

**Terminal Evaluation of the UNEP/GEF Project
“Enhanced cross-sectoral land management through land
use pressure reduction planning” (GEF ID: 5822)**



Republic of Serbia
MINISTRY OF ENVIRONMENTAL
PROTECTION



Republic of Serbia
Ministry of Environmental Protection
ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION AGENCY



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The evaluator would like to express her gratitude to all persons met and who contributed to this evaluation, these persons are listed in Annex 2.

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The evaluating consultant hopes that the findings, conclusions and recommendations will contribute to building on the foundations laid by the project towards remediation of all the contaminated sites in Serbia for healthy soil and people in the future.

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ABOUT THE EVALUATION

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Brief Description: This report is a terminal evaluation of a UNEP/GEF Medium-Sized Project implemented between 2015 and 2021, entitled “Enhanced cross-sectoral land management through land use pressure reduction and planning (ILM Serbia)”. The project’s goal was to support the developing of instruments and mechanisms for integrated land use management, remediation and capacity development in Serbia, most notably through mapping and prioritising soil-contaminated sites in urgent need of remediation. 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 GEF, the Ministry of Environmental Protection, the Serbian Environmental Protection Agency and other project partners.

Key words: integrated land management, sustainable land management, soil, soil contamination, remediation, contaminated sites, hotspots, cadaster.

Primary data collection period: August-September 2022

Field mission dates: 13 - 21 September 2022

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LIST OF ACRONYMS

EU	European Union
GEF	The Global Environment Facility
ILM	Integrated Land Management
IMELS	Italian Ministry for Environment, Land and Sea
ISPRA	Higher Institute for Environmental Protection and Research
MoEP	Ministry of Environmental Protection
MSP	Medium-sized Project
MTR	Mid-Term Review
MTS	Medium-Term Strategy
PCBs	Polychlorinated biphenyls
POW	Programme of Work
PRA.MS	Preliminary Risk Assessment Model for Human Health and Environment
PSUCE Vojvodina	Provincial Secretariat for Urban Planning and Environmental Protection of Vojvodina
SDGs	Sustainable Development Goals
SEPA	Serbian Environmental Protection Agency
SLM	Sustainable Land Management
SSNRM	Strategy of Sustainable Natural Resources Management
UNCBD	United Nations Convention on Biological Diversity
UNCCD	United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification and Drought
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
UNEP	United Nations Environment Programme
UNIDO	United Nations Industrial Development Organisation
WHO	World Health Organisation

PROJECT IDENTIFICATION TABLE

Table 1: Project summary

GEF Project ID:	5822		
Implementing Agency:	UNEP Ecosystems Division (formerly DEPI) (GEF BD LD unit, BD and Land Branch)	Executing Agency:	UNEP Europe Office - Vienna Programme Office, on behalf of Ministry of Environmental Protection of Republic of Serbia
Relevant SDG(s) and indicator(s):	SDG 15, target 15.3, indicator 15.3.1		
Sub-programme:	Healthy and Productive Ecosystems	Expected Accomplishment(s):	EA 3(a)
UNEP approval date:	18 May 2015	Programme of Work Output(s):	PoW 2014-2015, PoW 2016-2017, PoW 2018-2019, PoW 2020-2021
GEF approval date:	1 July 2015	Project type:	Medium Size Project
GEF Operational Programme #:	5	Focal Area(s):	Land Degradation
		GEF Strategic Priority And GEF Core Indicators (identify these for projects prior to GEF-7)	Strategic Programme for GEF 5 - LD 3
Expected start date:	7 October 2015	Actual start date:	7 October 2015
Planned completion date:	30 June 2018	Actual operational completion date:	30 September 2021
Planned project budget at approval:	USD 6,949,144	Actual total expenditures	USD 620,498
GEF grant allocation:	USD 661,644	GEF grant expenditures reported:	USD 620,498
Project Preparation Grant - GEF financing:	USD 27,397 (CEO Endorsement)	Project Preparation Grant - co-financing:	USD 20,000 (CEO Endorsement)
Expected Medium-Size Project/Full-Size Project co-financing:	USD 5,636,000	Secured Medium-Size Project/Full-Size Project co-financing:	USD 6,287,500
First disbursement:	USD 172,649	Planned date of financial closure:	March 2022
No. of formal project revisions:	1 Budget Revision, 2 No-Cost Extensions	Date of last approved project revision:	25 June 2021
No. of Steering Committee meetings:	3 SC meetings, 1 Validation Committee Meeting	Date of last/next Steering Committee meeting:	Last: 17 March 2017 Validation Committee Meeting: 25 September 2019
Mid-term Review/ Evaluation (planned date):	30 September 2018	Mid-term Review (actual date):	March - May 2018
Terminal Evaluation (planned date):	30 September 2021	Terminal Evaluation (actual date):	June - November 2022
Coverage - Country(ies):	Serbia	Coverage - Region(s):	Europe
Dates of previous project phases:	N/A	Status of future project phases:	N/A

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Project Background

1. The GEF/UNEP project “Enhanced cross-sectoral land management through land use pressure reduction and planning (GEF ID 5822) was a Medium-sized Project (MSP) with a budget of USD 6,949,144, with a relatively small GEF contribution of USD 661,664 and substantial co-financing from Government and partners amounting to USD 6,287,500. The project ran from 7 October 2015 to September 2021.
2. The project was implemented by the UNEP Ecosystems Division, executed by the UNEP Europe Office - Vienna Programme Office (on request of Government), in partnership with the Ministry of Environmental Protection (MoEP) and the Serbian Agency for Environmental Protection (SEPA).
3. The project was co-designed and requested through the Ministry of Environmental Protection of the Government of Serbia for GEF to support soil remediation in Serbia and thus support sustainable land management (SLM) efforts and reduce land degradation. The project objective “developing the instruments and mechanisms for integrated land use management, remediation, and capacity development to reduce pressures on land as a natural resource from competing land uses in the wider landscape and to support the reversal of land degradation” was to be addressed through three components: (1) enabling institutional, policy and scientific environment for long-term integrated land-use management (ILM), (2) landscape-level management of natural resources in Serbia, and (3) capacity-building, awareness-raising and sharing lessons with main stakeholders and the wider public on a sustainable monitoring system.
4. This report encompasses the terminal evaluation of this project (abbreviated to “ILM Serbia Project” for the purposes of the report).
5. A Theory of Change (TOC) was reconstructed for the purposes of the evaluation (Figure 5 in the main report, Annex 8 for the justification for the reconstruction of some of the project’s intervention logic) which shows the causal pathways from outputs to project outcomes to intermediate states, and finally the project long-term impact, on the basis that key drivers and assumptions outlined in the TOC would be maintained. The broader impact for the project was to move toward healthy and resilient soils, and improved health of ecosystems and people in Serbia.
6. In line with UNEP’s Evaluation Policy, the Terminal Evaluation was conducted with two main purposes: (1) to provide evidence of results to meet accountability requirements, and (2) to promote operational improvement, learning and knowledge sharing through results and lessons learned among UNEP and its key partners toward moving the results towards impact for the country and the Land Degradation (LD) agenda. An external evaluator was commissioned by the UNEP Evaluation Office to conduct the Terminal Evaluation between June and October 2022. This was done through extensive document studies, online interviews in anticipation of the country visit as well as site visits and country-level interviews during the country mission 13-21 September 2022.

Key Findings

7. The project delivered on all of its outputs and these were of excellent quality. The foundational knowledge both in capacity within partners and through the publication of various high-quality products is useful not only for Serbia, but also for neighbouring countries in the region who could learn about the process and tools acquired for their own challenges around soil contamination.
8. Those outputs that were delivered and found, through the evaluation, to be most appreciated by the country, included the cadaster of contaminated sites, the methodology

for risk assessment, the soil sampling methodology and SEPA's lab accreditation expansion to include soil sampling, the study exchange visits and support from the Italian Ministry of Environment, Land and Sea (IMELS), and several important publications, most notably "Towards Soil Decontamination in the Republic of Serbia".

9. The achievement of outcomes was variable.
10. Outcome 1.1 (Demonstrated commitment (including through finance and institutional mechanism) towards the remediation of identified hotspots using the ILM tools developed) - the project has laid a strong foundation that seems to be used and has built towards some level of commitment on dealing with sites in need of remediation, but no commitment by the Government has been made to move forward on remediating any of the sites so far (which would be an extremely expensive, but necessary, endeavour).
11. Outcome 1.2 - (Enhanced enabling legal and decision-making environment for ILM in Serbia) - the outcome has been achieved to the extent possible within the project timeframe, and enabled continued legal development on soil protection and ILM in Serbia.
12. Outcome 2.1 - (Demonstrated improvement of ILM at specific sites) - the outcome was achieved, although the actual impact of these works (illegal dumpsite remediation) is negligible compared to the level of soil contamination across Serbia, and thus these pilot interventions cannot be seen as much of a benefit in terms of ILM improvement to a quantitative level of ha of land restored (we are talking about ~5 ha total). However, the removal and rehabilitation of dumpsites across Serbia is a priority for local authorities and the project examples will likely have some effect on replicating the work among municipalities dealing with similar problems, moving toward enhanced pollution control and soil protection.
13. Outcome 3.1. - (Key stakeholders demonstrate strengthened capacity for improved monitoring and reporting on soil quality and use monitoring system) - this outcome was mostly achieved through the increase in capacity particularly for SEPA, although there were some limitations at local level where capacity was lost with staff-turnovers.
14. Outcome 3.2. - (Target groups, including policy makers, of outreach and communication demonstrate increased awareness and understanding and demonstrate support towards remediation) - the project made an effort to raise awareness and understanding around soil protection and remediation in the regions, and the country as a whole, through various publications, events and trainings. It would have benefited from a stronger communications campaign to the public in order to build pressure around remediation priorities in the country. The outcome was mostly achieved in terms of effort on communications, but was missing the final commitment from high level decisions makers on moving remediation forward
15. The project has laid a strong foundation with highly relevant and high-quality outputs as well as very useful guides and entry points for next steps, but where remediation is concerned (an expensive endeavour that is not a priority at state-level, nor at local-level government), it is unlikely that the priority sites will undergo remediation any time soon unless external funding becomes available.

Conclusions

16. The project performance is assessed as Satisfactory overall. A full table of ratings is presented in the conclusions section of the main report (Table 6).
17. The project built on the country's existing efforts through some really effective and necessary tools, including the key resource, the cadaster, but also through the prioritisation of sites list, the accreditation and capacity building of SEPA and others on soil sampling and monitoring. The capacity development for the local level was also of excellent value, bringing local authorities on board through several meetings and through

the legal requirement of updating the cadaster while at the same time providing the local level with the training and the tools to make this updating process as simple as possible.

18. The project delivered products of excellent quality and which are highly useful for application and for the building of the knowledge base on soil contamination and protection in Serbia. The monitoring-level contributions were done exceptionally well and while these will be followed up within SEPA and the network of labs, it will be a matter of time in terms of application of local-level soil monitoring (which depend on the law on soil and its enforcement through the development of by-laws, of which the two most important ones have already been developed).
19. Country ownership, particularly within MoEP and SEPA, remains aligned to a small number of championships and while some positive moves have been made due to these championships and thanks to the project laying the foundation, the prioritisation of remediation (and soil monitoring), remains limited.
20. In summary, this well-managed project laid a strong foundation of knowledge that the country can take and further build on effectively. The torch of remediation has been well lit, and handed over, so to speak. It will be up to the Government of Serbia to strategize, based on this information, how to move forward effectively (through requesting support from multi-lateral and bi-lateral partners) on the remediation of contaminated sites in Serbia.

Key lessons learnt

21. **Lesson #1:** creating strong partnerships can enhance peer-to-peer capacity, strengthen project resilience and enhance the quality of project results, as was shown through this project and its use of the Multi-disciplinary Expert Working Group and other forms of partnership engagement.
22. **Lesson #2:** using a multi-disciplinary expert group to validate work and guide the technical direction enhances quality and ownership and increases the interface between science and government decision-making.
23. **Lesson #3:** championship is important for uptake and further pushing for remediation, but building in resilience in terms of government staff turn over is equally important.
24. **Lesson #4:** using young motivated and capacitated people can be an effective way to get project activities moving.

Recommendations

25. Recommendations are provided in detail in the main report, but are summarised briefly below:
26. **Recommendation #1:** Support SEPA with key messages and improve website for public engagement (Project-level; partners: Executing Agency (EA), SEPA, other key stakeholders, timeline: by early 2023).
27. **Recommendation #2:** Hold meeting with key project partners to discuss remediation opportunities (National Project Coordinator to facilitate only) (Project-level; partners: UNEP Regional Office, MoEP, UNDP, IMELS, other relevant stakeholders, timeline: this year).
28. **Recommendation #3:** SEPA to continue championing the cadaster and to provide support to local government to update (Partner-level, Partners: SEPA, timeline: at their discretion);
29. **Recommendation #4:** Continue strong partnership and sharing of project results on various platforms (Partner-level; partners: several, timeline: ongoing).
30. **Recommendation #5:** Take note and learn from stakeholder mapping done through this project (in the design) (UNEP- level; partners: UNEP Evaluation Office, timeline: this year).

31. **Recommendation #6:** Introduce graduated cost-sharing for understaffed government or NGO implementing partners (UNEP-level; partners: UNEP EO, timeline: as appropriate).

I. INTRODUCTION

1. The GEF/UNEP Project “Enhanced cross-sectoral land management through land use pressure reduction and planning” (GEF ID 5822) was a Medium-sized Project (MSP) with GEF contributions coming from the Land Degradation Focal Area GEF Trust Fund Account to UNEP as the GEF Implementing Agency. The project was executed through the UNEP Vienna Programme Office of the UNEP Regional Office.
2. The project aligns with the Ecosystem Management Subprogramme of the UNEP Medium-Term Strategy 2014-2017, as well as the Healthy and Productive Ecosystems Subprogramme of the UNEP Medium-Term Strategy 2018-2021, and their associated Programmes of Work between 2015 and 2021.
3. The project was approved by GEF on 1 July 2015, started on 7 October 2015 and was planned to end in June 2018 (3 years). The project was ultimately extended by an additional 3 years with final operational completion in September 2021.¹
4. The project budget was USD 6,949,144, of which USD 661,664 was from the GEF, and USD 6,287,500 was from co-financing contributions.
5. In line with UNEP Evaluation Policy and the UNEP Programme Manual, as well as the updated guidance² for evaluators (developed by the Evaluation Office), the Terminal Evaluation of the SLM Serbia Project was undertaken 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. As per the TOR, 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 among UNEP and its project partners (including MoEP, and provincial and local government).
6. The main target audiences for the evaluation findings are:
 - GEF Secretariat (as the funding entity)
 - Implementing Agency (UNEP): Biodiversity and Land Branch of the GEF Biodiversity and Land Degradation Unit of the Ecosystems Division
 - Executing Agency (UNEP): UNEP Europe Office - Vienna Programme Office
 - Co-executing Agency (Serbian Government): Ministry of Environmental Protection (and notably, the Serbian Environmental Protection Authority)
 - The Project Steering/Validation Committee
 - Co-financiers and key project partners
 - Other UN agencies and bi-lateral partners to the country interested in remediation

¹ The project closing ceremony, however, was held in October 2019.

² Most of which was updated in 2020.

II. EVALUATION METHODS

7. The ILM Serbia Project Terminal Evaluation was conducted by an external consultant (herein after referred to as the 'evaluator'). The evaluation took place between May and October 2022 under the management and oversight of the Evaluation Office of UNEP, based in Nairobi.
8. The evaluation employed a participatory approach with the UNEP Task Manager during which the key project partners (UNEP Europe Office - Vienna Programme Office Project Manager and National Project Coordinator) were kept informed of progress; other project stakeholders were provided with an opportunity to comment on the evaluation findings in the draft Terminal Evaluation Report. This process is illustrated in Figure 2 below.

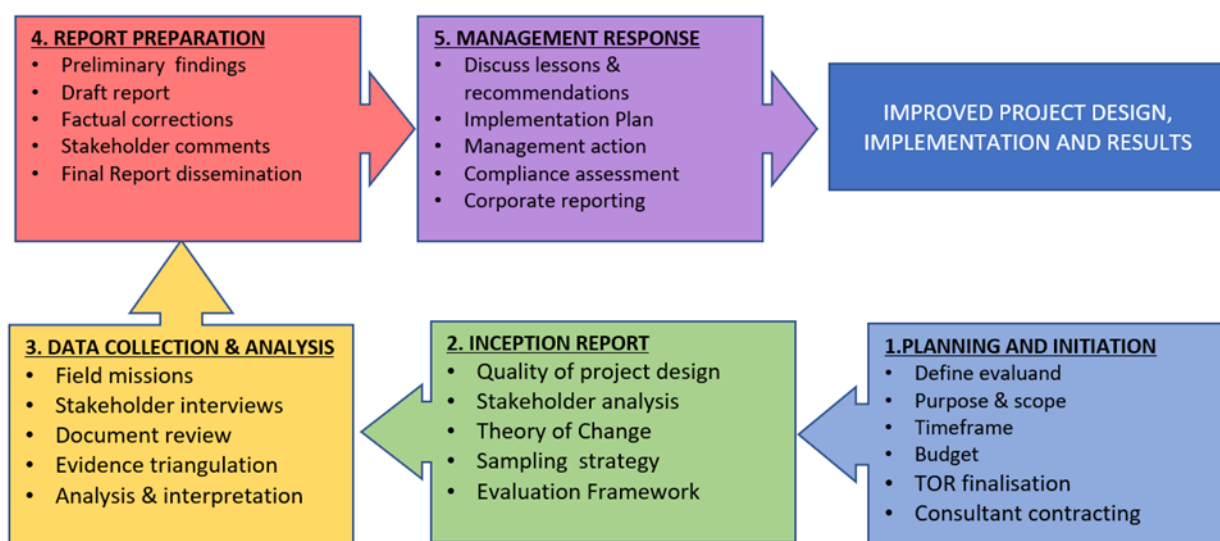


Figure 1. UNEP Evaluation Process

9. In line with the UNEP Evaluation Guidelines, the project was assessed with respect to a minimum set of evaluation criteria grouped into the following 9 categories: Strategic Relevance, Quality of Project Design, Nature of External Context, Effectiveness (availability of outputs, achievement of project outcomes and likelihood of impact), Financial Management, Efficiency, Monitoring and Reporting, Sustainability and the Factors Affecting Performance and Cross-cutting Issues. As per UNEP guidance, the evaluation ratings are on a six-point scale.³ The UNEP Evaluation Office has developed detailed descriptions of the main elements required to be demonstrated at each level (i.e. Highly Satisfactory to Highly Unsatisfactory) for each evaluation criterion. The evaluator has considered all the evidence gathered during the evaluation in relation to this matrix in order to generate evaluation criteria performance ratings.
10. The quality at project design was assessed during the Inception Phase of the Evaluation and can be found in the Inception Evaluation Report, available from the UNEP Evaluation Office.
11. A Theory of Change was reconstructed during the Inception Phase of the Evaluation based on an extensive desktop review of all project documentation, and initial interviews with key project partners. This Theory of Change was then presented and discussed with project

³ Most criteria are rated against the following points on the scale: Highly Satisfactory (HS); Satisfactory (S); Moderately Satisfactory (MS); Moderately Unsatisfactory (MU); Unsatisfactory (U); Highly Unsatisfactory (HU); Nature of External Context is rated from Highly Favourable (HF) down to Highly Unfavourable (HU); Sustainability and Likelihood of Impact are rated from Highly Likely (HL) down to Highly Unlikely (HU).

partners involved in the evaluation, inputs and suggestions for improvement were sought, and the (slightly) revised version can be found in section IV of this report.

12. The strategic questions for the evaluation related to project-outcome level, and connected to the reconstructed Theory of Change (Section IV of this report):

Q1: To what extent are project partners using the tools developed and demonstrating commitment towards the remediation of hotspots? (to what extent has the project improved the understanding of LD and remediation measures related to the hotspots?) (Outcome 1.1)

Q2: To what extent has the project contributed to enhancing the enabling legal and decision-making environment for ILM in Serbia (through an enhanced policy framework)? (Outcome 1.2)

Q3: To what extent has the project improved ILM at specific sites? (Outcome 2.1)

Q4: To what extent has the capacity been strengthened for improved monitoring and reporting on soil quality and LD? (Outcome 3.1)

Q5: To what extent have project target groups of awareness and outreach campaigns demonstrated support towards remediation? (Outcome 3.2)

Q6: To what extent has the project achieved progress towards remediation of soil and prevention of further soil loss, monitoring and maintenance of soil quality and overall improved ILM in Serbia? (related to intermediate states and impact)

13. During the inception stage, the evaluator developed an evaluation matrix (found in Annex 9) which consisted of an extended set of questions based on the above strategic conservations as well as the evaluation criteria set out in the TOR.
14. For projects funded by the GEF, findings from the evaluation are to be uploaded in the GEF Portal⁴. To support this process, evaluation findings related to the 5 topics of interest to the GEF are summarised in Annex 5. The intended action/results on the 5 topics were described in the GEF CEO Endorsement and Approval documents. The 5 topics are: i) performance against GEF's Core Indicator Targets; ii) engagement of stakeholders; iii) gender-responsive measures and gender result areas; iv) implementation of management measures taken against the Safeguards Plan and v) challenges and outcomes regarding the project's completed Knowledge Management Approach.
15. A combination of methods and tools were applied during the evaluation to collect information necessary to answer all evaluation questions in an evidence-based manner. These are explained below in six stages:
 - a. Inception Stage and Document Review: This included planning of the evaluation, development of the questions Annex 10), the review of project design, and the reconstruction of the Theory of Change. The IA (Ecosystems Division), the EA (UNEP Regional Office for Europe - Programme Office in Vienna) provided the majority of documentation during the Inception Stage and thus the evaluator undertook a thorough review of all project-related documents received. The full list of documents can be found in Annex 4. The inception stage also included a few key interviews with the IA and the EA. The Inception Report was developed, and included

⁴ The GEF Portal is an online platform for accessing information about all projects funded by the GEF Trust Fund.

the evaluation matrix (Annex 10). At Inception stage and in consultation with the Evaluation Office, the field mission was discussed and field site visits were agreed upon.

- b. Pre-country Mission Stakeholder Interviews and Email Exchanges: The evaluator conducted a series of semi-structured interviews with a small set of key stakeholders during July and August, in advance of the country mission. These interviews were conducted on Zoom Professional⁵ all of which were done using video. The selection of stakeholders to be interviewed was made by the evaluator, in agreement with the EAs and the IA. During the inception stage, the EA delivered an extensive list of stakeholders. During a series of discussions with the IA and the EA (most notably, the National Project Coordinator (NPC)), the evaluator noted a small set of stakeholders (seven) to contact in advance of country missions.⁶ The overall sampling frame for interviews in both the pre-country and in-country interviews combined can be found in Table 2 below.

Table 2. Respondents' sample for the Terminal Evaluation of the ILM Serbia Project

Respondent Category	Entity	# People Involved (M/F)	# People Contacted (M/F)	# Respondent (M/F)	% Respondent
Project team (<i>those with management responsibilities</i>)	Implementing agency	3 (2/1)	3 (2/1)	3 (2/1)	100%
	Executing Agency	4 (1/3)	4 (1/3)	4 (1/3)	100%
Respondent Category	# Entities Involved	# People Involved (M/F)	# People Contacted (M/F)	# Respondent (M/F)	% Respondent
Project (implementing/ executing) partners (<i>receiving funds from the project</i>)	4	16 (7/9)	15 (7/8)	15 (7/8)	93%
Project (collaborating/ contributing⁷) partners (<i>not receiving funds from the project</i>)	11	28 (16/12)	22 (13/9)	15 (5/10)	53%
Local Government	14 (32)	>143	~20 (?) ⁸	15 (8/7)	~11%
Multi-lateral partners	3	3 (1/2)	3 (1/2)	1 (1/2)	33%
	-	>199	69	55	~30%

- c. Country mission: The country mission took place between 13 and 21 September 2022. The country schedule was determined by the evaluator, but scheduling and

⁵ A video conferencing and meeting platform under a Professional Subscription, <https://zoom.us/>

⁶ Mostly for those that were not based in Serbia or for clarifications for the project (governmnet) focal point, and with the NPC to discuss field missions, schedules and have advance interviews to understand the project stakeholder landscape in order to be most effective during the country mission.

⁷ Contributing partners may be providing resources as either cash or in-kind inputs (e.g. staff time, office space etc).

⁸ Phone calls were made by the NPC to secure meetings with local government and representatives from factories, local government decided who would attend, thus the evaluator did not have control over the number of people called other tht requesting that they be representatives in the same roles as those who were engaged and attended training - many of these positions had been turned over in the local government elections.

logistics were supported by the NPC. In August, a discussion between the Evaluation Office, the evaluator and the NPC helped determine which sites to visit during the country visit. The five sites chosen are included in Table 3 below. The country schedule and stakeholder interview list is included in Annex 2. Interviews were held in Belgrade, Novi Sad, and the sites outlined in Table 3 below.

Table 3. Sites selected for the ILM Serbia Project Terminal Evaluation

Site	Reason for choice/Project activity done
Sombor City	Part of the training, and where trade-off measures were conducted by the project
Sabac	A zone included in the prioritised 14 sites in urgent need of remediation (heavy metal contamination, arsenic, cadmium, lead, etc), and where the Italian project partner supported the project through the development of a site characterisation plan. Part of training
Zrenjanin	A zone polluted with PCBs, in the top 14 priority list, and which UNIDO (through GEF project 4877, "Environmentally sound management and final disposal of PCBs) had follow up interventions after the ILM project Part of training
Kraljevo	Part of the training, and where trade-off measures were conducted by the project
Krusevac	A zone contaminated with several heavy metals including mercury, in the top 14 priority list, this site was also a focus of the Minamata Initial Assessment by UNDP where information was used from the ILM Serbia project Part of training

- d. Validation of data: Once the data were gathered through the document review (a), online interviews and emails (b) and in-country interviews, document checks, and site visits (c), this was organized according to the criteria and evaluations questions as laid out in the matrix (Annex 10). Where data from the three areas of collection demonstrated complementarity, these were used directly in the findings. In the cases where information did not coincide, additional interviews with relevant stakeholders (either (i) through direct follow up with the NPC and through documentation verification (e.g. request for email evidence), or (ii) through triangulation with other stakeholders and written sources.
- e. Preliminary Findings: The evaluator developed the preliminary findings which were circulated among the Evaluation Office, the IA and the EA in advance of a feedback meeting with the EA and key stakeholders post-country visit. The feedback meeting was held on 6 October 2022 where preliminary results were presented by the evaluator, and participants (NPC, SEPA, Ministry of Environmental Protection) provided feedback/clarifications, these were included in the final report.
- f. Development of Terminal Evaluation Report: The evaluator developed a draft TE report and submitted it (1st) to the evaluation manager at the Evaluation Office, who reviewed it and shared it with (2nd) the IA and EAs, after which the evaluator responded and/or revised the draft for the evaluation manager to finally (3rd) share it with project stakeholders for comment. Comments were shared with the evaluator for response and/or revision for finalisation of the Terminal Evaluation Report. An evaluation bulletin/brief was developed at the final stage of the evaluation reporting process.

