance	
22. Was the TOC in the inception report peer-reviewed?	X	
23. Was the quality of the draft/cleared report checked by the Evaluation Manager and Peer Reviewer prior to dissemination to stakeholders for comments?	X	
24. Did the Evaluation Office complete an assessment of the quality of both the draft and final reports?	X	
Transparency:		
25. Was the draft evaluation report sent directly by the Evaluation Consultant to the Evaluation Office?	X	
26. Did the Evaluation Manager disseminate (or authorize dissemination) of the cleared draft report to the project team, Sub-Programme Coordinator and other key internal personnel (including the Reference Group where appropriate) to solicit formal comments?	X	
27. Did the Evaluation Manager disseminate (or authorize dissemination) appropriate drafts of the report to identified external stakeholders, including key partners and funders, to solicit formal comments?	X	
28. Were all stakeholder comments to the draft evaluation report sent directly to the Evaluation Office	X	
29. Did the Evaluation Consultant(s) respond adequately to all factual corrections and comments?	X	
30. Did the Evaluation Office share substantive comments and Evaluation Consultant responses with those who commented, as appropriate?	X	