16. The evaluation did not encounter any significant limitations during the evaluation. Some respondents did not participate (they either did not reply or were too busy).
17. This evaluation was bound to the Ethical Code of Conduct as per the UNEP Evaluation policy, which includes the following key factors: (a) all interviews and information were provided in confidence and anonymously and no information can be traced back to a direct source/individual, (b) those involved in the evaluation have had the opportunity to review the evaluation findings as well as the main evaluation report, (c) the evaluator was sure to have empathy and sensitivity to different contexts and cultures in which stakeholders work.

THE PROJECT

Context

18. Without healthy soils, ecosystems and human food production cannot be sustained. When soil is contaminated, water and other systems are also contaminated. Not only does this have a negative influence on the long-term economic stability of a country, it risks human health and wellbeing. Studies have shown that areas with soil contaminated with heavy metals have high prevalence of cancer.⁹
19. Serbia has (historically) driven a major part of its economy through an industry that has polluted the soils without remediation. This includes soil loss and damage caused by industrial, mining and power-producing activities, loss of soil organic matter, acidification and salinisation of soils, direct soil pollution such as disposal of tailings with heavy metals including carcinogens like chromium and cobalt, excessive use of agrochemicals, and soil erosion as well as compaction of agricultural soils.
20. As a result, Serbia has had large tracts of land that have been rendered unusable and polluted, with repercussions and impacts into international waters (including e.g. the Danube and Sava river catchments).
21. While new and upcoming industry has been regulated more appropriately by Government under new laws and within the accession process of the European Union (EU), historical sites that were abandoned decades ago (due to bankruptcy caused through the NATO sanctions and/or bombing in the late 1990s, or other reasons) are still highly contaminated.
22. Serbia, of its own accord, but also as part of the accession process to the EU, has been attempting to remedy this critical problem by implementing various interventions through (among others) the Serbian Environmental Protection Agency (SEPA) within the Ministry of Environmental Protection¹⁰, including introducing methods of sampling and analysis of soil quality, initial sampling of some locations, adjustments of existing laboratories for receiving, storage and preparation of samples, construction of a new laboratory for soil analysis, and starting a cadaster (at the time more of an inventory in an excel worksheet) of industrial/environmental (contamination) hotspots.
23. Despite these efforts, several gaps existed that required urgent project intervention, including:
 - i. Activities for the identification of soil pollution and soil quality monitoring were inadequate (overlapping, fragmented)
 - ii. Lack of human (technical) capacity to fully establish and implement the cadaster of hotspots
 - iii. Incoherence and lack of harmonization of land use and land protection activities
 - iv. Institutions were not communicating with each other
 - v. Lack of knowledge and strategic guidance for local levels on SLM (like integrated planning)
 - vi. Limited funds towards environmental protection and land degradation.

⁹ e.g. Mohajer et al 2013. The status of lead and cadmium of high prevalence gastrointestinal cancer region of Isfahan. J Res Med Sci (18:210-214); Ahmad et al 2021. Toxic and heavy metals contamination assessment in soil and water to evaluate health risk. Nature (17006), among many others.

¹⁰ At the time of the project, this was the Ministry of Agriculture and Environmental Protection; MoAEP from 2015 until 2017 when a standalone MoEP was established after elections.

24. The ILM Serbia project was designed to address these gaps and set Serbia off on a pathway towards the protection and remediation of its soils and towards sustainable land management, through:
 - i. The development of a suite of tools and methodologies to enhance and strengthen the existing monitoring programme (including a cadaster of hotspots, GIS mapping, soil quality methodology, etc)
 - ii. Strengthening and harmonizing the policy, institutional and decision-making frameworks for better enabling environment to protect and monitor soil quality
 - iii. Test evidence-based decision-making in some locations
 - iv. Strengthen capacity, public awareness and political decision-making on soil protection and monitoring in Serbia.
25. The project worked mainly with historically contaminated sites across Serbia as described in paragraph 23 above, and upon deliberation, had focused on 32 sites where sampling and other studies were done (Figure 3).

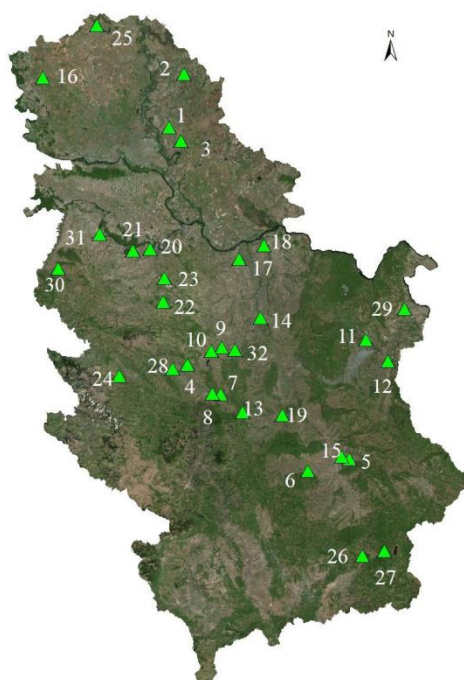


Figure 2. Map of Serbia with the 32 contaminated site locations the ILM Serbia project focused its soil sampling efforts on and delivered site assessments (Source: Towards Soil Decontamination in Serbia, 2018)

26. This project was the first-ever, nation-wide effort to improve sustainable land management (through the lense of soil remediation and protection) in Serbia.
27. The project faced two external challenges, neither of which had significant impacts on project results achievement, namely (a) government changes due to elections (Presidential and Parliamentary 2017, Provincial 2020), and (b) COVID-19 which took place at the end of the project when most activities had already been completed but affected the sustainability of activities (particularly the trade-off measures). These will be discussed under the Findings section.

Results Framework

28. This project was co-designed and requested through the Ministry of Environmental Protection of the Government of Serbia for GEF to support soil remediation in Serbia and thus support SLM efforts and reduce land degradation.

29. The project objective “developing the instruments and mechanisms for integrated land use management, remediation, and capacity development to reduce pressures on land as a natural resource from competing land uses in the wider landscape and to support the reversal of land degradation” was to be addressed through three components. The project’s components, planned outcomes and outputs are found in Table 4 below.

Table 4. ILM Serbia components, outcomes and outputs as per approved Project Document, 2015

Component	Stated Project Outcomes	Outputs
1. Enabling institutional, policy and scientific environment for long-term integrated land use management (ILM)	1.1. ILM tools available to land users for an increased understanding of land degradation and remediation measures, based on identified industrial hotspots and environmental and socio-economic risks	1.1.1. Pollution sources and land pressures from production sectors (spatial distribution, soil quality, pollutants) are identified and mapped 1.1.2. Environmental, social and economic risks of the production sectors related to land use patterns and soil quality are assessed and ILM tools developed on this basis
	1.2. Mechanisms and responsibilities agreed upon for the implementation and financing of remediation of identified priority sites	1.2.1. Remediation priorities are established in accordance with Regulation 22/2010 and stakeholder consultations 1.2.2. Cadaster of environmental/industrial hotspots in Serbia with GPS database developed
	1.3. Developed/enhanced policy framework for ILM in Serbia with the application of international policy recommendations such as the UNCCD process	1.3.1. An Integrated Land Management Planning Framework (ILMF) for Serbia developed in accordance with the requirements of SSNRM ¹¹ and its implementation mechanisms
2. Landscape-level management of natural resources in Serbia	2.1. Principles for management of natural resources are agreed upon and allow multipurpose use of resources	2.1.1. A methodology complied for the implementation of ILMF practice at the local level 2.1.2. A package of trade-off measures developed and tested at community and local levels
3. Capacity building, awareness-raising and sharing lessons with main stakeholders and wider public based on sustainable monitoring system	3.1. Strengthened capacities of major stakeholders for sustainable practices in sectors competing for land area and natural resources	3.1.1. Support to the National Laboratory within SEPA for soil sampling and quality analysis is provided 3.1.2. Baseline information and methods are established, and capacity strengthened for a monitoring and reporting system on soil quality and land degradation 3.1.3. Communication and outreach conducted in different regions of Serbia 3.1.4. Interactive hotspot map developed and made available to the public

¹¹ Strategy of Sustainable Natural Resources Management

Component	Stated Project Outcomes	Outputs
	3.2. Ensured broad and high level commitment to expanding and replicating measures for integrated SLM; ensured public support for remediation and SLM of environmental/industrial hotspots	3.2.1. A conference aimed at presenting best practices in integrated land management in Serbia and the region is organised 3.2.2. A platform for monitoring of impact on land degradation (physical, environmental, social and economic impacts) is created

Stakeholders

30. The project's key stakeholders, besides the IA and the EA, included a spectrum of collaboration and partnership that had roles to play in attaining the project results.
31. The project preparation process had strong engagement of stakeholders where various meetings were held with various national stakeholders between July and December 2014,¹² including through the set up of a Steering Committee, which provided a strong foundation from which to work once the project was implemented.
32. The **Ministry of Environmental Protection** and the **Serbian Environmental Protection Agency (SEPA)** were the main beneficiaries and held the most prominent role, interest and influence over the project's results. The Ministry of Environmental Protection provided the political and institutional supervision and chaired the Steering Committee. It also has influence over budgeting prioritisation (and seeking budget allocation from the national budget allocation) and the championing of the legal framework around soil protection in Serbia, and houses the GEF and UNCCD focal points. It is also the ministry which is responsible for the remediation of historically contaminated sites and had oversight over the soil monitoring and environmental inspection across the country.
33. SEPA is the key national institution for monitoring and reporting on soil quality, including the management of the national cadaster of contaminated sites, and led most of the project activities. The SEPA laboratory accreditation for soil analysis was extended to include soil sampling procedure and staff were trained on soil sampling and application of new analytical methods. SEPA representatives took part in the work of Project Steering Committee, Multidisciplinary Expert Working Group and Project Validation Committee, respectively established to monitor project activities, provide expert opinion and validate project results, respectively. The SEPA has influence over continued monitoring of soil in the country.
34. The **other ministry** involved, to a lesser degree, was the Ministry of Mining and Energy, which provided information regarding the development of a Cadaster of Mining Waste in Serbia, as a related and complementary activity. It also provided contributions through sharing relevant information during the phase of investigation of selected contaminated sites.
35. The **Provincial Secretariat for Urban Planning and Environmental Protection (PSUCE Vojvodina)** were important stakeholders who took part in the field visits and provided valuable assistance in connecting the project with the **local authorities** in Vojvodina province. They were also members of the Multi-disciplinary Expert Working Group. **Local authorities and municipalities** were direct beneficiaries of the eight regional trainings on the registration and submission of data to the cadaster on contaminated sites, and information collected about contaminated sites within their territories, and have influence over the local-level monitoring and continued data entry to the cadaster (i.e. sustaining

¹² This is well outlined in pg 46 of the Project Document.

project results). The **Standing Conference of Towns and Municipalities (SKGO)** provided assistance in the organisation of the eight regional trainings across Serbia and facilitated communication with local authorities and acted as facilitators and connectors between the project and the local authorities. In addition, they have been helpful in following up on how local authorities have continued sustaining the results of the project.

36. **Expert and technical capacity development support** was provided by multiple institutions, including

- i. The **Italian Ministry of Environment, Land and Sea (IMELS)** that included a substantial co-financing contribution and the involvement of expert institutions, most notably the Higher Institute for Environmental Protection and Research (ISPRA) that provided professional assistance in the form of numerous training sessions and enabled study visits of Italian experts to Serbia and of representatives of SEPA to Italy, with the aim of exchanging knowledge and experiences. It also provided development of the first two Site Characterization Plans in Serbia, and contributed to obtaining the missing accreditation of SEPA laboratory for soil sampling. Furthermore, the contribution enabled the purchase of special personal protective equipment for field investigations, laboratory analytical instrument for soil analysis, and data server storage system for the national Cadaster of Contaminated Sites, developed under the project. Support also considered the application of a preliminary risk assessment (PRA.MS) methodology to 32 investigated industrial sites in Serbia.
- ii. The **City Institute of Public Health Belgrade** provided support through transferring knowledge on soil sampling and analysis to SEPA during the field missions to the 32 sites, and by conducting laboratory analyses of specific pollutants in soil samples taken. Based on the analytical findings and desk review of material collected, the Institute developed a Technical Report advising on the priority sites (14 sites) which require detailed investigation and clean-up/remediation. Representatives of the Institute were appointed members and actively contributed to work of the Multidisciplinary Expert Working Group.
- iii. The **Institute of Field and Vegetable Crops Novi Sad** provided their expert opinions as members of the Multidisciplinary Expert Working Group with the purpose of providing expert opinion during selection of sites to be investigated, as well as during selection of sites for testing of trade-off measures. Furthermore, the Institute's laboratory was one of the three engaged to perform the analyses of soil samples collected at 32 sites. The laboratory was specifically in charge of preparing samples and performing physical and chemical analysis.
- iv. The **Institute of Soil Science Belgrade** had a member on the Multidisciplinary Expert Working Group who provided expert opinions on site selection and trade off measures.
- v. The **Geological Survey of Serbia** provided the information on the baseline concentration against geochemical (natural) composition from the results of a research conducted by this institution. A representative of Geological Survey of Serbia was appointed as member of the Multidisciplinary Expert Working Group.
- vi. The **National Hydrometeorological Service of Serbia** also had a representing member on the Multidisciplinary Expert Working Group as well as Project Steering and Validation Committee.
- vii. The **Forestry and Environmental Action (fea)** are an NGO that was contracted by the project to provide expert support by developing the Guidelines on SLM and Soil Sampling at the Local Level, supported the logistical organisation of regional trainings with local authorities, and provided the expert support to the testing of trade-off measures at two sites. They also supported communications through the development of a dedicated webpage on land degradation (LD) and SLM

(which was handed over to SEPA), as well as driving the organisation of the World Soil Day celebration events in 2017 and 2018.

37. The **private sector/industry stakeholders** were predominantly represented by the Chamber of Commerce and Industry, and in some cases site representatives were available for those sites where new industry owners were present. The Chamber supported the project through co-hosting a meeting in April 2017 to present the plan of investigation, and also have received all the project results for perusal of relevant industry.
38. Other **UN agencies** who had a collaborative role and influence over the project results (and had uptake of project results) included:
 - i. The **UNIDO**, with whom (in April 2017) collaborative activities were established under their GEF project “Environmentally Sound Management and Final Disposal of PCBs in the Republic of Serbia”. Based on the data obtained under the ILM Serbia project, three sites potentially contaminated with PCBs were considered and detailed site investigations were performed, with one of them currently being analyzed for potential remediation activities.
 - ii. The **WHO**, with whom collaborative activities were implemented through “Strengthening Serbian national capacities and inter-sectorial synergies for safe management of contaminated sites and related hazardous substances to prevent negative impact on human health and the environment” was conducted owing to the funds allocated from the UNEP’s Strategic Approach to International Chemicals Management (SAICM) Quick Start Programme (QSP) Trust Fund. Within the scope of the project, a national framework for sound management of contaminated sites to eliminate/minimize and prevent risks for human health and environment was developed based on multi-sectoral and multi-stakeholder approaches to improve the health of the population in the Republic of Serbia by preventing negative impacts of contaminated sites and related hazardous substances on health, which was piloted in Bor.
 - iii. The **UNDP**, with whom collaborative activities were implemented through the GEF Minamata Initial Assessment project on assessing the situation for mercury contamination and sources, to create an inventory for mercury contamination, where two sites were identified of which one was a priority site for remediation under the ILM Serbia project. A detailed site plan was developed for mercury contaminated sites.
39. Stakeholder involvement and communication channels were further analysed during the evaluation, particularly in terms of sustaining the maintenance, evolution, uptake and further use of the tools. These are further discussed in the evaluation findings.
40. The project made an effort to promote equal participation and empowerment of women through project activities. This is particularly noted in that women made up a large proportion of the agents of change in this project with 70% of participants of regional trainings and submission of data being women. It is also noted here that the leadership and management of the project was proportionally skewed towards women.

Project implementation structure and partners

41. UNEP Ecosystems Division (formerly Division of Environmental Policy Implementation, DEPI) was the **Implementing Agency** for the project. Thus, it was responsible for coordinating activities, monitoring the implementation of UNEP’s standard monitoring and reporting procedures, and transmitting financial and progress reports to the GEF. These responsibilities are conducted through the Task Manager. The Task Manager is supported through a Programme Assistant (supporting with logistical matters and assists in

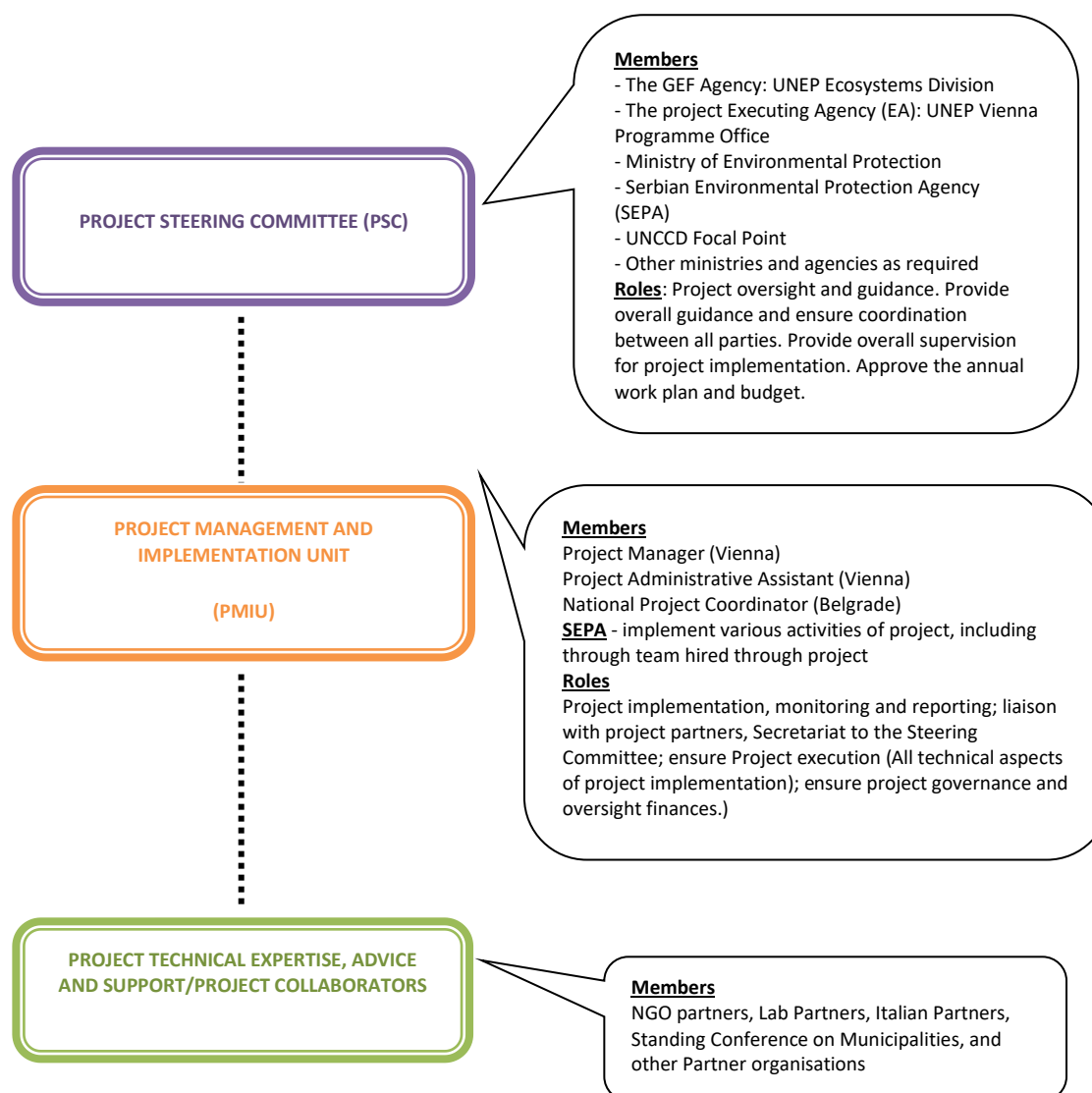
monitoring and online reporting), and the Fund Management Officer (FMO) who gives final approval to all expenditure and financial reports.

42. The UNEP Regional Office for Europe, of which the Programme Office based in Vienna, Austria, was the **Executing Agency**. The role of the Programme Office was outlined through an Internal Cooperation Agreement with the Ecosystems Division (the IA). The office was to take responsibility for the execution of the project and its delivery through a **Project Manager**.¹³ The project management was carried out by a **National Project Coordinator**, guided and supervised by the Project Manager.
43. The project's Government partner was the **Ministry of Environmental Protection**, including chairing the Steering Committee and providing an overview of project implementation and management.¹⁴ Most of the project activities were implemented through the Ministry's **SEPA**, which was the key beneficiary and champion for the project. During the project, additional capacity support was provided through the addition of three full-time staff members who provided much needed human resources for SEPA to complete project activities.
44. Project implementation partners who provided **expert support and capacity development** to SEPA and the project in general are outlined in paragraph 37 above. This included the NGO, fea, which was contracted to deliver on specific outputs of the project (including the trade-off plans, and communications activities).
45. Other partners included the **regional and local government**, which are outlined under Stakeholders above.
46. An organigram has been edited from the original in the Project Document and can be found below.

¹³ The project manager manages a portfolio of projects in the Balkan Region and visits the country on a needs-basis.

¹⁴ See paragraph 33 for more details.

Figure 3. Revised organigram for the ILM Serbia Project (original source: Project Document, 2015)



Changes in design during implementation

47. A few changes took place during the implementation that warrant some explanation:
48. *Workplan/activity-level:* the MTR noted that the workplan had been changed slightly to accommodate a change that had happened in the law. These changes are related to the Output 1.3.1 - and Activity 13; as the National Land/Soil Action Plan in ILM is no longer anticipated in the package of sub-laws and tools under the umbrella Law on Soil from 2015. The Project, therefore, supported the development of relevant rulebooks with a specific focus on a Rulebook on the content and manner of keeping a Cadaster of Contaminated Sites, as well as type, content and forms, manner and deadlines for delivering the data. This package was accepted and adopted by the Ministry of Environmental Protection. Outcome indicator 1.3 was therefore amended as follows: *Rulebook on the identification of contaminated sites developed, based on the Law on Soil (2015), and in a participatory manner, and for associated mid-term target: Relevant stakeholder groups actively contribute to the development of the Rulebook.* The evaluator believes that the project should have made a change to the output, this was not done.
49. *Partners:* The SKGO came on board to support the facilitation of the local authority's active participation in the project.

50. *Recommendations from MTR (no change to design)*: The MTR made some recommendations towards the realisation of the trade-off measures within the limitations of the budget and time-frame. It also recommended that the Multidisciplinary Expert Working Group take an active advisory role in determining which site and what kind of activity to support.
51. *Project extension*: Two no-cost extensions were requested and approved for the project to a total of 36 months (double the planned project time), from 30 June 2018 to 30 September 2019, and from 1 October 2019 to September 2021. The first extension was granted based on the MTR recommendation that trade-off measures be completed in time. By 30 September, trade-off measures had been delayed (through the decision-making processes of the Multidisciplinary Expert Working Group and activities on the ground). This, and the delay in the re-establishment of the steering committee as a result of the national elections in 2017, which then set in motion the adaptive management decision to instead set up the validation committee to validate the project deliverables, were the reasons given for the second extension. The project closure, according to partners (and on the SEPA website¹⁵), was on 7 October 2019. When asked to confirm this, the project management stated that the activities had ended by then, but the validation was still pending for key deliverables (and to enhance sustainability and uptake)¹⁶.

Project financing

52. The total project budget at approval was USD 6,949,144, of which the GEF allocation was USD 661,644, with planned co-financing of USD 5,536,000 (of which USD 600,000 was in cash).
53. Total budget expenditure was USD 620,498¹⁷, and total co-financing realised was USD 6,287,500¹⁸. The detailed table illustrating the actual co-financing versus planned per individual partner can be found in Annex 3. The budget at design compared with expenditure is shared in Annex 3.

¹⁵ <https://degradacijazemljista.sepa.gov.rs/?p=1185&lang=en>

¹⁶ The Ministry validated all the results during the PVC meeting held prior to the closing ceremony, "the only remaining substantive report to be submitted is the analytical report on the trade-off measures undertaken at two sites. This report is not envisaged to be subject to approval, but rather serves as narrative description of the conducted activities and as such will be complementary to the final project report." (quote from PVC meeting minutes) This further delayed project terminal narrative and financial reporting so the second extension were sought to allow for "1) Adequate time to prepare final progress and financial reports in line with latest expenditures, and 2) Adequate time to permit an orderly phase-out of the project, follow-up on and ensure continuation of all activities initiated within the project." (as per request for bridging agreement).

¹⁷ This figure was derived from the final expenditure statement.

¹⁸ This figure was reported in the final co-financing report signed off by the FMO.

III. THEORY OF CHANGE AT EVALUATION

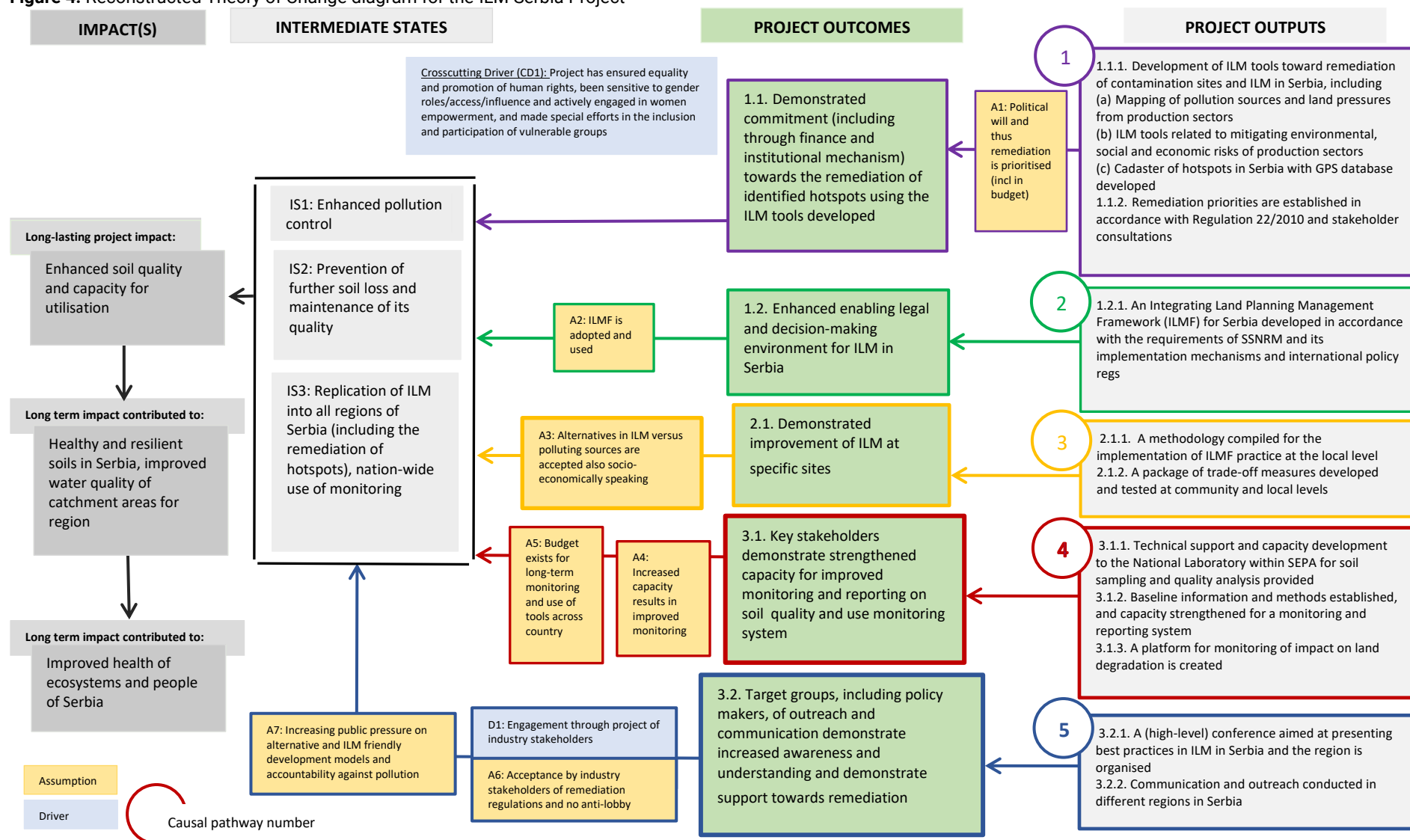
54. The (reconstructed) Theory of Change is a particularly important framework for assessing project performance and results-achievements of the evaluation. While it needs to maintain the elements of the original targets and intended results of the project (as the project was designed), it also needs to allow the evaluator to understand the flow from outputs through to project outcomes, intermediate states to the eventual long-lasting impact of the project, and the long-term impact to which the project aims to contribute.
55. The project did not develop a Theory of Change at design, nor did it speak to the causal pathways between the outputs and outcomes (or components) of the project. The project document only briefly speaks about “early and intermediate results” and “long-term impacts” in the summary on the first page. There it states: The early and intermediate positive results include a number of strategic documents and tools for application such as Environmental and Social Impact Assessments, cadaster of degraded “hot spots”, an Integrated Land Planning and Management Framework etc. (please refer to outcomes). Expected long term positive impacts include: remediation and amelioration of degraded “hotspots” and improved soil quality and capacity for utilization, enhanced pollution control and reduced pollution impact on the ecosystem and human health as a whole, prevention of further soil loss and maintenance of its quality, especially in the fields of industry, mining, power production and agriculture which are major economic drivers in Serbia.
56. The Mid-Term Reviewer re-constructed a Theory of Change as part of the MTR. This Theory of Change kept the original logical framework in place, i.e. outputs and outcomes were left as is. The project objective was formulated as the project impact, the intermediate states were formulated from the project components.
57. The Terminal Evaluator found during the inception phase that the intervention logic needed to be substantially reconsidered (without losing the intention and accountability of the project to the project document and results framework). The project objective and some of the impacts stated in the project document sounded more like intermediate states, while the long-term impact needed to be phrased like a “destination” rather than a “journey”. In addition, some of the outcomes read more like outputs (e.g. Outcome 1.1), and most of the outcomes needed to better demonstrate action or behaviour change (which in the case of this project, some did not at all, and some did not demonstrate this enough).
58. The re-shuffling and re-wording of impacts, intermediate states, outcomes and outputs (and the comparison from design to MTR to TE, as well as justification for changes) can be found in Annex 8.
59. There are five causal pathways demonstrated in the diagrammatic Theory of Change (Figure 5).
60. The five causal pathways all contribute to the intermediate states which flow into one pathway towards long-lasting project impact and eventually towards the long-term impact the project contributes to.
61. The **first causal pathway** is from the combination of Output 1.1.1. (development of a suite of tools, most notably the cadaster of hotspots) and 1.1.2. (remediation priorities are legally established), which would lead to Outcome 1.1. (demonstrated commitment - including financial and institutional - towards the remediation of hotspots using the tools developed), but necessitates that the assumption that the political will actually exists to prioritise remediation (including in national budget allocations). The causal pathway leads from the outcome contributing (along with the other four causal pathways) to the intermediate states. This causal pathway requires that the utilisation of tools is taken up

by the relevant stakeholders (particularly SEPA), and the assumption depends on decision-makers like the Ministry of Environmental Protection attaining budget allocation from the Ministry that makes national budget allocations.

62. The **second causal pathway** is from the Output 1.2.1. (the development of an Integrated Land Planning Management Framework) that allows for Outcome 1.2. (an enhanced enabling legal and decision-making environment) to be reached. If the framework is actually adopted and used (an assumption, as it is not under the direct control of the project), the causal pathway could reach the intermediate states.
63. The **third causal pathway** is from Outputs 2.1.1. (local level ILMF methodology compiled) and 2.1.2. (trade-off measures developed and tested at local levels) moved to Outcome 2.1. (demonstrated improvement of ILM at specific sites). If improvement carries forward, and alternatives in ILM versus polluting sources are accepted socio-economically speaking at local level (assumption 3), then the pathway will have reached the intermediate states.
64. The **fourth causal pathway** is from Outputs 3.1.1. (capacity development support to the SEPA), 3.1.2. (capacity for monitoring and reporting), and 3.1.3. (platform for monitoring) to Outcome 3.1. (demonstrated strengthened capacity of key stakeholders for improved monitoring). If the increased capacity actually results in improved monitoring, and budget exists in the long-term to continue monitoring and using the tools developed through the project, the causal pathway will have reached the intermediate states.
65. The **fifth causal pathway** is from Outputs 3.2.1. (conference demonstrating ILM best practices) and 3.2.2. (communication and outreach conducted in different regions in Serbia) aims to reach Outcome 3.2. (policy makers and other targets groups demonstrate increased awareness and understanding and demonstrate support towards remediation). The project would need to make sure that there is sufficient engagement of key stakeholders who have influence over the process (such as industry, or the CCI representing industry - the assumption here is that there is acceptance of remediation and responsibility and no anti-lobby against remediation). The causal pathway would need the assumption that there is increased public pressure (due to increased awareness) on ILM alternatives and accountability against pollution to be met.
66. An important cross-cutting driver (CD1) is that the project has ensured equality and promotion of human rights, been sensitive to gender roles/access/influence and actively engaged in women's empowerment and made special efforts in the inclusion and participation of vulnerable groups. The evaluation will proceed to test the project's influence and role in addressing equality as pertains to the project and its results.
67. If the assumptions are met for the five causal pathways, they would all actively contribute to the three intermediate states: enhanced pollution control, prevention of further soil loss and maintenance of its quality, and replication of ILM into all regions of Serbia (including the remediation of hotspots) and nation-wide monitoring of ILM.
68. The three intermediate states (thanks to the five causal pathways from outputs through outcomes and assumptions and drivers) would lead to a long-lasting project impact that soil quality and capacity for utilisation is enhanced in Serbia, with this contributing to longer-term impacts: healthy and resilient soils in Serbia, improved water quality of catchment areas for the region (due to lack of drainage of contaminants into water table), and overall and eventually (together with other ILM measures and interventions): improved health of ecosystems and eventually health¹⁹ of people of Serbia.

¹⁹ Health of people is linked to ecosystem health in general, but particularly in this project it aimed to decrease and remediate the contamination of soil (and thus the water table) of dangerous contaminants and pollutants (such as heavy metals), which has a direct impact of human health.

Figure 4. Reconstructed Theory of Change diagram for the ILM Serbia Project



IV. EVALUATION FINDINGS

Strategic Relevance

A.1. Alignment to UNEP MTS and POW

69. The project aligned to the MTS 2014-17 and MTS 2018-21 (POWs 2014-2021) by contributing to two sub-programmes: 3. Ecosystem Management (POW 2014-15, POW 2016-17), Healthy and Productive Ecosystems (POW 2018-19, POW 2020-21), and 5. Chemicals and Waste (POW 2014-15, 2016-17), Chemicals, waste and air quality (POW 2018-19, POW 2020-21). There was no evidence to suggest quantitative alignment to these plans (through the indicators, for instance).
70. While the Bali Strategic Plan²⁰ has more of a focus on developing countries and south-south sharing, the project did align in ways in which capacity building was an important aspect in the project, although no direct mention was made to the plan.
71. Alignment to UNEP MTS and POW is rated as 'Satisfactory'.

A.2. Alignment to Donor/Strategic Priorities

72. The project contributed to GEF-5 Focal Area LD-3, Outcome 3.1 Enhanced cross-sector enabling environment for integrated landscape management (Output 3.1. Integrated land management plans developed and implemented), and Outcome 3.2. Integrated landscape management practices adopted by local communities (Output 3.2 IRM tools and methodologies developed and tested).
73. The evaluator notes that the project's title and some of the outputs were named in relation to the alignment above, but are not strict alignments, per se (at least not in the conventional way the above outcomes are used²¹). This project focused *specifically* on remediation of soil contamination, with some support to SLM with regard guidelines on SLM, and soil quality monitoring.
74. This was a unique project under the LD focal area for the GEF. Despite what is said in paragraph 74, it was a highly relevant project for the GEF in the focal area of LD and SLM because it deals with soil health, the primary foundation to healthy land. The project had to (to an extent) paraphrase its work to fit the outcomes under the LD focal area, but it should not have needed to do this given that any LD work in Serbia would have needed to start with healthy soils, and to get to healthy soils and thus healthy land, remediation is necessary.
75. The project contributed to the LD tracking tools (LD 3 - SLM in wider landscapes) through the contributions (i) enhanced cross-sector enabling environment for integrated landscape management (framework strengthening INRM -3, capacity strengthening towards ILM - 5), (ii) integrated landscape management practices adopted by local communities (spatial coverage of integrated NRM practices in wide landscapes - 270,687 ha, number of INRM tools and methodologies introduced - 3: cadaster of contaminated sites and rulebook on identification of contaminated sites, guidelines for SLM at local level, guidelines for development of local soil monitoring).²²
76. The project document and final report outlined its contributions to the UNCCD Strategic Plan (2008-2018), the UNCBD Strategic Plan for Biodiversity (2011-2020), and the

²⁰ The Bali Strategic Plan for Technology Support and Capacity Building, a framework for strengthening the capacity of governments in developing countries, developed and came into force 2005.

²¹ In relation to other LD-3 projects, which are usually focusing on holistic land management and forming integrated plans around e.g. agriculture, forestry

²² GEF Tracking Tools updated January 2020.

Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). With regard to the SDGs, it contributed to SDG 15 (Life on Land), through target 15.3.²³

77. Alignment to donor priorities in terms of focal area is rated as 'Satisfactory'.

A.3. Relevance to regional, sub-regional and national environmental priorities

78. The project document clearly outlines its alignment and relevance to national environmental priorities. The project is fully compliant and supports the implementation of main environmental legislation in Serbia treating land degradation, such as the Law on Environment, the Law on Agricultural Land/Soil, Law on Soil Protection, as well as relevant by-laws and several strategic documents adopted at the national level. It is also in line with Serbia's UNDAF (2016-2020), with its contribution to achieving Outcome 8 under Pillar IV – Environment, Climate Change and Resilience²⁴.

79. The project came as a direct demand from the Ministry of Environmental Protection (under the Environmental Inspection Department) and came at a perfect time when SEPA was attempting to move forward with its cadaster and needed capacity and resources. Soil remediation of contaminated soil (of levels of contamination, in many cases, >1,000 times acceptable level²⁵), is of critical importance and should be prioritised in the name of basic human rights related to health.

80. Rated as 'Highly Satisfactory'.

A.4. Complementarity with existing interventions

81. The project document clearly outlines the project linkages with a large number of projects that had already been implemented.²⁶

82. The project made a large effort throughout the implementation to align and create synergies with other interventions to increase efficiency, efficacy and sustainability of results, including through the project manager presenting and encouraging SEPA and others to present findings and share results with other donors.

83. Three projects that were most notably aligned with UN partners included those already outlined in paragraph 40 under the Stakeholder section. The project did a good job in sharing its results and being pro-active in creating synergies with these three projects.

84. Rated as 'Highly Satisfactory'.

Rating for Strategic Relevance: Highly Satisfactory

Quality of Project Design

85. A detailed review of the project design was completed and elaborated in the Inception Report of the Terminal Evaluation and thus only the summarized version will be presented here.

²³ By 2030, combat desertification, restore degraded land and soil, including land affected by desertification, drought and floods, and strive to achieve a land degradation-neutral world, achievement of which is measured through an indicator 15.3.1 - Proportion of land that is degraded over total land area. NOTE BY EVALUATOR: Under this definition, the extent of land degradation for reporting on SDG Indicator 15.3.1 is calculated as a binary - degraded/not degraded - quantification using its three sub-indicators which are: Trends in land cover, Trends in land productivity, and Trends in carbon stocks (above and below ground), currently represented by soil organic carbon (SOC) stocks. The evaluator did not see any quantitative evidence measuring these three sub-indicators.

²⁴ By 2020, there are improved capacities to combat climate change and manage natural resources and communities are more resilient to the effects of natural and man-made disasters, achievement of which is measured through an indicator 8.7 - Number of cadasters of environmental hotspots in the country, among others.

²⁵ Site characterisation plans developed by the project, technical report, PRAMS assessment.

²⁶ Page 25 of ProDoc.

86. The project outlined a strong baseline situation with an intensive stakeholder participation process during the Project Preparation Grant (PPG) phase that enhanced the quality and relevance of the project to the country. The stakeholder mapping was excellent in the project design and could be used as a good practice example for stakeholder engagement processes in similar countries and projects.
87. The project design also did a good job at highlighting the urgency and critical nature of the project value addition regarding laying foundational steps toward soil remediation in the country.
88. The project's intention in terms of its causal pathways to impact were not clearly or well stated in the project, nor in the results framework. Particularly in how this project can lead towards a longer-term change toward healthy soils and land was a key missing element. The evaluator had to reshuffle the project intervention and results framework to better understand the intention of the project, have a clear view of the causal pathways and the overall Theory of Change.
89. The project design in terms of communications was not a strong point (as already noted by the MTR), and while considerable effort was made in implementation, the project could have benefited from a stronger communication strategy (especially to the public) at design (especially given that this was an outcome).
90. The project was ambitious in what it set out to achieve in the timeframe (which was extended to double the time) and budget (which was relatively small given the projects intentions). The exit strategy at design level was not strong.

Rating for Project Design: Moderately Satisfactory

Nature of the External Context

91. The evaluator's assessment of how the project design dealt with the nature of external context, including risk, as satisfactory/favourable. While the design did have some risks identified, it could have done a better job at assessing the external context by identifying likely or at least probable issues, most notably the change in government as a result of elections during project implementation.
92. The project experienced two main events during implementation, namely (a) government turnover as a result of national elections in 2017²⁷ which resulted in the stagnation and inactivity of the Steering Committee for most of 2017 and 2018 until the project had to request a late extension and make adaptive management arrangements around it, and (b) the COVID-19 pandemic which took place at the tail-end of project completion and had minor implications on project implementation but more on the sustainability of some activities.
93. Neither of these two events had a significant impact on the achievement of project results, although will be discussed under findings in terms of sustainability.

Rating for Nature of the external context: Moderately Favourable

Effectiveness

Availability of Outputs

²⁷ And during the evaluation waiting again the government turn over after elections in April 2022.

Output 1.1.1. Development of ILM tools toward remediation of contamination sites and ILM in Serbia, including (a) Mapping of pollution sources and land pressures from production sectors, (b) ILM tools related to mitigating environmental, social and economic risks of production sectors, and (c) Cadaster of hotspots in Serbia with GPS database established

94. This output was fully achieved.
95. The establishment and use of the Multi-Disciplinary Working Group, which was made up of experts and practitioners, allowed for sharing of relevant data and information that was scattered across various institutions. Working with municipalities, the cadaster was developed and updated.
96. The number of sites registered in the cadaster was 709, of which 478 were in need of investigation and 103 had been confirmed as sites of contamination. Of these, 32 were chosen based on project criteria discussed and recommended by the Multi-Disciplinary Expert Working Group and agreed by the Steering Committee,²⁸ mainly based on the availability of existing data on the presence of contaminated land within the industrial complexes, with particular attention given to abandoned locations under bankruptcy proceedings.
97. Soil sampling was conducted in a road-show that took eight months in total to complete, with SEPA staff being accompanied by experts from the Multi-Disciplinary Expert Working Group (and in some instances, the Italian expert institutions) so that SEPA could learn from these on how to go about soil sampling methodologies. Additional water and sediment samples were taken, where it was necessary (17 sites). These samples were analyzed, and site assessments were conducted (in individual site reports) for all 32 sites, which included tailored socio-economic situations.
98. The Preliminary Risk Assessment Model for Human Health and Environment (PRA.MS) methodology for identification and assessment of problem areas for soil contamination in Europe was applied for preliminary risk assessment at the 32 sites.
99. Mapping was done for all sites and these are available to stakeholders in the cadaster database, as well as being disseminated in project deliverables, most notably the publication "Towards soil decontamination in the Republic of Serbia".
100. The cadaster was fully established, and the IMELS supported SEPA in attaining an additional server to host the database. A Contaminated Sites (CS) module was developed and integrated within SEPA's environmental IT system for reporting, as well as an application for reporting by the local authorities and operators.
101. Best practice tools and guidelines were developed and integrated into "Guidelines for Sustainable Land Management at the local level" (which was requested by the local government during the site visits and 8 regional training session); this was printed and disseminated to local authorities.



²⁸ The meeting minutes of the second SC meeting discussed the selection of 39 sites, but prioritisation was finally done, seven sites were not finally included due to issues with access and/or had been privatised. The minimum for field testing and sampling in the corresponding activity was 30.

Figure 5. Some examples illustrating the suite of publications and knowledge addition to the country (ILM Serbia Project)

Output 1.1.2. Remediation priorities are established in accordance with Regulation 22/2010 and stakeholder consultations

102. This output was fully achieved.

103. A technical report was completed through the project assessing the 32 sites (through the sampling analysis) and a priority list of 14 sites was created based on those that required remediation. This report was validated through the Multi-disciplinary Expert Working Group.

104. In addition, two site characterisation plans were developed for two of the 14 sites by Italian experts with the co-financing provided by IMELS. These characterisation plans are the first step in planning detailed investigation and further remediation activities of these sites.

105. Stakeholder consultations were carried out and priorities for remediation were defined.

Output 1.2.1. An Integrated Land Planning Management Framework (ILMF) for Serbia developed in accordance with the requirements of SSNRM and its implementation mechanisms and international policy regulations

106. This output changed during implementation. It was initially aimed to develop a National Land/Soil Action Plan in ILM. However, in the meantime between the project being approved and implementation starting, there had been a Law on Soil adopted (2015), and the project rightly took advantage of this circumstance to align to the package of sub-laws and tools under this law.

107. Within this new framework law, the project supported the development of the “Rulebook on the content and manner of keeping a cadaster of contaminated sites, as well as type, content and forms, manner and deadlines for delivering the data”, in alignment with its main focus of work, which was the development and running of the cadaster in SEPA (with registration and updating from local authorities and operators).

108. The project developed this rulebook through intensive stakeholder processes, a complete package (including training, videos for registering and completing the cadaster, forms to be completed, and other guidance) was submitted for adoption in September 2018. The rulebook was subsequently adopted by the Government of Serbia in August 2019 (Official Gazette of the Republic of Serbia No. 58/2019).

109. The evaluator believes this to have been a good move and much more concrete output. Considering that there is a (Framework) Law on Soil, and the project has delivered tangible enforceable action under this framework law, the output has been fully achieved.

Output 2.1.1. A methodology compiled for the implementation of ILMF practice at the local level

110. This output has been fully achieved.

111. A methodology and guidelines on best land use management practices for local authorities was compiled in the publication titled “Guide on Sustainable Land Management at the Local Level in the Republic of Serbia with a compact brochure for decision makers”. In addition, “Guidelines for the Development of Local Soil Monitoring Programme” was published to support all local self-governments.

112. While guidelines were linked to relevant legislation, the guidelines of the local soil-monitoring programme was published prior to the by-law on local soil monitoring (under the Law on Soil). One of the stakeholders during interviews proclaimed that this would create confusion because of the sequence, especially if the by-law requests different

types of information. However, other stakeholders to the project still highlighted its usefulness in understanding how to go about soil sampling and monitoring and felt that it was a value add.²⁹

Output 2.1.2. A package of trade-off measures developed and tested at community and local levels

113. This output was fully achieved. The project would have followed a more justified sequence of activities if it had piloted remediation interventions for a sample of the 14 sites prioritised for remediation. However, remediation is expensive³⁰ and the project was aiming to support the implementation of overall practical rehabilitation efforts within the framework of ILM as outlined in the activities of this output.
114. The framework for trade-off analysis was defined and locations for testing trade-off measures at the local level were discussed with the Multi-Disciplinary Expert Working Group. Based on several proposals received from local authorities, two locations were selected (as recommended by the Multi-Disciplinary Expert Working Group), one in the autonomous Province of Vojvodina (Kraljevo), and the other in central Serbia (Sombor). Both of these were illegal dump sites that were causing contamination and had been used as dumping grounds for generations.³¹
115. Trade-off measurement plans were developed through experts (fea) and the local authorities, and these were implemented at the two locations with local support of public utility companies toward the end of 2019. This was done in two phases: earth works and removal of waste (top layers of soil removed and replaced with healthy top soil), and landscaping (greening of the area and planting of a protective buffer strip).
116. The utility companies contracted were tasked through the local authorities to service these areas in each of the locations. The evaluator visited both these sites and had interviews with the local authorities and the utility companies.
117. For **Sombor** (Figures 7, 8 and 9), the site does not look like it has been maintained since the initial rehabilitation efforts. While it has certainly been cleaned up and it looks like some of the trees planted have survived and vegetation has generally recovered, there were signs of continued dumping (albeit at a much-reduced level), including e.g. crushed asbestos (which is highly toxic). The site is on a pathway that is accessible by car (and this is why in some cases the habit to dump rubbish there has continued). However, the evaluator was told that there would be a highway replacing the smaller town road that would close off the access to the pathway and would limit this pathway to pedestrian use only (there would also be no opportunity to “stop and drop” on this highway), which would stop the “dumping”. There were minimal communication efforts made during the trade-off implementation - the evaluator believes this as an opportunity lost where a modest communication’s strategy could have been used through, e.g. having a public event including communities supporting the clean-up (through a competition, or similar) to raise awareness of the site and the dangers of dumping waste in this manner. The evaluator was informed during the finalisation of this report that the authorities immediately removed the waste that was found during the evaluation mission. In addition, colleagues

²⁹ In-country interviews.

³⁰ As an example, the estimate given in the UNDP Minamata Assessment case study at Krusevac for doing remediation of *only* Mercury, was 39 million Euros.

³¹ Dump sites are a general problem in Serbia and most local authorities spoken to highlighted these as one of their main priorities in terms of cleaning up. [It should be noted that only those local authorities where 32 sites were investigated (of which 14 prioritized) were eligible to apply with ideas/priorities for testing of trade-offs. Another criterion was co-financing from the local budget. Both Kraljevo and Sombor fall within the above 14.]

from the waste removal company committed to put up signboards on the prohibition of waste and follow the recommendations of this report.



Figure 6. Photos of the Sombor site before trade-off measures implementation (ILM Serbia Project, Source: Local Authority, Sombor)



Figure 7. Photos of the Sombor site during trade-off measures implementation (ILM Serbia Project, Source: Local Authority, Sombor)



Figure 8. Photos of the Sombor site taken during the Terminal Evaluation visit, three years later (ILM Serbia Project, Source: Justine Braby)

118. For **Kraljevo**, the site was near a large legal dumpsite (Figures 10, 11 and 12). There was a Romani community that had lived there and had been upscaling and recycling trash (and essentially living off the dumpsite) within an informal economy. This was a health hazard, and through the municipal programme of re-location (much prior to the project intervention and not linked to the project at all), the community was re-located to a safer territory.³² This site was earmarked for clean up and rehabilitation and was going to be changed into a dog park for the dog shelter nearby. The trade-off plan was implemented towards the end of 2019, with waste removal and earthworks removing the top soil, and bush and trees being planted, including, through a green corridor/buffer separating the actual dump site (at a distance of roughly 300 m). Upon visiting the site and through interviews with the utility company, the evaluator found that the site was still being maintained (grass cut, clean ups), but that the green corridor had been vandalised and trees had been removed. Servicing and maintenance was limited when the COVID-19 pandemic broke in the beginning of 2020 and disrupted the plans by the local authority to continue in the spring of 2020 to enhance the area and turn it into the dog park it had planned to. Lock-downs resulted in limited visits to the area and when services were resumed, the area had been vandalised. The evaluator was told that there was a budget allocation provided to greening spaces and to improve the road and enhance the servicing of the legal dumpsite, and that the plan for this area was back in place as a result. As mentioned, the evaluator would have thought that a communication's and community engagement strategy may have helped to decrease vandalism and enhance residential ownership of this public site.³³



Figure 9. Photos of the Kraljevo site before trade-off measures were implemented (ILM Serbia Project, Source: Local Authority, Kraljevo)



³² While this is outside of project intervention, this will still be discussed under human rights and gender section later on in this report, as it is relevant in terms of context and for wider learning.

³³ Refer to paragraph 166 for more information.

Figure 10. Photos of the Kraljevo site right after trade-off measures were implemented (ILM Serbia Project, Source: Local Authority, Kraljevo)



Figure 11. Photos taken of Kraljevo site during Terminal Evaluation visit, three years later (ILM Serbia, Source: Justine Braby)

Output 3.1.1. Technical support and capacity development to the National Laboratory within SEPA for soil sampling and quality analysis provided

119. This output was fully achieved.

120. A manual for soil sampling was developed and the method approved by the Accreditation Body of Serbia, allowing for the expansion of the SEPA laboratory accreditation to include soil sampling in addition to soil sample analysis.

121. Staff was trained during the process of drafting the manual. In addition, capacity development support was provided to SEPA on soil sampling and soil analysis through a learn-by-doing approach based on bringing together the laboratory experts from other laboratories (notably the Institute for Field and Vegetable Crops and the Institute for Public Health Belgrade, with some support from the Soil Science Institute) and conducting the field work for the 32 contaminated sites. The IMELS also supported this by inviting SEPA on a study visit to Italy, and providing them with a specialised course on the use of the Atomic Absorption Spectrometer (and X-Ray Fluorescence scanning devices)³⁴ which the SEPA obtained from the IMELS (as part of the co-financing to the project).

122. In summary, SEPA's laboratory (and staff) was capacitated and received expanded accreditation to include soil sampling. Staff were trained and received certificates for the use of the XRF scanning devices, and the laboratory analytical equipment (spectrometer) and training of staff was realised through IMELS support (as well as the knowledge-transfer support from the other three laboratories in the country as per above).

Output 3.1.2. Baseline information and methods established, and capacity strengthened for monitoring and reporting system

123. This output was fully achieved.

³⁴ The Ministry of Environmental Protection already had two scanning devices, and the IMELS provided the SEPA lab with the spectrometer.

124. Baseline concentrations of heavy metals in soils were determined for 32 sites, and baseline concentration against geochemical composition was made available from the results of a research conducted by the Geological Survey of Serbia (a project partner).
125. SEPA capacities were built on soil quality monitoring through three study visits to Italy, a joint mission of Italian and Serbian experts in Serbia (as one of the sampling trips done over the 8 months to the 32 sites) and supported participation at several conferences and events.³⁵

Output 3.1.3. A platform for monitoring of impact on land degradation is created

126. This output was fully achieved.
127. The project supported SEPA in access to information and data collection, including the development of the Cadaster, which is the main platform on which contaminated sites and information on soil contamination is provided.
128. Collected data and monitoring results of the 32 sites was published in “Towards Soil Decontamination in the Republic of Serbia” and integrated into the interactive hotspots map.
129. Participation at numerous conferences and events (see footnote 31), the findings were promoted at two public events in September 2021.³⁶
130. Baseline concentrations of heavy metals in soils were determined for 32 sites, and baseline concentration against geochemical composition was made available from the results of a research conducted by the Geological Survey of Serbia (a project partner).
131. A public platform, through an informative national website focusing on land degradation was developed.³⁷ This website is hosted by SEPA.



³⁵ Fourteen events in total, a complete list is provided on page 11 of the brochure “Enhanced cross-sectoral land management through land use pressure reduction and planning - overview of project results” published in September 2019, available here http://www.sepa.gov.rs/download/GEF_LD_Serbia-Overview_of_Project_Results-English%20version.pdf

³⁶ (i) Serbian Soil Society Conference with the paper on “Enhancing Management of Contaminated Sites Using Environmental Monitoring Data and Preliminary Risk Assessment Methodology in Serbia” and (ii) RemTech Expo with the paper on “Contaminated Sites Prioritization in the Republic of Serbia”.

³⁷ <http://degradacijazemljista.sepa.gov.rs/>

Figure 12. Website cover page for the national land degradation website hosted by SEPA, <https://degradacijazemljista.sepa.gov.rs/> (ILM Serbia Project)

Output 3.2.1. A (high level) conference aimed at presenting best practices in ILM in Serbia and the region is organised

132. This output was fully achieved.

133. A scientific and professional event was held on 10 September 2015 with the theme “Sustainable Soil Use”, hosted by the Institute for Field and Vegetable Crops, in 2015 in Novi Sad, as part of the International Year of Soils.

134. The event aimed to promote the importance of soil and its sustainable use, and gathered all those who study, manage and use soil resources in Serbia (with some international representation). At the event, the participants adopted the Declaration on Soil which was the official contribution of Serbia to the United Nations. Another outcome of the event was to send the joint message of mutual cooperation between institutional, scientific and economic sectors working together on soil preservation.

135. This platform laid the foundation of the strong partnership within the project that are discussed in detail in paragraphs 242-245 of this report.

136. In addition to this conference organised through the project, project partners also participated in 16 other conferences (see footnote 14).

Output 3.2.2. Communication and outreach conducted in different regions in Serbia

137. This output was fully achieved.

138. Meetings were held with all local authorities in April 2017 prior to the field missions (soil sampling at the 32 locations). Subsequent meetings with the 14 priority sites took place back-to-back with the 8 regional trainings.

139. Paper information was collected from local authorities and visual material (photographs, videos) were collected during the 32-site field missions. Various video news segments were broadcast.³⁸

140. Additional visual material was compiled in September 2019 in the form of a brochure “Overview of Project Results”, and a video presentation.³⁹

141. The project also made an effort to raise awareness through events on World Soil Day 2017 (awareness raising activities on “caring for the planet starts from the ground” with school children at the Serbian Science Festival and at the Phenomenon Scientific Centre), and World Soil Day 2018 (awareness raising activities on “be the solution to soil pollution” were conducted with key project stakeholders at the event “Fostering National Soil Partnership” and through workshops on soil pollution at LORIST eco-fair in Novi Sad and in elementary schools in Belgrade).

142. Eight regional trainings were held with local authorities on how to submit data for the Cadaster on Contaminated Sites to SEPA and to apply sustainable practices in local land management.

143. The various publications issued through the project have also increased awareness and supported soil-related knowledge in Serbia: including the Guide for SLM at the Local Level (and accompanying brochure), Towards Soil Decontamination in Serbia, and the Guidelines for the Development of Local Soil Monitoring Programmes, but also the

³⁸ Available at: <http://www.rainews.it/dl/rainews/media/ContentItem-2825e291-c75c-48af-90fa-2865ae99a5c9.html> and <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Z6SDRbyRLvQ&feature=youtu.be>

³⁹ Available at: <https://serbia.un.org/en/20310-enhanced-cross-sectoral-land-management-through-land-use-pressure-reduction-and-planning>

supporting of the publication of the National State of Soil Reports for 2015 (bilingual for the first time), 2016 and 2017 and indicators brochures, and the first textbook on soil science for students across Serbia (by the Faculty of Agriculture, University of Belgrade).

144. The national LD website is a one-stop shop for LD-related information in Serbia. Media attention was also received through five news stories.⁴⁰



Figure 13. Photos of the events held for awareness creation around soil protection (ILM Serbia Project, Source: Overview of Results Brochure)

OVERALL AVAILABILITY OF OUTPUTS FINDINGS

145. The project managed to deliver all its outputs and these were all of excellent quality. The foundational knowledge both in capacity within partners and through the publication of various high-quality products is useful not only for Serbia, but also for neighbouring countries in the region who could learn about the process and tools acquired for their own challenges around soil contamination.

146. A brief summary of the multiple tools, publications and capacity is provided in Table 5 below.

Table 5. Table summarising the narrative achievement of the ILM Serbia project, including its multiple tools and publications delivered to the country

Project Launch (2015)	The project was launched through the Sustainable Soil Use event in Novi Sad in September 2015 (International Year of Soils), signed Declaration on soil, and laying the platform of partnership and collaboration for the project.		
Site visits and Sampling Missions (2016-17)	Desk-study: collecting data from available public records, local government records, research papers, resulted in the development of factsheets and an understanding of the extent of contaminated sites.	Site visits: Multi-disciplinary Expert Working Group visited selected industrial sites to complement desk study through collecting additional data; based on collected data, sampling plans were prepared, these were then presented in a workshop in Belgrade 2017 to local authorities, operators and bankruptcy directors.	Sampling missions: Visits to all 32 sites to take soil, water and sediment samples to be analyzed in laboratories of Institute of Field and Vegetable Crops, Public Health Institute, and SEPA. All sites receiving individual technical reports, and all summarised into one technical report proposing the list of 14 sites for remediation. Cadaster developed. Equipment support provided by IMELS for sampling: Personal protective equipment, Atomic Absorption Spectrometer, Data server storage system for the Cadaster
Tools and methodologies developed and applied (2017-2019)	Cadaster of Contaminated Sites: development of a contaminated sites module integrated into SEPA's existing IT platform, the module enables reporting by local authorities and operators, access to relevant environmental information has been improved through the interactive hotspots map		

⁴⁰ Links are provided on page 15 of the brochure "Enhanced cross-sectoral land management through land use pressure reduction and planning - overview of project results" published in September 2019, available here http://www.sepa.gov.rs/download/GEF_LD_Serbia-Overview_of_Project_Results-English%20version.pdf

	Methodology for risk assessment: the PRA.MS methodology for identification and assessment for soil contamination in Europe was successfully applied for the preliminary risk assessment at the 32 sites, this was the first of its kind Soil Characterisation Plans: for two of the 14 priority sites, to instruct on detailed investigation and subsequent remediation Soil sampling methodology: a manual for soil sampling was developed, SEPA staff was trained and SEPA's accreditation certificate was expanded to include soil sampling, and guidelines for the development of local soil monitoring programmes were drawn up to support self-governments
Workshops and trainings	Four study exchange visits for Serbian staff (from SEPA and MoEP as well as partners) and Italian experts (one in Serbia, three in Italy) Eight regional trainings to build capacities of local authorities on how to submit data to the Cadaster, and how to apply sustainable practices Learn-by-doing soil sampling missions between SEPA staff and four expert laboratories Training and certification of use of the XRF hand-held scanners and field application for soil testing Various other workshops on engagement of project deliverables
Project Publications/Legal deliverables	Guide for Sustainable Land Management at the Local Level in the Republic of Serbia with accompanying brochure (Serbian and English) Towards Soil Decontamination in the Republic of Serbia (Serbian and English) Guidelines for the Development of Local Soil Monitoring Programmes (Serbian) Supported the publications of: The National State of Soil Reports for 2015 (bilingual), 2016, 2017 (Serbian) The first textbook in soil science for students across Serbia, Faculty of Agriculture, University of Belgrade Rulebook on the content and manner of keeping a Cadaster of Contaminated Sites, as well as type, content and forms, manner and deadlines for delivering the data. (Official Gazette no. 58/2019) Various papers and presentations (16 conferences)
Trade off measures	Trade-off measures developed and implemented for two dumpsites in Serbia (Sombor and Kraljevo)

147. The project's delivery of outputs is rated as 'Highly Satisfactory'.

Achievement of Project Outcomes

148. The achievement of the project's outcomes was evaluated based on the reconstructed Theory of Change's causal pathways between outputs and outcomes, and the strategic questions provided per outcome below.

Outcome 1.1. Demonstrated commitment (including through finance and institutional mechanism) towards the remediation of identified hotspots using the ILM tools developed

Strategic Question 1: *To what extent are project partners using the tools developed and demonstrating commitment towards the remediation of hotspots? (to what extent has the project improved the understanding of LD and remediation measures related to hotspots?)*

149. This outcome was partially achieved.

150. The tools developed through the project based on country needs were of exemplary quality. Training and capacity developed represented best practice given what was available in terms of budget and time.

151. The cadaster is probably the biggest achievement and highlight from the project. The SEPA will be continuing to update this and with the law in place to enforce registration and data input from local authorities, it will likely continue. However, despite the efforts made by the project on training,⁴¹ the evaluator noted from the country visit that the local authorities visited and interviewed knew little about the cadaster and only a small

⁴¹ See Table 5 under workshops and trainings

proportion (about 20% of those interviewed⁴²) had actually applied what they were trained to do by using the cadaster. The staff member (one of three hired through the project) who had been routinely following up with the local authorities is no longer at SEPA and thus SEPA is back to its resource constraints in doing active follow up.

152. The PRA.MS risk assessment was novel and has been used fully in site prioritisation, but whether this methodology will be used in the future to monitor the situation is unlikely as the staff member (another one of three hired through the project) at SEPA was let go once the project ended.
153. The soil sampling training and methodologies will continue to be used. However, notably, those who had been trained also included those staff members who were let go after the project ended, which is a loss of capacity built within SEPA.
154. Those Ministry of Environmental Protection staff trained (through Italy study visits) have moved from their positions. In one case, the Head of Environmental Inspection has moved to Head of Waste Management. While this has resulted in a loss of a champion in this Inspection Department, it has resulted in some championing of results within the Waste Management Department. The Waste Department has a list of prioritised sites planned for removal of toxic waste (included in the nationally budgeted activities of the Ministry) for which half of the list has already been done (i.e. waste has been removed). This list has 33 sites, of which 10 out of the 14 priority sites from this project are included, as well as four additional sites that the project had identified as large industrial enterprises of which certain parts require remediation but not enough data was available for an effective assessment at the time of the project.⁴³ While this is not *remediation*, it is at least a step towards removing the toxic waste above ground which would in time continue causing more soil contamination.
155. Neither of the sites where site characterization plans were completed (Sabac and Loznica) have used these in conducting full remediation so far.⁴⁴ At both sites, waste *had* been removed through the work of the Waste Management Department at the Ministry of Environmental Protection. The evaluator was able to visit one of these sites, Sabac. At Sabac, the evaluator was given permission to visit the (new) factory which has a new owner and has changed activity to a fertilizer-making factory. All the waste has been removed from the ground up, but the top soil was left as is. Water quality meters were added where water quality is tested every 5 years. An environmental inspector comes and carries out inspections but the evaluator was told no soil samples are taken in these inspections. While the area was cleaned up, a new modern factory was put in place, and the factory abides to all laws in their operations (in fact their storage facility of waste is cutting edge and they store waste from nearby factories), the site

⁴² The evaluator considers the limitation of interviewing only 20 people out of 199 might not be an accurate sample size, but there had been high turnover. The Standing Conference of Towns and Municipalities had done a survey and found that three local self-governments/local authorities had adopted and Annual Soil Protection Plan out of 30 (and thus also cadaster inputs).

⁴³ List shared with evaluator during country visit, interviews with stakeholders.

⁴⁴ Elixir Group in Sabac industrial zone has used the characterisation plan as well as results of the soil sample analysis conducted by SEPA for detailed analysis (report dated 2020) with an aim to identify risk and propose protection measures.

characterisation plan was not used, and the site did not undergo soil remediation.



Figure 14. Photo of the site at Sabac, on the left is a screenshot taken from the RaiNews24 footage⁴⁵ of Marco Falconi, Italian expert pointing to the area where contamination was leaking into the soil during the sampling mission (in 2017), on the right is a photo taken during the Terminal Evaluation visit of the same area in 2022 (Source: Right: footnote 39, Right: Justine Braby)

156. The local guide on soil monitoring will likely be used as a guide only until the by-law on soil monitoring under the Law on Soil is being enforced.
157. The project has made an effort to align its results with other projects that are being supported through multi-lateral agencies, including through UNDP, WHO and UNIDO already mentioned in this report, as well as other projects that are supporting Serbia gain accession to the EU (e.g. the Environment Accession Project in Serbia, Phase 4).
158. Overall, for this outcome, the project has laid a strong foundation that seems to be used and has built towards some level of commitment on dealing with sites in need of remediation, but no commitment has been made by the Government to move forward on remediating any of the sites so far (which would be an extremely expensive, but necessary, endeavour).

Outcome 1.2. Enhanced enabling legal and decision-making environment for ILM in Serbia

Strategic Question 2: *To what extent has the project contributed to enhancing the enabling legal and decision-making environment for ILM in Serbia (through an enhanced policy framework)?*

159. The project has done well to practically align with the country's Law on Soil in pushing for legal support to the cadaster, its most prominent output and achievement. This has contributed greatly towards better monitoring and informed decision-making around soil decontamination in the country.
160. The project has also likely catalysed the trajectory towards pushing for the by-laws and regulations under the Law on Soil through the monitoring programme support (this is evidenced by three local authorities already having their own action plan on the national soil protection programme).⁴⁶
161. The outcome has been achieved to the extent possible within the project timeframe, and enabled continued legal development on soil protection and ILM in Serbia.

⁴⁵ <https://www.rainews.it/archivio-rainews/media/ContentItem-2825e291-c75c-48af-90fa-2865ae99a5c9.html>

⁴⁶ Interviews with country partners and survey results from the Standing Conference of Towns and Municipalities.

Outcome 2.1. Demonstrated improvement of ILM at specific sites

Strategic Question 3: *To what extent has the project improved ILM at specific sites?*

162. The project most notably has demonstrated improvement through the output on the trade-off measures. These have been discussed in some detail in the availability of outputs under Output 2.1.2. above.
163. Although the project achieved this intervention by taking a demand-led approach, the sustainability of this intervention was hampered by COVID-19. In both cases, local authorities and utility companies interviewed highlighted the problem around “changing habits of people” referring to the illegal dumping of waste at these historic dumpsites. This could have been improved through a dedicated communication’s strategy to engage the public in the interventions. However, the evaluator notes the very limited budget of the project and the activities in particular and what could be realistically achieved, was achieved.
164. The actual impact of these works is negligible compared to the level of soil contamination across Serbia, and thus these pilot interventions cannot be seen as much of a benefit in terms of ILM improvement to a quantitative level of ha of land restored (we are talking about ~5 ha total). However, the removal and rehabilitation of dumpsites across Serbia is a priority for local authorities and the project examples will likely have some effect on replicating the work among municipalities dealing with similar problems, moving toward enhanced pollution control and soil protection.
165. The outcome was achieved.

Outcome 3.1. Key stakeholders demonstrate strengthened capacity for improved monitoring and reporting on soil quality and use monitoring system

Strategic Question 4: *To what extent has capacity been strengthened for improved monitoring and reporting on soil quality and LD?*

166. The project did a really good job at enhancing the capacity of the SEPA national laboratory in soil sampling, this accreditation will likely have impact in terms of longer-term monitoring programmes in the country. The equipment gained is useful and will continue to be used to this effect.
167. Baseline and foundational information on soil monitoring was a really strong contribution from this project to the country and will strongly support further work in the field.
168. The use of partnerships within the laboratories has greatly helped capacity sharing and the ability for partners working on soil in Serbia to connect with each other for information sharing and improvement on their work on soil protection.
169. The platforms, including through the cadaster, the interactive hotspots map, the various publications, and through the open website is a strong contribution to knowledge for informed monitoring.
170. The local level soil monitoring process is not in place yet for most local authorities, but once it is put in place with the by-laws under the Law on Soil, the project has laid some foundations on soil monitoring capacity.
171. Active, intelligent and energetic staff who were hired to support SEPA (and who had hoped to stay on based on the value-add to SEPA operations and content) were not retained at SEPA once the project ended, this is a large loss in terms of pushing for various results (including the cadaster, updating the website - which has not been done since 2019 -, and continuing support to local authorities). In addition, some turn over of staff (as a result of the national election in 2017) has resulted in some capacity losses in the Ministry of Environmental Protection. The same has happened in 2020 at the local level when local government elections were held.

172. The evaluator considers this outcome mostly achieved, with some limitations due to staff turnovers.

Outcome 3.2. Target groups, including policy makers, of outreach and communication demonstrate increased awareness and understanding and demonstrate support towards remediation

Strategic Question 5: *To what extent have the project target groups of awareness and outreach campaigns demonstrated support towards remediation?*

173. The project (as outlined under Output 3.2.2) made an effort to raise awareness and understanding around soil protection and remediation in the regions, and the country as a whole, through various publications (of which many found the “Towards soil decontamination” very useful having shared it widely outside of the project), events and trainings. These included various target groups, such as the project stakeholders, but also school children, students, and the communities at local level.

174. This said, there does not seem to be much behaviour change or action at the policy-maker level; most notably perhaps due to the national election in 2017 resulting in leadership changes - these were seen in the inability of the Steering Committee to be reformed until the project end where the project was forced to request a project extension and request the Minister to allow at the very least for a validation committee to validate the project deliverables, and the fact that there has not been any concrete plans/way forward from the Ministry of Environmental Protection on remediation of any of the sites (except for the waste removal championed by the Head of Waste Management). This is also shown in the ability of only one staff member to be retained at SEPA despite the obvious value-add they brought.⁴⁷

175. The project would have benefited from a stronger communications campaign to the public in order to build pressure around remediation priorities in the country. Afterall, this has immense risks to the health of the people of Serbia.

176. The outcome was mostly achieved in terms of effort on communications, but was missing the final commitment from high level decisions makers on moving remediation forward.

177. Achievement of Outcomes is rated as ‘Satisfactory’.

Likelihood of Impact

Strategic Question 6: *To what extent has the project achieved progress towards remediation of soil and prevention of further soil loss, monitoring and maintenance of soil quality and overall improved ILM in Serbia?*

178. The following highlights have laid a foundation toward remediation of soil in Serbia, and thus also move to impact:

179. The cadaster and the by-law is a strong and sustained result of the project. Together with the publications and knowledge created through the project, the country has a strong platform on which to work towards remediation.

180. The partnerships started at the launch, carried through the Multi-disciplinary Expert Working group and bringing together all parties involved, all facilitated excellently through the NPC, has resulted in the sustaining of partners and the improvement of the network of soil protection in the country.

⁴⁷ These staff claimed that they would have stayed on for less income because they were committed and enjoyed the work, one staff member stayed on for free for some months in the hope to get a permanent position and was eventually taken into the private sector when this position did not become available.

181. The SEPA has a strong project champion who has been sharing projects not only in their sphere of influence but also has been invited to several neighbouring countries to share experiences for possible replication. SEPA having received training and having been accredited in soil sampling has also given the country a strong step towards improved monitoring and understanding of the situation on the ground.
182. The support to local level government has resulted in “ready-ing” them for when soil monitoring and cadaster updating becomes enforced in a practical manner.
183. While most of the assumptions have held, the greatest influencing factor actually depends on the level of priority the Ministry of Environmental Protection gives to remediation, and the level of prioritisation the national government gives to the MoEP to conduct remediation. The evaluator does not see evidence of this having happened or that it will happen in the near future. Here, the assumption of increased public pressure has not held.
184. Industry stakeholders were in favour of remediation where historical sites were concerned but they highlighted that this fell under the responsibility of the Ministry of Environmental Protection, and not new owners buying the land. Most industry partners visited were keeping to regulations (and even to EU standards in anticipation of accession).
185. The project has laid a strong foundation with highly relevant and high-quality outputs as well as very useful guides and entry points for next steps, but where remediation is concerned (an expensive endeavour that is not a priority at state-level, nor at local-level government), it is unlikely that the priority sites will undergo remediation any time soon unless external funding becomes available.
186. It must be noted that the assumptions laid out in the Theory of Change, particularly A1 (political will and thus remediation prioritised), A4 (increased capacity results in improved monitoring), A5 (budget exists for long-term monitoring and use of tools across country) and A7 (increasing public pressure and accountability) have either only partially held (e.g. A4), or not held at all (all others), in the Terminal Evaluation assessment. Without these, the causal pathways between outcomes and intermediate states are affected.
187. However, the project has moved the theory of change forward in such a way that the next steps will be towards the prevention of soil loss and enhanced pollution control (through the foundations laid and some next steps in legislation and monitoring).
188. Achievement of likelihood of impact, as directly connected to what the project is able to control, and how it achieved its outcomes within the move to impact of the Theory of Change is rated as ‘Moderately Likely’.

Rating for Effectiveness: Satisfactory

Financial Management

Adherence to UNEP’s Policies and Procedures

189. The roles of financial reporting were defined in the Internal Cooperation Agreement (ICA) between the IA (Ecosystems Division) and the EA (Regional Office for Europe). All financial oversight and sign off was carried out by the FMO of the IA.
190. All contracts and agreements with service providers adhered to UNEP policies and procedures, although notably in some cases the Regional Office had to go through UNOPs (or UNDP, in the case with the NPC) to provide certain contracts because of certain limitations in contracting. While this falls within normal operating procedure, it does create additional red tape for the project.

191. The MTR picked up on a small complication which was fixed internally at UNEP and did not influence the delivery of project results.⁴⁸
192. There was a slight delay in the transfer of funds to the EA in 2018. In this period there were also deviations between the financial system and reporting templates. These two situations caused a delay in the submission of the financial report in 2018. With the new FMO in place since 2019, financial reporting was improved.
193. The rating given is 'Satisfactory'.

Completeness of Project Financial Information

194. Project financial information is complete, the evaluator received all the annual financial expenditure reports (with delays for the final one) and the detailed budget revision that was done in 2021. The expenditure reporting aligned to the previous method of reporting and thus does not show expenditure per component.
195. Co-financing information was complete, with a large cash contribution and additional support that was in-part vital to the project's success coming from IMELS. Additional co-financing was leveraged through the UNEP Environment Fund. Co-financing can be found in Annex 3 of this report.
196. Financial completeness is rated as 'Satisfactory'.

Communication Between Finance and Project Management Staff

197. Communication was good between the project management (EA) and the FMO (IA), and improved with the incoming FMO in 2019. No problems were flagged.
198. Communication between finance and project management staff is rated as 'Satisfactory'.

Rating for Financial Management: Satisfactory

Efficiency

199. The project underwent two project extensions. The first one was from 30 June 2018 to 30 September 2019 and was based on a recommendation that trade-off measures are given more time as well as the back-and-forth that happened after the national election when the Steering Committee went stagnant. The second extension (October 2019 to September 2021) was given for similar reasons. The trade-off measures were supposed to be a relatively short process, but were delayed by local authorities delaying deadlines and then delaying their reporting. Only in 2021 did the project, after many requests to get the Steering Committee going again, take an adaptive measure and request for a simple Validation Committee to validate and take ownership of the final project deliverables.⁴⁹ The project closure, according to partners (and on the SEPA website⁵⁰), was on 7 October 2019. When asked to confirm this, the project management stated that the activities had ended by then, but the validation was still pending for key deliverables (and to enhance sustainability and uptake).⁵¹

⁴⁸ MTR, page 44: "There were administrative problems in preparation of the expenditure report for the Year 1. Consequently, there was a kind of financial complications during the implementation of the Project. Up to date, first sub-allotment for Expenditure year 1 of 172,649 USD was received on 15.12.2015. Submission of a second sub-allotment cash request was processed in 2018 during this MTR. In order to regulate this delay in financing internal re-allocation of funds within the UNEP was performed. Therefore, this unwanted situation did not affect the timely delivery of the project or the quality of its performance. This represents an adaptive management action."

⁴⁹ The request letter for the validation was sent on 30 July 2019 and the PVC was established on 7 August 2019.

⁵⁰ <https://degradacijazemljista.sepa.gov.rs/?p=1185&lang=en>

⁵¹ See footnote 15

200. The project was able to be quite efficient in time and cost in that it tried to synergise as much as possible with incoming opportunities, including (a) the IMELS offering professional assistance and resources, (b) UNIDO getting information from the project for its PCBs project and finally using the ILM Serbia project information and one of the sites under the top 14, (c) WHO using information at BOR⁵², and (d) UNDP taking on one of the top 14 sites for its mercury detailed assessment and plan for remediation of this particular heavy metal. Details of these are given in paragraph 40 above.
201. When looking at the amount and quality of work the project did in, admittedly, more time than it had planned, it is remarkable what it managed to achieve with a relatively tiny GEF budget allocation. This is testament to the power of a strong partnership, the manner in which additional resources were leveraged through a strong NPC as a connector, and through champions (including the work ethic and passion of the three staff hired through the project) at SEPA, and many of the other partner institutions. It is no surprise that several interview respondents shared that more man hours went into this project than was planned.

Rating for Efficiency: Satisfactory

Monitoring and Reporting

Monitoring Design and Budgeting

202. The monitoring design, work plan and budget were detailed in the project document. The indicators were not all SMART as these were geared more at output-level (mostly because the outcomes read more like outputs) and focused more on participation numbers and tools rather than any demonstrated level of capacity or behaviour change.
203. The budgeted monitoring plan appears realistic and well planned, with dedicated co-financing per item. These include the inception, measuring of project indicators, semi-annual progress and operational reports, project steering committee meetings (as well as their reports), PIRs, monitoring visits to the field sites, the MTR, the TE, an annual audit, the project final report, as well as the co-financing report. There is also a budget of USD 60,000 (half from GEF, half from co-financing) toward “a publication of lessons learnt and other project documents”.⁵³ A total budget of USD 267,000 (113,000 from GEF, 154,000 co-financing) was allocated to this area of the project’s work at design phase. These did not come to fruition - although lessons learnt were put into the final report, other reports were developed that were not planned, like the useful “overview of project results” brochure and accompanying video. In addition, the “Towards decontamination in Serbia” has been popularly taken up within different target groups, e.g. universities.
204. Monitoring design and budgeting is rated as ‘Satisfactory’.

Monitoring of Project Implementation

205. The project was reflexive and adaptive in its management approach and taking into consideration the changing circumstances based on its monitoring framework (including, e.g. the change of output as a result of the law on soil in 2015, and changing the Steering Committee to a Validation Committee to be able to close off the project through validation of the final project results). The reporting was also used for results-based management.

⁵² Mining and smelting complex in the city of Bor, where “Sentieri” method was first piloted under SAICM QSP funded project

⁵³ This was to be produced annually, and “also part of semi-annual reports and project final report”. Source: Appendix 7: Monitoring and Evaluation Budget and Workplan (Project Document, 2015).

- 206. There was no evidence to suggest or show how co-financing was used in project monitoring (as was planned).
- 207. An MTR was completed and was helpful but did not steer the project in any particular direction, it only supported the enhancement of the project through recommending the sharing of the technical reports across the broader stakeholders and some minor recommendations that did not have major significance on project results' attainment.
- 208. Monitoring of Project Implementation was 'Satisfactory'.

Project Reporting

- 209. All main reports were completed, including the annual reports, PIRs, steering committee minutes, and the LD-PMAT, were all completed, including quarterly reporting.
- 210. Final project reporting through the final PIR (2021) and the Final Project Report was satisfactory but could have been more nuanced in the challenges the project faced and how it attempted to overcome these.
- 211. Project reporting is rated as 'Satisfactory'.

Rating for Monitoring and Reporting: Satisfactory
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Sustainability

Socio-political Sustainability

- 212. The project made intensive capacity building efforts (e.g. the study visits between Italy and Serbia, the eight regional trainings) which are likely to be sustained for those who have stayed in their position (or moved on to similar positions) within SEPA, Ministry of Environmental Protection, and local government.
- 213. The country ownership in terms of championship (as a result of this increased capacity) sits mostly within the SEPA and with the Waste Department at Ministry of Environmental Protection. The latter is limited in its mandate in what it is able to achieve, although it has done quite a bit in terms of waste removal at these prioritised sites.
- 214. There had been a reshuffle after national elections which caused some turnover in the leadership at SEPA and the Ministry of Environmental Protection, in 2017, and related to sustaining of project results, again in 2022. While the evaluator was in-country, the new cabinet of Ministers had still not been released and so there was a bit of uncertainty in terms of the prioritisation of the remediation. The change in leadership that occurred in 2017, and its resultant deprioritisation of the project was illustrated through the lack of engagement even after several follow up attempts in re-instituting and putting into place the new Steering Committee. This was dragged along to such an extent that the project needed to make an adaptive effort after delaying implementation and decisions through requesting a simple validation committee to sign off on the project deliverables. The fact that none of the key staff that the project hired to support SEPA during the project were kept on also demonstrates a limited level of commitment from the leadership at the SEPA. The project may have limited this risk by having introduced graduated cost-sharing of these positions.
- 215. One of the biggest successes of the project is the building of effective partnerships and professional relationships among the actors working in soil protection and this will likely continue to function as a network.
- 216. Socio-political sustainability is rated as 'Moderately Likely'.

Financial Sustainability

217. The project was able to achieve a lot with very little, at least in terms of GEF allocation. This was a product of not only a strong-working team with a support structure based on a strong partnership of stakeholders, but also that large co-financing (even in cash) was secured for some important activities, most notably through the IMELS.
218. Additional funding from the Italian Government is not likely, at least momentarily, as it has also changed in the recent elections and with new priorities arising from the Ukraine/Russia war and climate adaptation focuses in Africa.
219. The project did manage to leverage its findings quite well and get some results moving forward through three projects in particular, namely (a) UNIDO, who used information of the site in Zrenjanin to conduct further site analyses and support the removal of PCBs at this site,⁵⁴ (b) WHO for which some information was used from Bor (one of the 32 sites), and (c) UNDP, where discussions between the two agencies ensured the choosing of Krusevac⁵⁵ as a site to further investigate the removal of mercury. There had also been discussions between the two agencies on a follow up proposal based on the results obtained from the two projects to help the Government resolve the issue of mercury polluted waste/soil through requesting GEF funding once the Minamata was ratified by the country (as of this evaluation, it has not yet been ratified).
220. There have been some other projects where the ILM Serbia project has possible linkages in, including, to a lesser degree the support from the Swedish Government to the Ministry of Environmental Protection for the Environment Accession Project in Serbia (Phase 4), which is focused on the negotiations and the environmental requirements that need to be met, and the Green Deal Agenda where some follow on work is being done with SEPA and more notably, sharing of project results between countries in the Balkan Region.
221. These are low-hanging fruit where, thanks to project champions, knowledge of the project is being shared for further uptake and causal pathways.
222. So for soil monitoring, cadaster updating, and many other parts of the project, things will likely move forward through some (limited) financing. However, when it comes to actual remediation of sites, there is unlikely to be large tracts of funding coming from the projects mentioned above or within the national budget allocation, unless external funding becomes available.
223. Financial Sustainability is 'Moderately Likely'.

Institutional Sustainability

224. Institutional sustainability will mainly be through the SEPA (particularly, the Department on Indicators and Reporting). The updating of the cadaster is done through a once-a-year reminder to local authorities and operators to do so under the new by-law. It is a pity that the three staff brought on through the project were not retained post-project, once again resulting in SEPA suffering from understaffing.
225. The project would may have benefited from a more strategic cost-sharing strategy here from the start of the staff-hiring. If SEPA was understaffed and this was a barrier identified in project design, then the PPG process could have negotiated with SEPA an agreement in which graduated cost sharing could have been done. For example, instead of paying 100% of the wages, the project could have paid 90% and SEPA 10%, and then gradually

⁵⁴ Through the UNIDO/GEF project 4877 "Environmentally sound management and final disposal of PCBs"

⁵⁵ It actually ensured the proper baseline data and information for Krusevac site were available to further conduct informed assessment of options and costs for removal of mercury. Kusevac site is one of the two in Serbia (other one is an operating industry in Pancevo) which are contaminated with mercury, hence no selection was needed.

over the project period decreasing GEF funds and increasing SEPA funds. The number of staff positions to be retained after the project ends could have been discussed at the onset. This approach would have ensured efficient use of GEF funds, but also ensured more commitment from SEPA to retain the capacity built with the project investment.

226. The website has also not been updated since 2019. The head of department has been quite instrumental in pushing various project results forward and has been presenting on regional platforms to share knowledge of the project.
227. Some local authorities (depending on the resource and level of championship) have been taking on some of the work they had learnt through the project. Few of these were included in those interviewed, but three out of 20 surveyed by the Standing Conference of Towns and Municipalities had developed soil protection action programmes within their constituencies.
228. There has been some uptake of project results in the Waste Management Department at the Ministry of Environmental Protection where waste has been removed from several sites identified through the project, but remediation is still lacking (and there is no champion for the project on this within the Ministry).
229. The soil protection programme and enacting the Law on Soil will likely move forward and there is enough capacity in the country to do this (in some parts, thanks to the project).
230. The project was a best practice example for how partnerships were created, a really good network and also good results sharing on various different platforms and conference. This network has supported a much better sharing platform of information and knowledge among soil scientists and practitioners in Serbia. However, more could have been done in terms of incorporating 'succession management' strategies to protect the project's achievements against staff turnover.
231. Institutional Sustainability is 'Highly Likely'.

Rating for Sustainability: Moderately Likely

Factors Affecting Performance and Cross-cutting Issues

Preparation and readiness

232. The project clearly outlined the baseline situation and articulated the problem statement very well. It demonstrated a good understanding of the gaps it intended to address.
233. The Project Document outlined the intensive stakeholder participation process at PPG phase and narrated (with tables outlining roles, interests, engagement at meetings on certain points) how different partners related to LD and how the PPG process went about identifying the key partners to directly involve in project implementation. This was very well done and could be used as an example of "how to" for future PPG processes. The evaluator stated at the inception report that the industry level was not sufficiently represented, but based on the country visit and interviews with the Chamber of Commerce and Industry, the evaluator found a strong representation through this partner. In addition, the focus on abandoned sites lessens the influence of private sector slightly.
234. The project could have done a better job in anticipating the risk of government turnover that a national election would bring.
235. Preparation and readiness is rated as 'Satisfactory'.

Quality of project management and supervision

UNEP/Implementing Agency

236. The Ecosystem Division was the Implementing Agency of the project. The team consisted of a Task Manager, an assistant, and an FMO. The Task Manager (TM) oversees a large portfolio of projects and has a vast amount of experience and expertise. While the TM came on board to this project just before the MTR, he had good overview of the project and understood the project importance. He visited the country once and took part in the third Steering Committee, a representative participated in the Project Validation Committee meeting.
237. The IA supported the project and gave it guidance when needed, but also gave the project room to flow. Particularly, the IA supported the project in terms of adaptive management, oversight of the PIRs and project reporting.
238. Project supervision and management by the IA is rated as 'Satisfactory'.

Executing Agency and Partners

239. The **Executing Agency and the PMU**: The project was managed through the Vienna Programme Office, with the Project Manager (PM) in Vienna and the National Project Coordinator (NPC) based in Belgrade, Serbia. The project was very well managed through the NPC who was a strong facilitator which was highlighted by almost all respondents in the country.
240. The Steering Committee met three times and in 2017 after the national elections stagnated and no longer had a role to play in steering the project. The project management put much effort into requesting the re-instatement without success until the project had to request a last-minute extension and had to take an adaptive management response (supported by the IA) to request for a simplified validation committee to sign off on the project results. If it had not been for the strong partnerships (and most notably through the Multi-Disciplinary Expert Working Group), and a strong NPC, the project would likely have suffered more from the absence of the SC for second half of the project.
241. However, the project did very well to move results forward in the meantime.
242. **Implementing partners**: The Ministry of Environmental Protection did not play as big a role as was envisaged although supported the project strongly through some champions (some of these have moved on). SEPA is the leader and champion of the project and the project's greatest beneficiary. Through the hiring of support to SEPA for the implementation of the project, the project management team was extended into SEPA and supported more integrated implementation, with SEPA taking the lead, and thus owning the project results.
243. The Multi-disciplinary Expert Working Group was a perfect example of bringing experts and practitioners together in a knowledge-sharing platform to enhance and verify and own project results. This was a red thread throughout the project that had an immense role to play, both directly, and indirectly, in the quality of project results.
244. The partnership with the IMELS and the involvement of the four Italian expert institutions (most notably ISPRA) had a strong role to play in SEPA's institutional strengthening and, overall, the quality of project results in general was also testament to their support.
245. The Standing Conference of Towns and Municipalities was a strong partner to have on board to facilitate the local government training sessions as well as the distribution of key project materials. The NGO fea was technically and process-wise a good partner and were particularly helpful in the facilitation of the training sessions as well as the outreach events.

246. The Chamber of Commerce and Industry and other stakeholders involved in the project, but not necessarily in the centre of it, were engaged in a strong way and highlighted their involvement and appreciation for the project.
247. Some actors played less of a role than was initially planned, such as the Ministry of Mining and Energy (from whom information was received but beyond this were not involved as most of the sites were not mining related) and the Faculty of Forestry, whose Dean was on the Steering Committee, and then when the Steering Committee was unravelled, was no longer formally engaged.⁵⁶ This said, these small instances do not retract from the project results achievement based on the engagement of the key stakeholders.
248. Overall, excellent management and adaptive management of project and strong partnerships, the rating for the executing agency and partners is Highly Satisfactory.
249. Project management and supervision is rated as 'Highly Satisfactory'.

Stakeholder participation and cooperation

250. The project was exemplary in its partnerships, as already noted in the section above, as well as other sections in this report.
251. What was quite clever and novel of the project was the red thread of bringing partners together, starting from the beginning, through supporting one of them in the Novi Sad Sustainable Soils conference while at the same time launching the project and then all experts and practitioners working on the declaration of soil and then pulling the key people together to form the Multi-disciplinary Expert Working group already in the first field missions.
252. The strength of partnerships has already been detailed in paragraphs 242-245.
253. It was due to partnership and the engagement process in general that the project was able to work so well even in the absence of direction from the steering committee.
254. Partnerships and cooperation is rated as 'Highly Satisfactory'.

Responsiveness to human rights and gender equity

255. The final report referred to the project implementation having been mindful of gender balance, gender parity and having considered gender throughout. The evaluator did not see gender disaggregated indicator-based data monitoring for the project (at least not in the logframe, nor in the SESP and there was no gender action plan for the project).
256. The project had equitable participation of women and men, and had an element of gender empowerment that was not necessarily driven by the project itself in that the majority of the leadership and championship in the project were female, including the PM, the NPC and the two leader-representatives from the Ministry of Environmental Protection and SEPA. As stated in the project final report, an important indicator of women's predominance in the role of environmental guardians and agents of change in Serbia is reflected in that women constituted the majority (over 70%) of participants of regional trainings. The composition of the PSC, PVC and the Multi-disciplinary Expert Working Group had strong woman-representation.
257. For the purpose of full disclosure the evaluation notes one area relating to the movement of people that might warrant more attention in future projects, although no negative effects were detected within this project: In 2002, the Romani population were granted the status of a national minority in Serbia, and enjoy rights to the protection of their

⁵⁶ He was appointed member of the Project Validation Committee but did not attend the meeting.

national, cultural and linguistic identity. The “Strategy for Social Inclusion of Roma until 2025” aims to implement policies to reduce poverty and eliminate discrimination in five strategic areas - education, employment, housing, social protection and health care. This community is known to frequently inhabit dumpsites that have high concentrations of hazardous materials, but which are part of the informal economy through the upscaling and recycling etc of waste materials. Prior to the project’s grant proposal submission this community was re-located from the Kraljevo dumpsite, as part of the Strategy for Social Inclusion, to formal housing. While movement from these sites is in the health interests of this community, it is assumed that this movement was carried out with full consideration of their human rights and in their best interests.

258. This said, the project itself actually worked (intrinsically, but also directly through the risk assessments) on supporting human rights to health in that it aimed to bring to light the danger of soil contamination to the health of Serbian citizens.

259. The responsiveness to human rights and gender is ‘Satisfactory’.

Environmental and social safeguards

260. The project had done an environmental and social safeguards screening in the project design (Annex 12 of the Project Document), although this was done somewhat superficially. However, the project aimed to safeguard environment and society directly through its work on decontamination.

261. The project did a good job of bringing this issue to the forefront in Serbia and into the agenda for sustainable development in the country.

262. Environmental and social safeguards rated as ‘Satisfactory’.

Country ownership and drivenness

263. As already stated in previous sections of this report, there was strong government ownership through champions within SEPA and the Ministry of Environmental Protection, but not necessarily at the level where decisions such as staff resources or remediation is prioritised. This said, key capacities have been built, the SEPA lab accreditation has been extended, and there have been several steps forward on results of the project.

264. Local level government ownership was already detailed in previous sections of this report (particularly paragraphs 214-229). The partnerships within the project have also been strengthened and will continue, as already elaborated under paragraphs 242-245.

265. Because of the project, the country has the platform on which to appropriately engage on remediation problems. It is also now the most advanced compared with other West Balkan countries and has resulted in SEPA leading the green agenda on soil pollution including through e.g. the Austrian Development Agency who are interested in working in other parts in the region.

266. As said under institutional sustainability, remediation has not been fully championed by the leadership at Ministry of Environmental Protection.

267. Country ownership and drivenness is rated as ‘Satisfactory’.

Communication and public awareness

268. Communications was part of Outcome 3.2. and had a lot of influence on the move to impact in terms of policy making; given the lack of ownership at the higher levels with regard to remediation, this was not so impactful. However, the passing of the cadaster by-law happened relatively fast showing some commitment.

269. There was a lot of good communications work done through two World Soil Day events (run through fea). There was also quite a lot of effort in sharing results and findings by several different project partners at no less than 16 conferences and events, and five news stories shared the projects interventions.
270. The website was a good platform on which to get information but has not been updated since 2019.
271. The project delivered really good publications, new papers (and thus new science knowledge generated). The textbook at university level, the first of its kind, is a great contribution, as was the quite popular "Towards soil decontamination in Serbia". The high-quality publications have laid a strong foundation of knowledge on soil protection and decontamination in Serbia, and future work and momentum on soil protection will continue to build on this.
272. While some target groups were well communicated (e.g. school children and students), there could have been some more effort on engaging the public in general to help increase public pressure for remediation given the danger to human health.
273. Also for the trade-off measures, more could have been done to get local authorities to include residents and the public in the clean-up efforts to be part of the process and thus buy-in, contribution to habit changes around dumping illegally.
274. From an effort and resulting demand point of view, communication and public awareness is rated as 'Satisfactory'.

Rating for Factors Affecting Performance: Satisfactory

V. CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

275. The project was designed from a strong situation analysis and baseline, it built on what was done and understood the local context and situation very well.
276. It built on the country's existing efforts through some really effective and necessary tools, including the key resource, the cadaster, but also through the prioritisation of sites list, the accreditation and capacity building of SEPA and others on soil sampling and monitoring. The capacity development for the local level was also of excellent value, bringing local authorities on board through several meetings and through the legal requirement of updating the cadaster while at the same time providing the local level with the training and the tools to make this updating process as simple as possible.
277. The project delivered products of excellent quality and which are highly useful for application and for the building of the knowledge base on soil contamination and protection in Serbia.
278. The monitoring-level contributions were done exceptionally well and while these will be followed up within SEPA and the network of labs, it will be a matter of time in terms of application of local-level soil monitoring (which depend on the law on soil and its enforcement through the by-laws).
279. The SEPA benefited greatly from having three young, intelligent, capacitated and highly motivated upcoming career professionals on board to support the implementation and work within SEPA; this was one of the reasons of success of many of the project activities which required immense effort (documentation searches, desktop reviews, extensive follow ups). It is a pity that despite this capacity, SEPA and/or other institutions could not (or were not able to) see the benefit of such capacity for their institutional growth and success and that these professionals are now either unemployed or working in the private sector. And as a result, SEPA, despite all the capacity development support, goes back to being under resourced.
280. The Ministry of Environmental Protection, while having some championship in place to drive things forward, could have been more effective in its leadership with e.g. the Steering Committee, but the project managed to adapt pretty well by having built-in resilience through the NPC and strong partnerships. The ministry was able to make quite some achievements (including the by-law passing for the cadaster within the timeframe of the project), but ultimately lacked gravitas in commitment to remediation (admittedly an extremely expensive endeavour).
281. The partnership, both outside of, and within, the Multi-disciplinary Working Group, was exemplary. The project did an excellent job at connecting the science-practitioner interface, connecting soil scientists with government practitioners, technocrats, and decision-makers.
282. The project was excellently managed overall, with strong facilitation particularly in forging partnerships.
283. Communication and outreach was scientific and technically focused in most cases (with the exception of perhaps the school events), and while this was certainly extensive, efficient and important, the sustainability of project results (here the evaluator is referring to commitments/prioritisation towards remediation and soil protection in Serbia in general) may have benefitted from a stronger *public* outreach and communications campaign, there may be some useful communication/outreach that the project could support SEPA to champion through the website and other platforms (see recommendation to this effect).

284. The exemplary nature of this project can be seen in the requests coming into the SEPA to share best practices and knowledge around the cadaster and other project results with neighbouring countries.
285. In summary, this well-managed project laid a strong foundation of knowledge that the country can take and further build on effectively. The torch of remediation has been well lit, and handed over, so to speak. It will be up to the Government of Serbia to strategize, based on this information, how to move forward effectively (through requesting support from multi-lateral and bi-lateral partners) on the remediation of contaminated sites in Serbia.
286. The table below provides a summary of the ratings and findings discussed in Evaluation Findings (Chapter V). Overall, the project demonstrates a rating of 'Satisfactory'.

Table 6. Summary of project findings and ratings of the ILM Serbia Project

Criterion <i>The criterion rating and the overall project rating is based on the automatic calculations based on the Weighting of Ratings table in the UNEP Evaluation Guidance package.</i>	Summary Assessment	Rating
A. Strategic Relevance		HS
1. Alignment to MTS and POW	Alignment to MTS 14-17 and MTS 18-21, POWS 2014-2021.	S
2. Alignment to Donor/GEF strategic priorities	Good alignment to LD-3 of GEF LD focal area, as well as global strategies.	S
3. Relevance to regional, sub-regional and national environmental priorities	Highly relevant to country priorities, building on country work where gaps were largest.	HS
4. Complementarity with existing interventions	Strong complementarity, particularly at implementation to enhance project sustainability.	HS
B. Quality of Project Design	While a strong baseline was held, the project results framework could have been put together better.	MS
C. Nature of External Context	Government change over from elections and COVID-19 caused some disruptions, change over could have been better considered in design.	MF
D. Effectiveness		S
1. Availability of outputs	Availability - extent, usefulness and quality of outputs excellent.	HS
2. Achievement of project outcomes	Project made strong efforts to achieve outcomes, which was variable, but with causal pathways clear to intermediate states.	S
3. Likelihood of impact	Strong foundation laid, with evidence of sustaining project results in various ways, particularly through championships, remediation only likely to be done if external funding becomes available.	L
E. Financial Management		S
1. Adherence to UNEP's policies and procedures	Adherence to UNEP policies good with some insignificant delays.	S
2. Completeness of project financial information	Information complete except for project expenditure per component. All reporting received.	S
3. Communication between finance and project management staff	Communication good overall.	S
F. Efficiency	Project was heavily delayed mostly due to the SC challenges in reforming, as well as some lags in trade-off measures implementation. Despite this, project very efficient in what it managed to achieve in terms of budget.	S
G. Monitoring and Reporting		S

Criterion <i>The criterion rating and the overall project rating is based on the automatic calculations based on the Weighting of Ratings table in the UNEP Evaluation Guidance package.</i>	Summary Assessment	Rating
1. Monitoring design and budgeting	Good design and budgeting for monitoring.	S
2. Monitoring of project implementation	Good adaptive management in regard to monitoring.	S
3. Project reporting	Reporting achieved.	S
H. Sustainability		ML
1. Socio-political sustainability	Strong championship, but with lack of higher level leadership towards remediation prioritisation.	ML
2. Financial sustainability	Strong co-financing contributions, strong partnerships, strong synergies with other UN agencies, but remediation in general needs external funding to become available.	ML
3. Institutional sustainability	Really strong institutional sustainability through partnerships and champions.	HL
I. Factors Affecting Performance and Cross-Cutting Issues⁵⁷		S
1. Preparation and readiness	Generally well-prepared in terms of baseline situation but could have anticipating government turnover risk, as an example.	S
2. Quality of project management and supervision	Excellent project management and supervision.	HS
UNEP/Implementing Agency	Support on a needs basis, satisfactory oversight.	S
Partners/Executing Agency	Excellent management, particularly by NPC and through extending management staff, in a way, to SEPA.	S
3. Stakeholder participation and cooperation	Stakeholder participation and cooperation in this project is best practice.	HS
4. Responsiveness to human rights and gender equity	Gender equity issues generally addressed, human rights particularly in health well addressed.	S
5. Environmental and social safeguards	ESS addressed mainly through the projects itself dealing with human health and environment issues.	S
6. Country ownership and driven-ness	Strong championship and partnerships, lacking some leadership towards commitment to remediation	S
7. Communication and public awareness	Comms good effort, some improvements could have been made	S
Overall Project Rating	Project excellently managed, excellent partnerships, many tools and new knowledge for Serbia that is extremely useful, capacity well developed and application likely, remediation lacks commitment in terms of appropriate and urgent action.	S

Lessons learned

287. The final report outlined a few lessons and best practices; these will not be repeated here other than those integrated into the lessons provided by the evaluator.

⁵⁷ While ratings are required for each of these factors individually, they should be discussed within the Main Evaluation Report as cross-cutting issues as they relate to other criteria. Note that catalytic role, replication and scaling up are expected to be discussed under effectiveness if they are a relevant part of the TOC.

Lesson 1: Creating strong partnerships can enhance peer-to-peer capacity, strengthen project resilience and enhance quality of project results

288. The project was very successful in its ability to foster partnerships, through the Multi-disciplinary Expert Working Group (which started subtly from the launch of the project and was a red thread holding the integrity of the project together), and through generally strong engagement, including using strong facilitators like the Standing Conference on Towns and Municipalities.
289. This level of partnership, if maintained, could really support the sustainability and continued championship of the project results.
290. The important contributors to this involved (a) a strong NPC who facilitated the engagement, (b) willing and connected stakeholders all working towards the same goal, (c) setting up the enabling environment for this quite early on (e.g. through the declaration on soil), (e) having individuals/institutions having also individual roles to play and seeing their own benefits.

Lesson 2: Using a multi-disciplinary expert group to validate work and guide the technical direction enhances quality and ownership and increases the interface between science and government decision-making

291. The Multi-disciplinary Expert Working Group was a good way to elevate quality, enhance ownership and provide technical support to the project. But it also did much more than this, it carried the project throughout and created a strong link between experts and practitioners in pushing project results forward.
292. This group is a great example of co-creation versus collaboration, where individuals work together toward one collective good (instead of working together for individual benefit).

Lesson 3: Championship is important for uptake and further pushing for remediation, building in "succession management" and resilience in terms of government turnover is equally important

293. Projects get pushed by champions. The one common denominator in projects that the evaluator has reviewed is that the success and sustainability of project results depends on the level of championship for the project and its results.
294. This project was demand led and depended on interested and engaged stakeholders in its implementation and quality. This was shown within the championship in the Expert Working Group, but also among the champions in the SEPA and the Ministry of Environmental Protection. Capacity strengthening of the most appropriate champions, lifting them and enabling them to do their work is the most important contribution a project can make. Building in "succession management" and resilience is important to not lose institutional sustainability when champions are moved and lose their influence.

Lesson 4: [Staff support through PM into SEPA -] Using young motivated people who are passionate and engaged, also professional, can support project results achievement

295. SEPA was understaffed and did not have the funding to have the staff necessary for project implementation, although it already had some capacitated interns (working as volunteers). The project did well by taking advantage of this (perhaps there was some luck involved here too given the capacities of the interns were highly appropriate to the work that needed to be done) and bring them on-board. As a result, the project management was extended into SEPA through this staff, and many activities went splendidly as a result of this arrangement. It is a shame that these positions could not be retained post-project.
296. All of these staff (including others in similar professional growth levels) claimed the benefits they received professionally through the project.

297. However, the project would have increased sustainability to have had a stronger exit strategy here. If SEPA is understaffed and this was a barrier identified in project design (regardless of the “extra work” conducted through the foundations laid by the project), then the PPG process could have negotiated with SEPA an agreement in which graduated cost sharing could have been done. For example, instead of paying 100% of the wages, the project could have paid 90% and SEPA 10%, and then gradually over the project period decreasing GEF funds and increasing SEPA funds. The number of staff positions to be retained after the project ends could have been discussed at the onset. This approach would have ensured efficient use of GEF funds, but also ensured more commitment from SEPA to retain the capacity built with the project investment.

Recommendations⁵⁸

1. The following recommendations are intended to enhance cooperation, sustaining of project results, and support movement towards the TOC impact, i.e. move remediation action forward in a more strategic way. They are divided as per the following: (a) Project-level Recommendations – recommendations to UNEP that pertain specifically to the ILM Serbia project, (b) Partner Recommendations – recommendations that pertain to partners of the project, and (c) UNEP Recommendations (for take up by UNEP for future work/learning).

(a) Project-level Recommendations:

Recommendation #1:	Support SEPA with key messages and improve website for public engagement
Challenge/problem to be addressed by the recommendation⁵⁹:	To increase public awareness and pressure for remediation, and to continue the use of the website. (a) Hold meeting between NPC and SEPA, as well as some key stakeholders to identify, based on the key knowledge products delivered by the project, a set of 5-10 key messages (short, snappy, to the point). What are the key pieces of information the public needs to know that affects them directly - why should they care about remediation? Each message should be linked to the knowledge products (i.e. the message is a teaser to learn more and attract readership to the product). (b) Refine these messages, and put them up on the website, add links to the messages and connect those to the knowledge products delivered by the project for easy access and downloadability. [These could be used to attract people to the website, here the website now needs to be reformatted slightly to encompass these key messages and pull the information/publications/videos etc around these so that people who go there can find out more information.]
Priority Level⁶⁰:	Important.
Type of Recommendation⁶¹	Partner recommendation

⁵⁸ Please see the “Guidance for Evaluation Managers and Evaluation Consultants on Presentation and Quality of Recommendations within a Main Evaluation Report” among the evaluation tools.

⁵⁹ The same challenge/problem can lead to a recommendation of more than one type, i.e. one or more of the following: Project Level, UNEP-wide or Partners recommendation.

⁶⁰ Critical, Important or Opportunity for Improvement.

⁶¹ Project Level, UNEP-Wide or Partners recommendation.

Responsibility:	PM, NPC and SEPA
Proposed implementation time-frame:	As soon as possible.

Recommendation #2:	Hold meeting with key project partners to discuss remediation opportunities (NPC to facilitate only)
Challenge/problem to be addressed by the recommendation⁶²:	To sustain and move toward action on remediation. It would be beneficial for the project to host a small informal discussion with key partners, this should include the relevant decision-makers at Ministry of Environmental Protection, the IMELS, UNDP, representatives from the Environmental Accession to the EU project, (SEPA - although not dealing with remediation, could observe), and other bi-lateral agencies interested. Without any concrete commitment, this could be an open, honest discussion on what could feasibly be done in terms of taking this information for remediation forward. The NPC should, if possible, facilitate, but not lead. Ideally, leadership should come from the Ministry of Environmental Protection but the feasibility of this will depend on the interest from the new leadership.
Priority Level⁶³:	Important
Type of Recommendation⁶⁴	Project-level
Responsibility:	NPC to convene
Proposed implementation time-frame:	This year/early next year (of piggy-backing off the TE report being sent out)

(b) Partner-level Recommendations:

Recommendation #3:	SEPA to continue championing the cadaster and to provide support to local government to update
Challenge/problem to be addressed by the recommendation:	The local authorities, despite the law being in place, are not registering and updating the cadaster. SEPA should attempt to gain support (financial, external if need be) to run more trainings on the updating of the cadaster among key stakeholders across the country, and provide more technical support follow-up to this process.
Priority Level:	Opportunity for improvement
Type of Recommendation	Partner recommendation
Responsibility:	SEPA

⁶² The same challenge/problem can lead to a recommendation of more than one type, i.e. one or more of the following: Project Level, UNEP-wide or Partners recommendation.

⁶³ Critical, Important or Opportunity for Improvement.

⁶⁴ Project Level, UNEP-Wide or Partners recommendation.

Proposed implementation time-frame:	Their prerogative (as soon as possible, ongoing)
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Recommendation #4:	Continue strong partnership and sharing of project results on various platforms
Challenge/problem to be addressed by the recommendation:	The partnerships were strong and there was a good sharing from different experts and practitioners at various different events, conferences, papers published, etc. The key partners should continue spreading the message and using the platforms the project created for them to share the results and outputs of the project widely.
Priority Level:	Important
Type of Recommendation	Partners recommendation
Responsibility:	All key partners and implementers
Proposed implementation time-frame:	Ongoing

(b) UNEP-level Recommendations:

Recommendation #5:	Take note and learn from stakeholder mapping done through this project (in the design)
Challenge/problem to be addressed by the recommendation:	The project design, as stated, had an excellent example of stakeholder mapping at design (using a timeline of how partners are connected, what they had already achieved so far, where gaps are). This likely laid a good foundation for the strong partnership framework on which the project operated. The UNEP Evaluation should take this example and table it for support to project design by UNEP in other, relevant and appropriate projects.
Priority Level:	Opportunity for improvement
Type of Recommendation	UNEP recommendation
Responsibility:	UNEP Evaluation Office
Proposed implementation time-frame:	This year.

Recommendation #6:	Introduce graduated cost-sharing for understaffed government or NGO implementing partners
Challenge/problem to be addressed by the recommendation:	In future projects, avoid using GEF funds to pay 100% of the cost of adding staff, whether to Government entities or to NGOs. This is rarely sustainable. Graduated cost sharing over the period of a project is most helpful in promoting sustainability, and negotiations should be done at PPG phase as part of co-financing to make sure that any GEF investment into capacity and staff is retained post-project. Otherwise, funds can be used to pay people who obtain important experience over the project

	period but who are then “let go” once GEF funds are no longer available, as is what happened in this project.
Priority Level:	Opportunity for improvement
Type of Recommendation	UNEP recommendation
Responsibility:	UNEP Evaluation Office
Proposed implementation time-frame:	As appropriate.

ANNEX 1: RESPONSE TO STAKEHOLDER COMMENTS

Table 7: Response to stakeholder comments received.

Place in text	Comment	Evaluator's Response
# 67, # 185, # 271 & Figure 5	Should "public awareness" be listed together with D1 and A6? Or, as mentioned in # 185, "the assumption of increased public pressure has not held" (also mentioned in # 271), so is A7 (public pressure) still coherent with this evaluation?	I would think that public awareness increasing public pressure is connected and have added under Likelihood of Impact that this did not hold.
# 73	If there is no evidence for "quantitative alignment" and no direct mention on capacity building, why this part still being evaluated as "satisfactory"?	This is arguable, footnote 30 details this; there is direct mention of capacity building
# 76	I don't quite understand the last sentence...	The project document outlined how it would contribute to these global strategic plans.
# 192	Should the "small complication" be simply described?	This was described in footnote 47
# 295-296	More like description of difficulties and situations rather than "lessons".	Respectfully disagree, these have been described as lessons for future work, but am happy to hear what evaluation office says. <i>Evaluation Office finds that these are lessons that could be applied in a similar context.</i>
Recommendation (a)	Perhaps adding a new item – UNEP can help in the capacity development in TOC-based project design (as they didn't do it well at first)	Given that TOC now has become a much more integrated concept for project design, this is stronger now than during time of this project's development <i>Evaluation Office agrees that TOC is now regularly addressed in design and training materials are available from the Programme and Policy Division</i>
Table 1 Executing Agency	According to OFP Execution Letter dated 19 May 2015, former Ministry of Agriculture and Environmental Protection requested from UNEP GEF Portfolio Manager that UNEP Regional Office for Europe – Vienna Programme Office fully executes the project, whereas Ministry was to maintain political and institutional supervision and chair the PSC to ensure the achievement of project outcomes.	Have put down Europe Office "on behalf of", as this would be considered as a national implementation modality support
Table 1 Date of last Steering Committee Meeting	There were three meetings of the PSC (in 2015, 2016, 2017) and one meeting of the Project Validation Committee (on 25 September 2019, following the establishment of the standalone Ministry of Environmental Protection)	Added Validation Committee meeting date
Para 18	MoEP has adopted Rulebook on identification of contaminated sites (with project support) as well as Rulebook on local soil monitoring, which are the key two bylaws for implementation of Law on Soil.	The project delivered products of excellent quality and which are highly useful for application and for the building of the knowledge base on soil contamination and protection in Serbia. The monitoring-level contributions were done exceptionally well and while these will be followed up within SEPA and the network of labs, it will be a matter of time in terms of application of local-level soil monitoring (which depend on the law on soil and its enforcement through the development of by-laws, of which the two most important ones have already been developed).

Place in text	Comment	Evaluator's Response
Executive Summary - Recommendations	We have full power on addressing recommendation #5. we can address recomment#2 and #4. However recomment#1 and #3 are beyond UNEP's scope and control and they may need funding therefore not sure how much we can achieve on those.	<i>Evaluation Office: Recommendations 1 and 3 have been marked as 'partner recommendations' which means that compliance is assessed based on the recommendation being discussed with the partner, in the hope that some constructive action can be identified.</i>
Table 2 Executing Agency	As per the list in Annex 2, it is 4(1/3) Executing Office response to inquiry/interview was 100%. Please kindly see comment to the Table in Annex 2.	Have changed it, although was counting the contracts within SEPA that had been hired through the EA.
Footnote 10	MoAEP from 2015 until 2017 when a standalone MoEP was established after elections.	Have added it to footnote 10
Para 23 vi	Limited funding rather than absent.	Changed from "absence" to 'limited'
Para 51	The Ministry validated all the results during the PVC meeting held prior to the closing ceremony, "the only remaining substantive report to be submitted is the analytical report on the trade-off measures undertaken at two sites. This report is not envisaged to be subject to approval, but rather serves as narrative description of the conducted activities and as such will be complementary to the final project report." (quote from PVC meeting minutes) This further delayed project terminal narrative and financial reporting so the second extension were sought to allow for "1) Adequate time to prepare final progress and financial reports in line with latest expenditures, and 2) Adequate time to permit an orderly phase-out of the project, follow-up on and ensure continuation of all activities initiated within the project." (as per request for bridging agreement)	Added this to footnote 15
Para 114	It should be noted that only those local authorities where 32 sites were investigated (of which 14 prioritized) were eligible to apply with ideas/priorities for testing of trade-offs. Another criterion was co-financing from the local budget. Both Kraljevo and Sombor fall within the above 14.	Added this to footnote 30
Footnote 33	Actually, project bought none. The initial intention was to buy two of these devices, but than the two were found purchased and unused though the previous project of Environmental Inspection, which handed over one device to SEPA and the other to MoEP Sector for Chemicals Management (to the best of my knowledge).	Have deleted the part saying that the project bought two - although this was relayed by SEPA staff to the evaluator...
Para 151	This creates a bit of a contradiction - para 144 above states "Eight regional trainings were held with local authorities on how to submit data for the Cadaster on Contaminated Sites to SEPA and to apply sustainable practices in local land management"	Just because people are trained does not mean behaviour will change - changed sentence to say "despite the training, the evaluator noted that..."
Para 155	Elixir Group in Sabac industrial zone has used the characterisation plan as well as results of the soil sample analysis conducted by SEPA for detailed analysis (report dated 2020) with an aim to identify risk and propose protection measures. Please	Added this as footnote 43 and kept overall statement.

Place in text	Comment	Evaluator's Response
	kindly see attached correspondence prior to the evaluation mission (in Serbian language).	
Likelihood of Impact Para 178 - 188	Suggestion for a better appreciation of the assessment of 'likelihood of impact': A majority of the assumptions identified in the reconstructed TOC lie along the causal pathways between the 'project outcomes' and intermediate states'. It would be beneficial to include a narrative of how well each of these assumptions (A2-A7) are holding/likely to hold, based on the findings of this evaluation. This would also make a stronger case for the performance rating given to this sub-criterion. Assumptions that do not seem to hold well (based on the narrative presented) include A1, A2, A4, A5 and A6 Without these assumptions holding true, it seems unlikely that there will be a sustained push for the cadaster, by-laws and regulations to be adopted. Further there is also mention of loss of personnel who acquired /developed new capacities I believe these factors will have quite a significant effect on the TOC causal pathways between the project outcomes and the Intermediate States, and eventually affect the likelihood of Impact achievement.	Have revised the narrative here and downgraded the achievement of likelihood to impact: 186.It must be noted that the assumptions laid out in the Theory of Change, particularly A1 (political will and thus remediation prioritised), A4 (increased capacity results in improved monitoring), A5 (budget exists for long-term monitoring and use of tools across country) and A7 (increasing public pressure and accountability) have either only partially held (e.g. A4), or not held at all (all others), in the Terminal Evaluation assessment. Without these, the causal pathways between outcomes and intermediate states are affected. 187.However, the project has moved the theory of change forward in such a way that the next steps will be towards the prevention of soil loss and enhanced pollution control (through the foundations laid and some next steps in legislation and monitoring). 188.Achievement of likelihood of impact, as directly connected to what the project is able to control, and how it achieved its outcomes within the move to impact of the Theory of Change is rated as 'Moderately Likely'.
Para 199	The request letter was sent on 30 July 2019 and the PVC was established on 7 August 2019.	Added this into footnote 48
Para 209	With reference to the utility of these reports for 'monitoring of project implementation' (above), is there any evidence the data from these reports was used for results-based management? e.g. management response to risks/challenges identified through the monitoring system	Added in the utility of reporting for results based management
Para 214	SEPA has the autonomy for hiring its own staff, this was not decision taken by the Ministry.	Changed this sentence to "leadership at SEPA", also made an argument for using graduated cost sharing instead of full salary pay for those staff members under the project
Para 219	It actually ensured the proper baseline data and information for Krusevac site were available to further conduct informed assessment of options and costs for removal of mercury. Kusevac site is one of the two in Serbia (other one is an operating industry in Pancevo) which are contaminated with mercury, hence no selection was needed.	Added footnote 54
Table 11 (E)	Was this specifically asked for? These documents are subject of reporting to the donor, reflected under two co-financing projects: 1st which was dedicated to Serbia alone and 2nd under a regional support with a component on Serbia.	Yes, from the financial management team - but generally the information is not strictly expected from the donor in the level of detail.

ANNEX 2: STAKEHOLDER LIST AND COUNTRY VISIT SCHEDULE

Table 8. Stakeholders engaged for the SLM Serbia Project Terminal Evaluation

Name of stakeholder	Institution	Affiliation/Role in Project	Zoom interview/Email	Date(s) of interview	Additional engagement
Implementing Agency					
Ersin Esen	UNEP Ecosystems Division	Task Manager	Zoom	Various	Follow up emails
George Saddimbah + Elizabeth Goro	UNEP Ecosystems Division	FMOs	Email	Various	Follow up emails
Executing Agency					
Harald Eger	Regional Office for Europe - Programme Office Vienna	Director of Programme Office (oversight)	Introductory email	N/A	N/A
Sonja Gebert	Regional Office for Europe - Programme Office Vienna	Project Manager (PMU)	Zoom	Various	Follow up emails
Iskra Stojanova	Regional Office for Europe - Programme Office Vienna	Support Administrative Oversight	Team Zoom	17 May 2022	None
Aleksandra Tomic	PMU/Regional Office for Europe - Programme Office Vienna	National Project Coordinator (PMU)	Zoom + In person	Various	Follow up various
International Experts/Cofinancier					
Marco Falconi	Higher Institute for Environmental Protection and Research (ISPRA)	Expert through support from Ministry of Environment, Land and Sea co-financing and technically supporting project	Zoom	18 August 2022	Follow up emails
Government Executing Partner					
Dragana Vidojević	SEPA	Project Focal Point	Zoom + in person	Various	Follow up various
Nemanja Jevtic	SEPA (moved since project ended)	Cadaster and training components	In person	In-country	
Lana Kukobat	SEPA (moved since project ended)	PRAMS risk assessment, and supported various deliverables of project	In person	In-country	

Name of stakeholder	Institution	Affiliation/Role in Project	Zoom interview/Email	Date(s) of interview	Additional engagement
Snežana Kuzmanović	Ministry of Environmental Protection	Head of Waste Department/involved in project design and implementation (at time of project, Head of Environmental Inspection)	In person	In-country	Email, feedback on preliminary findings meeting
Milenko Jovanović	Previous Head of SEPA	Head of SEPA during Project	In person	In-country	
Vladica Božić	Head of Projects	Department of Environmental Project Management	In person	In-country	Email, feedback on preliminary findings meeting
Marija Dragović	Soil Protection Sector Leader	UNCCD Focal Point, Head of Soil Protection Group	In person	In-country	
Other implementing partners					
Jovana Andrašević	Former fea	SLM guidelines	In person	In-country	
Slavisa Mladenovic, Radomir Matić and Andrej Sostaric	Public Health Institute	Support to capacity development, on technical expert group	In-person	In-country	
Sandra Nedeljković	Public Investment Management Office	Strategic interest/influence	Zoom	In-country	
Radmila Pivić	Soil Science Institute	Member of technical expert group	In-person	In-country	
Ivica Nikolic	Groundwater Monitoring		Email	Email questions	
Ratko Ristic	Vice-Rector for International Cooperation University of Belgrade	Steering Committee member	Request for interview declined, email questions declined to answer	-	<i>Reached out with email questions, but declined to answer, only having been present at one SC meeting</i>
Dušan Stokić	Chamber of Commerce and Industry	Representing company interests	In-person	In-country	-
Jana Pavlovic and Ljubinka Kaludjerovic	Standing Conference of Towns and Municipalities	Supported connection and facilitation with all municipalities involved in project	In-person	In-country	Email follow up
Jovica Vasin and Milorad Živanov	Institute for Field and Vegetable Crops	Capacity development support to SEPA, member of expert technical group	In-person	In-country	-
Hristina Radovanović-Jovin and Tamara Orlovic	Provincial Secretariat for Urbanism, Novi Sad	Supported field missions and connection to local municipalities	In-person	In-country	-

Name of stakeholder	Institution	Affiliation/Role in Project	Zoom interview/Email	Date(s) of interview	Additional engagement
Branka Polic	Inspector for Environmental Protection, Department of Inspection and Communal Police	Sombor city - site representative	In-person	In-country	-
Milovan Topic	Advisor for Environmental Protection, Department for Agriculture and Environmental Protection	Sombor city - site representative	In-person	In-country	-
Branislav Svorcan	Advisor for Monitoring the Implementation of European Projects, Department for Economy, LED and Tourism	Sombor city - site representative	In-person	In-country	-
Dragan Radojicic	PUBLIC UTILITY "Cistoca" general director	Sombor city - site representative	In-person	In-country	-
Vanja Vlaskalic	PUBLIC UTILITY "Cistoca" assistant director for hygiene and environmental protection	Sombor city - site representative	In-person	In-country	-
Aleksandar Jovanović	Head of the City Administration of Šabac	Sabac - site representative	In-person	In-country	-
Zorica Gvozdenović	Head of the Department for Inspection and Communal-Housing Affairs (City Administration)	Sabac - site representative	In-person	In-country	
Olivera Kikanović	Environmental Protection Inspector in the Department for Inspection and Communal-Housing Affairs (City Administration)	Sabac - site representative	In-person	In-country	
Jelena Travar Miljević	Head of the Department of Economy	Zrenjanin - site representative	In-person	In-country	
Bojan Radulov	Advisor on Waste Management	Zrenjanin - site representative	In-person	In-country	
	Head of Public Utility Company	Kraljevo - trade-off site representative	In-person	In-country	
	Head of Inspectorate, Environmental Department	Kraljevo - site representative	In-person	In-country	
	Head of Department Project Management	Kraljevo - site representative	In-person	In-country	
Aleksandar Mandic	Director, Chemical Industry "Zupa"	Krusevac - site representative	In-person	In-country	
Ivana Pajic	Deputy Head of City Administration	Krusevac - site representative	In-person	In-country	

Name of stakeholder	Institution	Affiliation/Role in Project	Zoom interview/Email	Date(s) of interview	Additional engagement
Miroslav Tadic	UNDP	Minamata Assessment - Krusevac	Zoom	16 August 2022	
Sandra Glisic	UNIDO	PCBs - Zrenjanin	-	Stakeholder cancelled on day of meeting	emails
Aleksandar Bojic	WHO	Informationf for Bor site	-	No response	
Ljubomir Zivotic	Independent	Conducted MTR for project	Zoom	13 July 2022	emails

Table 9. Country mission schedule for the ILM Serbia Project Terminal Evaluation

Country visit	Place/Logistics	Interview Schedule
Tuesday, 13 Sep	Arrival Interviews Belgrade	Arrive in Belgrade (early morning flight arrival 05:25) Morning 09:00-10:30 Dragana Vidojević (SEPA) 11:15-12:30 Snežana Kuzmanović (working brunch) 12:45-14:00 Aleksandra and Justine (at UN office) Afternoon 14:30-15:30 Milenko Jovanović (coffee late afternoon) (with Translator) 16:15/30-17:30 Vladimir Nikolic (trade-off expert)
Wednesday, 14 Sep	Belgrade – Sombor (176km, 2h26min) – Novi Sad (93 km, 1h35min) – Belgrade (89 km, 1h07min)	Visit to Sombor, a zone which was not under the 32 industrial sites assessed (although included one factory site which was), but was a public dump site in which trade-off measures were tested confirmed, meeting at 10am in City Hall, room 108/I floor and then visit to the site. Contact: Branislav Svorcan mob.+381 65 923 84 77 Meeting point 07:20am in front of "M House Bed and Breakfast", Kapetan Misina 31 Meeting Novi Sad (afternoon): 14:00 Jovica Vasin and Milorad Živanov 15:00 Hristina Radovanović-Jovin and Tamara Orlovic Provincial Secretariat for Urbanism, groundfloor room no. 48 Dragan Djurica (not available) Return to Belgrade in the evening

Country visit	Place/Logistics	Interview Schedule
		<i>To be accompanied Nemanja Jevtic + Translator</i>
Thursday, 15 Sep	Belgrade – Sabac (86km, 1h12min drive) – Zrenjanin (120km, 2h16min) – Belgrade (73km, 1h30min)	Sabac, a zone contaminated with heavy metals like Arsenic, Cadmium, Chromium, Lead, among others, as well as organic pollutants. This was one of two sites in which site characterisation plans were developed. Confirmed, 10am meeting in the City Hall (Gospodar Jevremova 6 , II floor, large room) and then site visit. Contact: Aleksandar Jovanovic, Head of City Administration mob. +381 60 6653901 Meeting point 08:20am in front of "M House Bed and Breakfast", Kapetan Misina 31 Zrenjanin, a zone which was polluted with PCB, and which UNIDO (through GEF Project 4877, "Environmentally sound management and final disposal of PCBs) had follow up interventions after this project" Confirmed, 14:30h meeting in the City Hall (Slobodana Bursaća 4) with Bojan Radulov, contact: +381 64 8116667. Access to the site is not possible due to unavailability of the new owner. <i>To be accompanied by Nemanja Jevtic + Translator</i>
Friday, 16 Sep	Belgrade – Kraljevo (168km, 2h19min) – Krusevac (62km, 1h10min) – Belgrade (194km, 2h05min)	Kraljevo, a zone which was not under the 32 industrial sites assessed (although included two factory sites which were), but was a public dump site in which the trade-off measures were tested 7:10 leave M House Site visit confirmed Krusevac, a zone contaminated with several heavy metals including mercury, this site was also a focus of the Minamata Initial Assessment by UNDP Site visit confirmed, meeting at Chemical Industry "Zupa" at 14h. Contacts: Aleksandar Mandic: +381 63 583362, and Ivana Pajic, Deputy Head of City Administration Bojan Cvetkovic, BIN COMMERCE, mob.+381 66 8283010 <i>To be accompanied by Nemanja Jevtic + Translator</i>
Saturday, 17 Sep	Belgrade	Coffee/Lunch with individual experts Lana Kukobat (PRAMS Risk Assessment, Lunch)

Country visit	Place/Logistics	Interview Schedule
		Jovana Andrašević (SLM guidelines, Coffee)
Sunday, 18 Sep	Belgrade	Write up of first interviews and field missions
Monday, 19 Sep	Belgrade	Interviews Belgrade Morning 08:30-09:15 Vladica Božić (Department for Env Project Management, Ministry of Environment) 09:30-10:15 Marija Dragović (UNCCD Focal Point, Soil Protection Sector, Ministry of Environment) SIV III, VI floor office 666 + translator 11:00-12:00 Slavisa Mladenovic, Radomir Matić and Andrej Sostaric (Public Health Institute)+ translator confirmed Lunch 12:30-14:00 Sandra Nedeljković (Public Investment Management Office) confirmed - ONLINE - send zoom link Afternoon 14:30-15:30 Radmila Pivić (Soil Science Institute) confirmed + translator 16:00 - 20:00 Write up preliminary findings and send off
Tuesday, 20 Sep	Belgrade	Final interviews Morning 09:00-11:00 Justine and Aleksandra (Justine also quickly to MoEP to get a document) 11:30-12:30 Dušan Stokić (Chamber of Commerce and Industry) (Chamber of Commerce and Industry of Serbia (CCIS), 15 Resavska Street, Belgrade (room no. – information will be available at the reception desk) confirmed Lunch 13:00-14:00 Sandra Glisic (UNIDO) TBD place cancelled - Afternoon 14:30-15:30 Jana Pavlovic and Ljubinka Kaludjerovic (Standing Conference of Towns and Municipalities, city centre) confirmed, meeting at SCTM premises in Makedonska 22, XI floor (call Jana at +38164 870 33 29 before entering elevator)
Wednesday, 21 Sep	Depart Belgrade	Departure 07:00

ANNEX 3: PROJECT BUDGET AND EXPENDITURES

Table 10: Expenditure by Component for the ILM Serbia Project

Component/sub-component/output <i>All figures as USD</i>	Estimated cost at design (USD) Source: (PRODOC)/Original Budget ⁶⁵	Actual Cost/ expenditure (USD)	Expenditure (actual/planned) ratio
Component 1	USD 260,000	*	*
Component 2	USD 179,852	*	*
Component 3	USD 161,643	*	*
Project Management	USD 60,149.50	*	*
Total	USD 661,644.50	USD 620,498.00	*

* Did not receive this as FMO was not reporting budget under this (was not a requirement during project implementation)

Table 11. Financial Management Table of the ILM Serbia Project

Financial management components:		Rating	Evidence/ Comments
1. Adherence to UNEP policies and regulations			
Adherence to policies and regulations		S	Project adhered to policies and regulations, no irregularities found.
2. Completeness of project financial information⁶⁶:			
Provision of key documents to the evaluator (based on the responses to A-G below)		S	
A.	Co-financing and Project Cost's tables at design (by budget lines)	Yes	Yes, well outlined at design, including separate excel budget for co-finance
B.	Revisions to the budget	Yes	Yes, budgeted revision received
C.	All relevant project legal agreements (e.g. SSFA, PCA, ICA)	Yes	All received, after requesting for specific documentation still missing by country mission
D.	Proof of fund transfers	Yes	n/a
E.	Proof of co-financing (cash and in-kind)	Not really	Figures are shown in the co-financing documentation, but the evaluator did not see detailed evidence of cash expenditures other than the purchase of equipment by the IMELS
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 and No	Yes budget lines, and annual level; but not for project components
G.	Copies of any completed audits and management responses (where applicable)	No	
H.	Any other financial information that was required for this project (list): <i>legal letters of delayed funds disbursement between UNEP and Executing Agency</i>	No	n/a
Any gaps in terms of financial information that could be indicative of shortcomings in the project's compliance ⁶⁷ with the UNEP or donor rules		No	n/a
Project Manager, Task Manager and Fund Management Officer responsiveness to financial requests during the evaluation process		MS	Had to request several times, there were delays, but these were apparently because they had not been signed off
3. Communication between finance and project management staff		S	
Project Manager and/or Task Manager's level of awareness of the project's financial status.		S	Strong level of awareness of project financials by FMO and TM
Fund Management Officer's knowledge of project progress/status when disbursements are done.		S	No real issues needed addressing, budget revisions looked clean, FMO on top of disbursements.
Level of addressing and resolving financial management issues among Fund Management Officer and Project Manager/Task Manager.		S	
Contact/communication between by Fund Management Officer, Project Manager/Task Manager during the preparation of financial and progress reports.		S	No comments on delays or issues with transfers.
Overall rating		S	

⁶⁵ The amount in the prodoc does not coincide with the amount in the

⁶⁶ See also document 'Criterion Rating Description' for reference

⁶⁷ Compliance with financial systems is not assessed specifically in the evaluation. Nevertheless, if the evaluation identifies gaps in the financial data, or raises other concerns of a compliance nature, a recommendation should be given to cover the topic in an upcoming audit, or similar financial oversight exercise.

Table 12. Co-financing Table for the ILM Serbia Project

Co-financing (Type/Source)	UNEP own Financing (US\$1,000)		Other* (US\$1,000)		Total (US\$1,000)		Total Disbursed (US\$1,000)
	Planned	Actual	Planned	Actual	Planned	Actual	
– In-kind support	90	90	4,946	5,331	5036	5421	5421
– Other (*) -cash	50	75	50	231.5	100	306.5	306.5
Totals	140	165	4,996	5,562.5	5736	5727.5	5727.5

Table 13. Co-financing committed versus actual per partner for the ILM Serbia Project

Committed	Actual co-financing
UNEP:	UNEP:
USD 50,000 (cash) USD 90,000 (in-kind)	UN Environment Fund: USD 25,000 (cash) UNEP RoE: USD 50,000 (cash) USD 90,000 (in-kind)
Third-party:	Third-party:
Serbian Environmental Protection Agency (GRN): USD 3,250,000 (in-kind) Ministry of Agriculture and Environmental Protection (GRN): USD 50,000 (cash) USD 500,000 (in-kind) Ministry of Mining and Energy (GRN): USD 1,000,000 (in-kind) Institute for Field and Vegetable Crops: USD 100,000 (in-kind) Institute of Soil Science: USD 66,000 (in-kind) Ministry of Environment, Land and Sea (Italy): USD 500,000 (in-kind) Forestry and Environmental Action (CSO): USD 10,000 (in-kind) Chamber of Commerce and Industry: USD 20,000 (in-kind)	Serbian Environmental Protection Agency (GRN): USD 3,250,000 (in-kind) Ministry of Environmental Protection (GRN): USD 50,000 (cash) USD 500,000 (in-kind) Ministry of Mining and Energy (GRN): USD 1,000,000 (in-kind) Institute for Field and Vegetable Crops: USD 100,000 (in-kind) Institute of Soil Science: USD 66,000 (in-kind) Ministry of Environment, Land and Sea (Italy): USD 556,500 (in-kind) USD 570,000 (cash) Forestry and Environmental Action (CSO): USD 10,000 (in-kind) Chamber of Commerce and Industry: USD 10,000 (in-kind)
Total: USD 5,636,000	Total: USD 6,287,500

ANNEX 4: LIST OF DOCUMENTS CONSULTED

Documents reviewed for the ILM Serbia Project Terminal Evaluation include:

- Evaluation Terms of Reference
- GEF MSP Project Document and Annexes and CEO Endorsement Request and Annexes
- GEF Submission and Review Documentation
- Project PIRs
- Final Project Report
- All project agreements and amendments thereof
- Quarterly Progress Reports
- Initial Budget Plans, Budget Revision
- Financial Reporting, including co-financing and all expenditure reports
- All component-related outputs, publications and extras
- Steering and Validation Committees written reports and minutes
- Outreach and Communications materials
- Training reporting
- No-cost extension requests and approval documentation
- Additional email communications requested for verification and triangulations
- Mid-Term Review and Management Response
- Project Results Overview Brochure

ANNEX 5: GEF PORTAL INPUTS

The following table contains text to be uploaded to the GEF Portal. **It will be drawn from the Evaluation Report, either as copied or summarised text.** In each case, references should be provided for the paragraphs and pages of the report from which the responses have been copied or summarised.

GEF portal inputs

Question: What was the performance at the project's completion against Core Indicator Targets? (For projects approved prior to GEF-7⁶⁸, these indicators will be identified retrospectively and comments on performance provided⁶⁹).
Response: <i>(Might be drawn from Monitoring and Reporting section)</i> The project contributed to the LD tracking tools (LD 3 - SLM in wider landscapes) through the contributions (i) enhanced cross-sector enabling environment for integrated landscape management (framework strengthening INRM -3, capacity strengthening towards ILM - 5), (ii) integrated landscape management practices adopted by local communities (spatial coverage of integrated NRM practices in wide landscapes - 270,687 ha, number of INRM tools and methodologies introduced - 3: cadaster of contaminated sites and rulebook on identification of contaminated sites, guidelines for SLM at local level, guidelines for development of local soil monitoring).
Question: What were the progress, challenges and outcomes regarding engagement of stakeholders in the project/program as evolved from the time of the MTR? <i>(This should be based on the description included in the Stakeholder Engagement Plan or equivalent documentation submitted at CEO Endorsement/Approval)</i>
Response: <i>(Might be drawn from Factors Affecting Performance section)</i> The stakeholder engagement process of this project was exemplary. The MTR provided one recommendation in terms sharing the publications among the local government.
Question: What were the completed gender-responsive measures and, if applicable, actual gender result areas? <i>(This should be based on the documentation at CEO Endorsement/Approval, including gender-sensitive indicators contained in the project results framework or gender action plan or equivalent)</i>
Response: <i>(Might be drawn from Factors Affecting Performance section)</i> The final report referred to the project implementation having been mindful of gender balance, gender parity and having considered gender throughout. The evaluator did not see gender disaggregated indicator-based data monitoring for the project (at least not in the logframe, neither in the SESP, no gender action plan for the project). The project did promote equitable participation of women and men, and had an element of gender empowerment that was more intrinsic in that the majority of the leadership and championship in the project were female, including the PM, the NPC and the two leader-representatives from the Ministry of Environmental Protection and SEPA. As stated in the project final report, an important indicator of women's predominance in the role of environmental guardians and agents of change in Serbia is reflected in that women constituted the majority (over 70%) of participants of regional trainings. The composition of the PSC, PVC and the Multi-disciplinary Expert Working Group had strong woman-representation.
Question: What was the progress made in the implementation of the management measures against the Safeguards Plan submitted at CEO Approval? The risk classifications reported in the latest PIR report should be verified and the findings of the effectiveness of any measures or lessons learned taken to address identified risks assessed. <i>(Any supporting documents</i>

⁶⁸ The GEF is currently operating under the seventh replenishment period of the GEF Trust Fund covering the period July 1, 2018 to June 30, 2022. The GEF Portal Reporting Guide for FY20 Reporting Process indicates that GEF-6 projects that have yet to map existing indicators to GEF-7 Core Indicators need to do so at MTR stage or (if already there) at the time of the TE. (i.e. not GEF projects approved before GEF-6)

⁶⁹ This is not applicable for Enabling Activities

gathered by the Consultant during this review should be shared with the Task Manager for uploading in the GEF Portal)

Response: *(Might be drawn from Factors Affecting Performance section)*

Risk classifications were low risk to no risk, the project justified this based on the fact that it was directly supporting human and environmental rights through health improvements to both.

Question: What were the challenges and outcomes regarding the project's completed Knowledge Management Approach, including: Knowledge and Learning Deliverables (e.g. website/platform development); Knowledge Products/Events; Communication Strategy; Lessons Learned and Good Practice; Adaptive Management Actions? *(This should be based on the documentation approved at CEO Endorsement/Approval)*

Response: *(Might be drawn from Factors Affecting Performance section)*

Knowledge Management was excellent in terms of knowledge created and shared among partners.

Stronger communication strategy to the public may have increased public pressure to Government to prioritise the remediation actions.

Question: What are the main findings of the evaluation?

Response:

The project was designed off a strong situation analysis and baseline, it built on what was done and understood the local context and situation very well.

It built on the country's existing efforts through some really effective and necessary tools, including the key resource, the cadaster, but also through the prioritisation of sites list, the accreditation and capacity building of SEPA and others on soil sampling and monitoring. The capacity development for the local level was also of excellent value, bringing local authorities on board through several meetings and through the legal requirement of updating the cadaster while at the same time providing the local level with the training and the tools to make this updating process as simple as possible.

The project delivered products of excellent production and which are highly useful for application and for the building of the knowledge base on soil contamination and protection in Serbia.

The monitoring-level contributions were done exceptionally well and while these will be followed up within SEPA and the network of labs, it will be a matter of time in terms of application of local-level soil monitoring (which depend on the law on soil and its enforcement through the development of by-laws).

The SEPA benefited greatly from having three young, intelligent, capacitated and highly motivated upcoming career professionals on board to support the implementation and work within SEPA; this was one of the reasons of success of many of the project activities which required immense effort (documentation searches, desktop reviews, extensive follow ups). It is a pity that despite this capacity, SEPA and/or other institutions could not (or were not able to) see the benefit of such capacity for their institutional growth and success and that these professionals are now either unemployed or working in the private sector. And as a result, SEPA, despite all the capacity development support, goes back to being under resourced.

The Ministry of Environmental Protection, while having some championship in place to drive things forward, could have been more effective in its leadership with e.g. the Steering Committee, but the project managed to adapt pretty well by having built-in resilience through the NPC and strong partnerships. The ministry was able to make quite some achievements (including the by-law passing for the cadaster within the timeframe of the project), but ultimately lacked gravitas in commitment to remediation (admittedly an extremely expensive endeavour). The partnership, both outside of and within the Multi-disciplinary Working Group, was exemplary. The project did an excellent job at connecting the science-practitioner interface, connecting soil scientists with government practitioners, technocrats, and decision-makers.

The project was excellently managed overall, with strong facilitation particularly in forging partnerships.

Communication and outreach was scientific and technically focused in most cases (with the exception of perhaps the school events), and while this was certainly extensive, efficient and important, the sustainability of project results (here the evaluator is referring to commitments/prioritisation towards remediation and soil protection in Serbia in general) may

have benefitted from a stronger public outreach and communications campaign, there may be some useful communication/outreach that the project could support SEPA to champion through the website and other platforms (see recommendation to this effect).

The exemplary nature of this project can be seen in the requests coming into the SEPA to share best practices and knowledge around the cadaster and other project results with neighbouring countries.

In summary, this well-managed project laid a strong foundation of knowledge that the country can take and further build on effectively. The torch of remediation has been well lit, and handed over, so to speak. It will be up to the Government of Serbia to strategize, based on this information, how to move forward effectively (through requesting support from multi-lateral and bi-lateral partners) on the remediation of contaminated sites in Serbia.

ANNEX 6: EVALUATION TORS (WITHOUT ANNEXES)

Terminal Evaluation of the UNEP/GEF project

Enhanced Cross-Sectoral Land Management through Land Use Pressure Reduction and Planning (GEF ID 5822)

Section 1: PROJECT BACKGROUND AND OVERVIEW

1. Project General Information

Table 14: Project Summary

GEF Project ID:	5822		
Implementing Agency:	UNEP	Executing Agencies:	UNEP Vienna Programme Office
Relevant SDG(s) and indicator(s):	SDG 15, target 15.3, indicator 15.3.1		
GEF Core Indicator Targets (identify these for projects approved prior to GEF-7 ⁷⁰)	GEF 5 Project (not applicable)		
Sub-programme:	Healthy and Productive Ecosystems	Expected Accomplishment(s):	??
UNEP approval date:	18 June 2015	Programme of Work Output(s):	PoW 2014-2015, PoW 2016-2017, PoW 2018-2019, PoW 2020-2021
GEF approval date:	1 July, 2015	Project type:	MSP
GEF Operational Programme #:	??	Focal Area(s):	Land Degradation
		GEF Strategic Priority:	LD-3: Integrated Landscapes: Reduce pressures on natural resources from competing land uses in the wider landscape
Expected start date:	??	Actual start date:	7 October, 2015
Planned operational completion date:	30 June 2018	Actual operational completion date:	30 September 2021
Planned project budget at approval:	USD 6,949,144	Actual total expenditures reported as of 30 Sept 2021:	USD 620,498

⁷⁰ This does not apply for Enabling Activities

GEF grant allocation:	USD 661,644	GEF grant expenditures reported as of 30 Sept 2021	USD 620,799
Project Preparation Grant - GEF financing:	USD 27,397	Project Preparation Grant - co-financing:	USD 20,000
Expected Medium-Size Project co-financing:	USD 5,636,000 (USD 100,000 cash; USD 5,536,000 in-kind)	Secured Medium-Size Project co-financing:	USD 6,287,500
Date of first disbursement:	15 December, 2015	Planned date of financial closure:	March 2022
No. of formal project revisions:	??	Date of last approved project revision:	??
No. of Steering Committee meetings:	??	Date of last/next Steering Committee meeting:	Last: ?? Next: ??
Mid-term Review/ Evaluation (planned date):	Sept 2018	Mid-term Review/ Evaluation (actual date):	??
Terminal Evaluation (planned date):	30 Sept 2021	Terminal Evaluation (actual date):	April – Oct 2022
Coverage - Country(ies):	Serbia	Coverage - Region(s):	Europe
Dates of previous project phases:	??	Status of future project phases:	??

2. Project Rationale

Between 1957 and 1993, Serbia lost around 220,000 ha of mostly fertile agricultural land due to various industrial, mining, power-producing, and infrastructure activities (Rudić et al. 1995). The main processes connected with soil loss and degradation in Serbia are identified as follows: 1) soil loss and damage due to industrial, mining, and power-producing activities, 2) loss of soil organic matter, 3) acidification and salinization of soil, 4) different forms of soil pollution (excessive use of agrochemicals, heavy metals, industrial pollution, etc.), 5) Aeolian and water erosion, and 6) compaction of agricultural soils. In general, these processes lead not only to the physical loss of soil but also to soil degradation and are very often interconnected, so that, for example, soil acidification leads to a loss of soil organic matter, soil erosion reduces soil biogenicity, and so on.

The main governmental institution responsible for monitoring and reporting on the state of soil in Serbia is the Serbian Environmental Protection Agency (SEPA), within the Ministry of Agriculture and Environmental Protection. Some of SEPA's related activities so far included the preparation of a manual entitled "Monitoring land - the legal basis, objectives and indicators", which is the starting point for the development of a systematic program for soil monitoring. This project aimed at providing the lacking methodologies, knowledge and coordination mechanisms to follow-up on and embellish the activities defined by the monitoring program.

Early and intermediate positive results include a number of strategic documents and tools for application such as Environmental and Social Impact Assessments, cadaster of degraded "hot spots", an Integrated Land Planning and Management Framework etc. (please refer to outcomes). Expected long term positive impacts include: remediation and

amelioration of degraded “hotspots” and improved soil quality and capacity for utilization, enhanced pollution control and reduced pollution impact on the ecosystem and human health as a whole, prevention of further soil loss and maintenance of its quality, especially in the fields of industry, mining, power production and agriculture which are major economic drivers in Serbia.

3. Project Results Framework

The project’s objective was presented as ‘development of instruments and mechanisms for integrated land use management, remediation, and capacity development to reduce pressures on land as a natural resource from competing land uses in the wider landscape and to support reversal of land degradation’.

Despite being approved in 2015, the project documents do not contain a Theory of Change (TOC). A reconstructed TOC is presented in the Mid Term Review and will need to be reviewed to see if it meets the TOC requirements for this Terminal Evaluation.

It is noted that the formulation of outcomes in results framework does not always meet evaluability requirements: they do not reflect the uptake or application of outputs (‘tools available to land users’ and ‘principles for management of natural resources are agreed upon’).

The project was delivered through three components with associated outcomes as follows:

Table 15: Results statements (PIR, 2021)

Component 1: Enabling institutional, policy and scientific environment for long-term integrated land use management (ILM)	
Outcome 1:	1.2 ILM tools available to land users for an increased understanding of land degradation and remediation measures, based on identified environmental/ industrial hotspots and environmental and socio-economic risks 1.2 Mechanisms and responsibilities agreed upon for the implementation and financing of remediation of identified priority sites 1.3 Developed/ enhanced policy framework for ILM in Serbia with the application of international policy recommendations such as the UNCCD process
Outputs	1.1.1. Pollution sources and land pressures from production sectors (spatial distribution, soil quality, pollutants) are identified and mapped 1.1.2. Environmental, social and economic risks of the production sectors related to land use patterns and soil quality are assessed and ILM tools developed on this basis
	1.2.1. Remediation priorities are established in accordance with Regulation 22/2010 and stakeholder consultations 1.2.2. Cadaster of environmental/industrial hotspots in Serbia with GPS database developed
	1.3.1 An Integrated Land Planning and Management Framework (ILMF) for Serbia developed in accordance with the requirements of SSNRM and its implementation mechanisms
Component 2: Landscape-level management of natural resources in Serbia	
Outcome 2:	2.1. Principles for management of natural resources are agreed upon and allow multipurpose use of resources
Outputs	2.1.1. A methodology compiled for implementation of ILMF practice at the local level 2.1.2. A package of trade-off measures developed and tested at community and local levels
Component 3: Capacity building, awareness raising and sharing learned lessons with main stakeholders and wider public based on sustainable monitoring system	
Outcome 3:	3.1. Strengthened capacities of major stakeholders for sustainable practices in sectors competing for land area and natural resources 3.2. Ensured broad and high level commitment to expanding and replicating measures for integrated SLM; ensured public support for remediation and SLM of environmental/ industrial hotspots
Outputs	3.1.1 Support to the National Laboratory within SEPA for soil sampling and quality analysis is provided

	3.1.2 Baseline information and methods established, and capacity strengthened for a monitoring and reporting system on soil quality and land degradation 3.1.3. Communication and outreach conducted in different regions of Serbia 3.1.4 Interactive hotspot map developed and made available to the public
	3.2.1 A conference aimed at presenting best practices in integrated land management in Serbia and the region is organized 3.2.2. A platform for monitoring of impact on land degradation (physical, environmental, social and economic impacts) is created

4. Executing Arrangements

8. UNEP is the Implementing Agency for this project. The work was managed within the GEF Biodiversity Unit, which is part of the Biodiversity and Land Branch of the Ecosystems Division. At the request of the Government of Serbia, UNEP Vienna Programme Office and the Ministry of Energy, Development and Environmental Protection of Republic of Serbia were named as the Executing Agencies whereas the Ministry of Agriculture and Environmental Protection provided political and institutional supervision.

5. Project Cost and Financing

Table 16: Project Financing at Design (CEO Endorsement, June 2016)

Item	GEF Financing	Co-Financing	TOTAL
Component 1: Enabling institutional, policy and scientific environment for long-term integrated land use management (ILM)	USD 260,000	USD 2,010,000	USD 2,270,000
Component 2: Landscape-level management of natural resources in Serbia	USD 179,852	USD 2,200,000	USD 2,379,852
Component 3: Capacity building, awareness raising and sharing learned lessons with main stakeholders and wider public based on	USD 161,643	USD 1,176,000	USD 1,337,643

sustainable monitoring system			
Total Project Costs	USD 601,495	USD 5,386,000	USD 5,987,225

6. Implementation Issues

9. The project did carry out a Mid Term Review.

10. The original implementation period was extended by 36 months from 30 June 2018 to 30 Sept 2021.

Section 2. OBJECTIVE AND SCOPE OF THE EVALUATION

7. Objective of the Evaluation

In line with the UNEP Evaluation Policy⁷¹ and the UNEP Programme Manual⁷², the Terminal Evaluation is undertaken at operational completion of the project 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 operational improvement, learning and knowledge sharing through results and lessons learned among UNEP, GEF and the main project partners, including NEPAD. Therefore, the Evaluation will identify lessons of operational relevance for future project formulation and implementation, especially where a second phase of the project is being considered. Recommendations relevant to the whole house may also be identified during the evaluation process.

8. Key Evaluation Principles

Evaluation findings and judgements will be based on **sound evidence and analysis**, clearly documented in the Evaluation Report. Information will be triangulated (i.e. verified from different sources) as far as possible, and when verification is not possible, the single source will be mentioned (whilst anonymity is still protected). Analysis leading to evaluative judgements should always be clearly spelled out.

The “Why?” Question. As this is a Terminal Evaluation and a follow-up project is likely [or similar interventions are envisaged for the future], particular attention will be given to learning from the experience. Therefore, the “why?” question should be at the front of the consultants’ minds all through the evaluation exercise and is supported by the use of a theory of change approach. This means that the consultant(s) needs to go beyond the assessment of “what” the project performance was and make a serious effort to provide a deeper understanding of “why” the performance was as it was (i.e. what contributed to the achievement of the project’s results). This should provide the basis for the lessons that can be drawn from the project.

Attribution, Contribution and Credible Association: In order to *attribute* any outcomes and impacts to a project intervention, one needs to consider the difference between what has happened with, and what would have happened without, the project (i.e. take account of changes over time and between contexts in order to isolate the effects of an intervention). This requires appropriate baseline data and the identification of a relevant counterfactual, both of which are frequently not available for evaluations. Establishing the *contribution* made by a project in a complex change process relies heavily on prior intentionality (e.g. approved project design documentation, logical framework) and the articulation of causality (e.g. narrative and/or illustration of the Theory of Change). Robust evidence that a project was delivered as designed and that the expected causal pathways developed supports claims of contribution and this is strengthened where an alternative theory of change can be excluded. A *credible association* between the implementation of a project and observed positive effects can be made where

⁷¹ <https://www.unenvironment.org/about-un-environment/evaluation-office/policies-and-strategies>

⁷² <https://wecollaborate.unep.org>

a strong causal narrative, although not explicitly articulated, can be inferred by the chronological sequence of events, active involvement of key actors and engagement in critical processes.

Communicating evaluation results. A key aim of the Evaluation is to encourage reflection and learning by UNEP staff and key project stakeholders. The consultant(s) should consider how reflection and learning can be promoted, both through the evaluation process and in the communication of evaluation findings and key lessons. Clear and concise writing is required on all evaluation deliverables. Draft and final versions of the Main Evaluation Report will be shared with key stakeholders by the Evaluation Manager. There may, however, be several intended audiences, each with different interests and needs regarding the report. The consultant(s) will plan with the Evaluation Manager which audiences to target and the easiest and clearest way to communicate the key evaluation findings and lessons to them. This may include some, or all, of the following; a webinar, conference calls with relevant stakeholders, the preparation of an Evaluation Brief or interactive presentation.

9. Key Strategic Questions

In addition to the evaluation criteria outlined in Section 10 below, the Evaluation will contribute to addressing the **strategic questions** listed in the first box below. These are questions of interest to UNEP and to which the project is believed to be able to make a substantive contribution. Also included, further down, are five questions that are required when reporting in the GEF Portal and these must be addressed in the TE.

What evidence is available that the Project has improved the understanding of land degradation and remediation measures related to industrial hotspots in Serbia?

What evidence is available that the Project has enhanced policy framework for integrated land management in Serbia?

The first set of questions outlined in the box below are intended to support a review of UNEP's portfolio of Sustainable Land Management projects. As this project (GEF 5822) is part of this SLM Portfolio, the evaluation consultant will be expected to: read a 30pg background document on UNEP's SLM work to-date; discuss these questions in a short online meeting; review/contribute to a draft SLM Portfolio TOC; collect data against these questions during the project evaluation and review/contribute to a draft SLM Portfolio brief (both in writing and during a half-day online meeting).

Q1. To what extent, and in what ways, has this project worked in a complementary/coherent manner with other identified SLM projects reaching operational completion in the same year?

- a) Do the project teams know about each other and do they share information/learning?
- b) Do the participants have any opportunities to share learning?

Q2. To what extent, and in what ways, are project teams (UNEP and Executing Agencies) aware of working within a common technical framework (e.g. do staff/partners think that UNEP is providing common guidance on technical approaches, applying common results formulation or measurement etc)

Q3. In what ways does the design of this project contribute to a common TOC on SLM (a proposed portfolio TOC will be provided during the inception phase of this project evaluation)? Further details on the possible elements/nature of the contribution will be provided (e.g. innovation, transformation effect, potential for substantive global and/or institutional contribution etc).

Q4. Has this project contributed to any efficiencies/economies of scale stemming from UNEP managing several projects on a similar topic? (E.g. have project designs been more efficient or of higher quality due to expertise within the UNEP GEF Focal Unit on

Biodiversity and Land Degradation? Have partnership been able to develop at a more mature level? Have common measures of results been developed? Etc)

Address the questions required for the GEF Portal in the appropriate parts of the report and provide a summary of the findings in the Conclusions section of the report:

(a) Under **Monitoring and Reporting/Monitoring of Project Implementation:**

What was the performance at the project's completion against Core Indicator Targets? (For projects approved prior to GEF-7, these indicators will be identified retrospectively and comments on performance provided⁷³).

(b) Under **Factors Affecting Performance/Stakeholder Participation and Cooperation:**

What were the progress, challenges and outcomes regarding engagement of stakeholders in the project/program as evolved from the time of the MTR? *(This should be based on the description included in the Stakeholder Engagement Plan or equivalent documentation submitted at CEO Endorsement/Approval)*

(c) Under **Factors Affecting Performance/Responsiveness to Human Rights and Gender Equality:**

What were the completed gender-responsive measures and, if applicable, actual gender result areas? *(This should be based on the documentation at CEO Endorsement/Approval, including gender-sensitive indicators contained in the project results framework or gender action plan or equivalent)*

(d) Under **Factors Affecting Performance/Environmental and Social Safeguards:**

What was the progress made in the implementation of the management measures against the Safeguards Plan submitted at CEO Approval? The risk classifications reported in the latest PIR report should be verified and the findings of the effectiveness of any measures or lessons learned taken to address identified risks assessed. *(Any supporting documents gathered by the Consultant during this review should be shared with the Task Manager for uploading in the GEF Portal)*

(e) Under **Factors Affecting Performance/Communication and Public Awareness:**

What were the challenges and outcomes regarding the project's completed Knowledge Management Approach, including: Knowledge and Learning Deliverables (e.g. website/platform development); Knowledge Products/Events; Communication Strategy; Lessons Learned and Good Practice; Adaptive Management Actions? *(This should be based on the documentation approved at CEO Endorsement/Approval)*

10. Evaluation Criteria

All evaluation criteria will be rated on a six-point scale. Sections A-I below, outline the scope of the criteria. A weightings table in excel format will be provided by the Evaluation Manager to support the determination of an overall project rating. The set of evaluation criteria are grouped in nine categories: (A) Strategic Relevance; (B) Quality of Project Design; (C) Nature of External Context; (D) Effectiveness, which comprises assessments of the availability of outputs, achievement of outcomes and likelihood of impact; (E) Financial Management; (F) Efficiency; (G) Monitoring and Reporting; (H) Sustainability; and (I) Factors Affecting Project Performance. The Evaluation Consultant(s) can propose other evaluation criteria as deemed appropriate.

A. Strategic Relevance

The Evaluation will assess the extent to which the activity is suited to the priorities and policies of the donors, implementing regions/countries and the target beneficiaries. The Evaluation will include an assessment of the project's relevance in relation to UNEP's mandate and its alignment with UNEP's policies and strategies at the time of project approval. Under strategic relevance an assessment of the complementarity of the project with other interventions addressing the needs of the same target groups will be made. This criterion comprises four elements:

⁷³ This is not applicable for Enabling Activities

i. Alignment to the UNEP Medium Term Strategy⁷⁴ (MTS), Programme of Work (POW) and Strategic Priorities

The Evaluation should assess the project's alignment with the MTS and POW under which the project was approved and include, in its narrative, reflections on the scale and scope of any contributions made to the planned results reflected in the relevant MTS and POW. UNEP strategic priorities include the Bali Strategic Plan for Technology Support and Capacity Building⁷⁵ (BSP) and South-South Cooperation (S-SC). The BSP relates to the capacity of governments to: comply with international agreements and obligations at the national level; promote, facilitate and finance environmentally sound technologies and to strengthen frameworks for developing coherent international environmental policies. S-SC is regarded as the exchange of resources, technology and knowledge between developing countries.

ii. Alignment to Donor/GEF/Partner Strategic Priorities

Donor, including GEF, strategic priorities will vary across interventions. GEF priorities are specified in published programming priorities and focal area strategies. The Evaluation will assess the extent to which the project is suited to, or responding to, donor priorities. In some cases, alignment with donor priorities may be a fundamental part of project design and grant approval processes while in others, for example, instances of 'softly-earmarked' funding, such alignment may be more of an assumption that should be assessed.

iii. Relevance to Global, Regional, Sub-regional and National Environmental Priorities

The Evaluation will assess the alignment of the project with global priorities such as the SDGs and Agenda 2030. The extent to which the intervention is suited, or responding to, the stated environmental concerns and needs of the countries, sub-regions or regions where it is being implemented will be considered. Examples may include: UN Development Assistance Frameworks (UNDAF), national or sub-national development plans, poverty reduction strategies or Nationally Appropriate Mitigation Action (NAMA) plans or regional agreements etc. Within this section consideration will be given to whether the needs of all beneficiary groups are being met and reflects the current policy priority to leave no one behind.

iv. Complementarity with Relevant Existing Interventions/Coherence⁷⁶

An assessment will be made of how well the project, either at design stage or during the project inception or mobilization⁷⁷, took account of ongoing and planned initiatives (under the same sub-programme, other UNEP sub-programmes, or being implemented by other agencies within the same country, sector or institution) that address similar needs of the same target groups. The Evaluation will consider if the project team, in collaboration with Regional Offices and Sub-Programme Coordinators, made efforts to ensure their own intervention was complementary to other interventions, optimized any synergies and avoided duplication of effort. Examples may include UNDAFs or One UN programming. Linkages with other interventions should be described and instances where UNEP's comparative advantage has been particularly well applied should be highlighted.

Factors affecting this criterion may include:

- Stakeholders' participation and cooperation
- Responsiveness to human rights and gender equality
- Country ownership and driven-ness

B. Quality of Project Design

The quality of project design is assessed using an agreed template during the evaluation inception phase, ratings are attributed to identified criteria and an overall Project Design Quality rating is established. The complete Project Design Quality template should be annexed in the Evaluation

⁷⁴ UNEP's Medium Term Strategy (MTS) is a document that guides UNEP's programme planning over a four-year period. It identifies UNEP's thematic priorities, known as Sub-programmes (SP), and sets out the desired outcomes, known as Expected Accomplishments (EAs), of the Sub-programmes. <https://www.unenvironment.org/about-un-environment/evaluation-office/our-evaluation-approach/un-environment-documents>

⁷⁵ <http://www.unep.fr/ozonaction/about/bsp.htm>

⁷⁶ This sub-category is consistent with the new criterion of 'Coherence' introduced by the OECD-DAC in 2019.

⁷⁷ 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.

Inception Report. Later, the overall Project Design Quality rating⁷⁸ should be entered in the final evaluation ratings table (as item B) in the Main Evaluation Report and a summary of the project's strengths and weaknesses at design stage should be included within the body of the report.

Factors affecting this criterion may include (at the design stage):

- Stakeholders participation and cooperation
- Responsiveness to human rights and gender equality

C. Nature of External Context

At evaluation inception stage a rating is established for the project's external operating context (considering the prevalence of conflict, natural disasters and political upheaval⁷⁹). This rating is entered in the final evaluation ratings table as item C. Where a project has been rated as facing either an Unfavourable or Highly Unfavourable external operating context, and/or a negative external event has occurred during project implementation, the ratings for Effectiveness, Efficiency and/or Sustainability may be increased at the discretion of the Evaluation Consultant and Evaluation Manager together. A justification for such an increase must be given.

D. Effectiveness

i. Availability of Outputs⁸⁰

The Evaluation will assess the project's success in producing the programmed outputs and making them available to the intended beneficiaries as well as its success in achieving milestones as per the project design document (ProDoc). Any *formal* modifications/revisions made during project implementation will be considered part of the project design. Where the project outputs are inappropriately or inaccurately stated in the ProDoc, reformulations may be necessary in the reconstruction of the Theory of Change (TOC). In such cases a table should be provided showing the original and the reformulation of the outputs for transparency. The availability of outputs will be assessed in terms of both quantity and quality, and the assessment will consider their ownership by, and usefulness to, intended beneficiaries and the timeliness of their provision. It is noted that emphasis is placed on the performance of those outputs that are most important to achieve outcomes. The Evaluation will briefly explain the reasons behind the success or shortcomings of the project in delivering its programmed outputs and meeting expected quality standards.

Factors affecting this criterion may include:

- Preparation and readiness
- Quality of project management and supervision⁸¹

ii. Achievement of Project Outcomes⁸²

The achievement of project outcomes is assessed as performance against the project outcomes as defined in the reconstructed⁸³ Theory of Change. These are outcomes that are intended to be achieved

⁷⁸ In some instances, based on data collected during the evaluation process, the assessment of the project's design quality may change from Inception Report to Main Evaluation Report.

⁷⁹ 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 by the project team. From March 2020 this should include the effects of COVID-19.

⁸⁰ Outputs are the availability (for intended beneficiaries/users) of new products and services and/or gains in knowledge, abilities and awareness of individuals or within institutions (UNEP, 2019)

⁸¹ 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.

⁸² Outcomes are the use (i.e. uptake, adoption, application) of an output by intended beneficiaries, observed as changes in institutions or behavior, attitude or condition (UNEP, 2019)

⁸³ All submitted UNEP project documents are required to present a Theory of Change with all submitted project designs. The level of 'reconstruction' needed during an evaluation will depend on the quality of this initial TOC, the time that has lapsed between project design and implementation (which may be related to securing and disbursing funds) and the level of any formal changes made to the project design.

by the end of the project timeframe and within the project's resource envelope. Emphasis is placed on the achievement of project outcomes that are most important for attaining intermediate states. As with outputs, a table can be used where substantive amendments to the formulation of project outcomes is necessary to allow for an assessment of performance. The Evaluation should report evidence of attribution between UNEP's intervention and the project outcomes. In cases of normative work or where several actors are collaborating to achieve common outcomes, evidence of the nature and magnitude of UNEP's 'substantive contribution' should be included and/or 'credible association' established between project efforts and the project outcomes realised.

Factors affecting this criterion may include:

- Quality of project management and supervision
- Stakeholders' participation and cooperation
- Responsiveness to human rights and gender equality
- Communication and public awareness

iii. Likelihood of Impact

Based on the articulation of long-lasting effects in the reconstructed TOC (*i.e. from project outcomes, via intermediate states, to impact*), the Evaluation will assess the likelihood of the intended, positive impacts becoming a reality. Project objectives or goals should be incorporated in the TOC, possibly as intermediate states or long-lasting impacts. The Evaluation Office's approach to the use of TOC in project evaluations is outlined in a guidance note available and is supported by an excel-based flow chart, 'Likelihood of Impact Assessment Decision Tree'. Essentially the approach follows a 'likelihood tree' from project outcomes to impacts, taking account of whether the assumptions and drivers identified in the reconstructed TOC held. Any unintended positive effects should also be identified and their causal linkages to the intended impact described.

The Evaluation will also consider the likelihood that the intervention may lead, or contribute to, unintended negative effects (e.g. will vulnerable groups such as those living with disabilities and/or women and children, be disproportionately affected by the project?). Some of these potential negative effects may have been identified in the project design as risks or as part of the analysis of Environmental and Social Safeguards.

1. The Evaluation will consider the extent to which the project has played a catalytic role⁸⁴ or has promoted scaling up and/or replication as part of its Theory of Change (either explicitly as in a project with a demonstration component or implicitly as expressed in the drivers required to move to outcome levels) and as factors that are likely to contribute to greater or long-lasting impact.

Ultimately UNEP and all its partners aim to bring about benefits to the environment and human well-being. Few projects are likely to have impact statements that reflect such long-lasting or broad-based changes. However, the Evaluation will assess the likelihood of the project to make a substantive contribution to the long-lasting changes represented by the Sustainable Development Goals and/or the intermediate-level results reflected in UNEP's Expected Accomplishments and the strategic priorities of funding partner(s).

Factors affecting this criterion may include:

- Quality of Project Management and Supervision (including adaptive management)

⁸⁴ The terms *catalytic effect*, *scaling up* and *replication* are inter-related and generally refer to extending the coverage or magnitude of the effects of a project. *Catalytic effect* is associated with triggering additional actions that are not directly funded by the project – these effects can be both concrete or less tangible, can be intentionally caused by the project or implied in the design and reflected in the TOC drivers, or can be unintentional and can rely on funding from another source or have no financial requirements. *Scaling up* and *Replication* require more intentionality for projects, or individual components and approaches, to be reproduced in other similar contexts. *Scaling up* suggests a substantive increase in the number of new beneficiaries reached/involved and may require adapted delivery mechanisms while *Replication* suggests the repetition of an approach or component at a similar scale but among different beneficiaries. Even with highly technical work, where scaling up or replication involves working with a new community, some consideration of the new context should take place and adjustments made as necessary.

- Stakeholders participation and cooperation
- Responsiveness to human rights and gender equality
- Country ownership and driven-ness
- Communication and public awareness

E. Financial Management

Financial management will be assessed under three themes: *adherence* to UNEP's financial policies and procedures, completeness of financial information and *communication* between financial and project management staff. The Evaluation will establish the actual spend across the life of the project of funds secured from all donors. This expenditure will be reported, where possible, at output/component level and will be compared with the approved budget. The Evaluation will verify the application of proper financial management standards and adherence to UNEP's financial management policies. Any financial management issues that have affected the timely delivery of the project or the quality of its performance will be highlighted. The Evaluation will record where standard financial documentation is missing, inaccurate, incomplete or unavailable in a timely manner. The Evaluation will assess the level of communication between the Project/Task Manager and the Fund Management Officer as it relates to the effective delivery of the planned project and the needs of a responsive, adaptive management approach.

Factors affecting this criterion may include:

- Preparation and readiness
- Quality of project management and supervision

F. Efficiency

Under the efficiency criterion the Evaluation will assess the extent to which the project delivered maximum results from the given resources. This will include an assessment of the cost-effectiveness and timeliness of project execution.

Focusing on the translation of inputs into outputs, cost-effectiveness is the extent to which an intervention has achieved, or is expected to achieve, its results at the lowest possible cost. Timeliness refers to whether planned activities were delivered according to expected timeframes as well as whether events were sequenced efficiently. The Evaluation will also assess to what extent any project extension could have been avoided through stronger project management and identify any negative impacts caused by project delays or extensions. The Evaluation will describe any cost or time-saving measures put in place to maximise results within the secured budget and agreed project timeframe and consider whether the project was implemented in the most efficient way compared to alternative interventions or approaches.

The Evaluation will give special attention to efforts made by the project teams during project implementation to make use of/build upon pre-existing institutions, agreements and partnerships, data sources, synergies and complementarities⁸⁵ with other initiatives, programmes and projects etc. to increase project efficiency.

The factors underpinning the need for any project extensions will also be explored and discussed. As management or project support costs cannot be increased in cases of 'no cost extensions', such extensions represent an increase in unstated costs to implementing parties.

Factors affecting this criterion may include:

- Preparation and readiness (e.g. timeliness)
- Quality of project management and supervision
- Stakeholders participation and cooperation

G. Monitoring and Reporting

⁸⁵ Complementarity with other interventions during project design, inception or mobilization is considered under Strategic Relevance above.

The Evaluation will assess monitoring and reporting across three sub-categories: monitoring design and budgeting, monitoring implementation and project reporting.

i. Monitoring Design and Budgeting

Each project should be supported by a sound monitoring plan that is designed to track progress against SMART⁸⁶ results towards the provision of the project's outputs and achievement of project outcomes, including at a level disaggregated by gender, marginalisation or vulnerability, including those living with disabilities.. In particular, the Evaluation will assess the relevance and appropriateness of the project indicators as well as the methods used for tracking progress against them as part of conscious results-based management. The Evaluation will assess the quality of the design of the monitoring plan as well as the funds allocated for its implementation. The adequacy of resources for Mid-Term and Terminal Evaluation/Review should be discussed if applicable.

ii. Monitoring of Project Implementation

The Evaluation will assess whether the monitoring system was operational and facilitated the timely tracking of results and progress towards projects objectives throughout the project implementation period. This assessment will include consideration of whether the project gathered relevant and good quality baseline data that is accurately and appropriately documented. This should include monitoring the representation and participation of disaggregated groups (including gendered, marginalised or vulnerable groups, such as those living with disabilities) in project activities. It will also consider the quality of the information generated by the monitoring system during project implementation and how it was used to adapt and improve project execution, achievement of outcomes and ensure sustainability. The Evaluation should confirm that funds allocated for monitoring were used to support this activity.

The performance at project completion against Core Indicator Targets should be reviewed. For projects approved under GEF-6, these indicators will be identified retrospectively and comments on performance provided.

iii. Project Reporting

UNEP has a centralised project information management system (Anubis) in which project managers upload six-monthly progress reports against agreed project milestones. This information will be provided to the Evaluation Consultant(s) by the Evaluation Manager. Some projects have additional requirements to report regularly to funding partners, which will be supplied by the project team (e.g. the Project Implementation Reviews and Tracking Tool for GEF-funded projects). The Evaluation will assess the extent to which both UNEP and donor reporting commitments have been fulfilled. Consideration will be given as to whether reporting has been carried out with respect to the effects of the initiative on disaggregated groups.

Factors affecting this criterion may include:

- Quality of project management and supervision
- Responsiveness to human rights and gender equality (e.g disaggregated indicators and data)

H. Sustainability

Sustainability⁸⁷ is understood as the probability of the benefits derived from the achievement of project outcomes being maintained and developed after the close of the intervention. The Evaluation will identify and assess the key conditions or factors that are likely to undermine or contribute to the endurance of achieved project outcomes (i.e. 'assumptions' and 'drivers'). Some factors of sustainability may be embedded in the project design and implementation approaches while others may be contextual circumstances or conditions that evolve over the life of the intervention. Where

⁸⁶ SMART refers to results that are specific, measurable, achievable, relevant and time-oriented. Indicators help to make results measurable.

⁸⁷ As used here, 'sustainability' means the long-lasting maintenance of outcomes and consequent impacts, whether environmental or not. This is distinct from the concept of sustainability in the terms 'environmental sustainability' or 'sustainable development', which imply 'not living beyond our means' or 'not diminishing global environmental benefits' (GEF STAP Paper, 2019, *Achieving More Enduring Outcomes from GEF Investment*)

applicable an assessment of bio-physical factors that may affect the sustainability of project outcomes may also be included.

i. Socio-political Sustainability

The Evaluation will assess the extent to which social or political factors support the continuation and further development of the benefits derived from project outcomes. It will consider the level of ownership, interest and commitment among government and other stakeholders to take the project achievements forwards. In particular the Evaluation will consider whether individual capacity development efforts are likely to be sustained.

ii. Financial Sustainability

Some project outcomes, once achieved, do not require further financial inputs, e.g. the adoption of a revised policy. However, in order to derive a benefit from this outcome further management action may still be needed e.g. to undertake actions to enforce the policy. Other project outcomes may be dependent on a continuous flow of action that needs to be resourced for them to be maintained, e.g. continuation of a new natural resource management approach. The Evaluation will assess the extent to which project outcomes are dependent on future funding for the benefits they bring to be sustained. Secured future funding is only relevant to financial sustainability where a project's outcomes have been extended into a future project phase. Even where future funding has been secured, the question still remains as to whether the project outcomes are financially sustainable.

iii. Institutional Sustainability

The Evaluation will assess the extent to which the sustainability of project outcomes (especially those relating to policies and laws) is dependent on issues relating to institutional frameworks and governance. It will consider whether institutional achievements such as governance structures and processes, policies, sub-regional agreements, legal and accountability frameworks etc. are robust enough to continue delivering the benefits associated with the project outcomes after project closure. In particular, the Evaluation will consider whether institutional capacity development efforts are likely to be sustained.

Factors affecting this criterion may include:

- Stakeholders participation and cooperation
- Responsiveness to human rights and gender equality (e.g. where interventions are not inclusive, their sustainability may be undermined)
- Communication and public awareness
- Country ownership and driven-ness

I. Factors Affecting Project Performance and Cross-Cutting Issues

(These factors are rated in the ratings table but are discussed within the Main Evaluation Report as cross-cutting themes as appropriate under the other evaluation criteria, above. If these issues have not been addressed under the evaluation criteria above, then independent summaries of their status within the evaluated project should be given.)

i. Preparation and Readiness

This criterion focuses on the inception or mobilisation stage of the project (i.e. the time between project approval and first disbursement). The Evaluation will assess whether appropriate measures were taken to either address weaknesses in the project design or respond to changes that took place between project approval, the securing of funds and project mobilisation. In particular the Evaluation will consider the nature and quality of engagement with stakeholder groups by the project team, the confirmation of partner capacity and development of partnership agreements as well as initial staffing and financing arrangements. *(Project preparation is included in the template for the assessment of Project Design Quality).*

ii. Quality of Project Management and Supervision

In some cases 'project management and supervision' may refer to the supervision and guidance provided by UNEP to implementing partners and national governments while in others, specifically for

GEF funded projects⁸⁸, it may refer to the project management performance of the executing agency and the technical backstopping and supervision provided by UNEP. The performance of parties playing different roles should be discussed and a rating provided for both types of supervision (UNEP/Partner/Executing Agency) and the overall rating for this sub-category established as a simple average of the two.

The Evaluation will assess the effectiveness of project management with regard to: providing leadership towards achieving the planned outcomes; managing team structures; maintaining productive partner relationships (including Steering Groups etc.); maintaining project relevance within changing external and strategic contexts; communication and collaboration with UNEP colleagues; risk management; use of problem-solving; project adaptation and overall project execution. Evidence of adaptive management should be highlighted.

iii. Stakeholder Participation and Cooperation

Here the term 'stakeholder' should be considered in a broad sense, encompassing all project partners, duty bearers with a role in delivering project outputs and target users of project outputs and any other collaborating agents external to UNEP and the Executing Agency. The assessment will consider the quality and effectiveness of all forms of communication and consultation with stakeholders throughout the project life and the support given to maximise collaboration and coherence between various stakeholders, including sharing plans, pooling resources and exchanging learning and expertise. The inclusion and participation of all differentiated groups, including gender groups should be considered.

The progress, challenges and outcomes regarding engagement of stakeholders in the project/program occurring since the MTR should be reviewed. *(This should be based on the description included in the Stakeholder Engagement Plan or equivalent documentation submitted at CEO Endorsement/Approval).*

iv. Responsiveness to Human Rights and Gender Equality

The Evaluation will ascertain to what extent the project has applied the UN Common Understanding on the human rights-based approach (HRBA) and the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous People. Within this human rights context the Evaluation will assess to what extent the intervention adheres to UNEP's Policy and Strategy for Gender Equality and the Environment⁸⁹.

In particular the Evaluation will consider to what extent project-implementation and monitoring have taken into consideration: (i) possible inequalities (especially those related to gender) in access to, and the control over, natural resources; (ii) specific vulnerabilities of disadvantaged groups (especially women, youth and children and those living with disabilities) to environmental degradation or disasters; and (iii) the role of disadvantaged groups (especially those related to gender) in mitigating or adapting to environmental changes and engaging in environmental protection and rehabilitation.

The completed gender-responsive measures and, if applicable, actual gender result areas should be reviewed. *(This should be based on the documentation at CEO Endorsement/Approval, including gender-sensitive indicators contained in the project results framework or gender action plan or equivalent).*

v. Environmental and Social Safeguards

UNEP projects address environmental and social safeguards primarily through the process of environmental and social screening at the project approval stage, risk assessment and management (avoidance, minimization, mitigation or, in exceptional cases, offsetting) of potential environmental and social risks and impacts associated with project and programme activities. The Evaluation will confirm

⁸⁸ For GEF funded projects, a rating will be provided for the Project Management and Supervision of each of the Implementing and Executing Agencies. The two ratings will be aggregated to provided an overall rating for Quality of Project Management and Supervision

⁸⁹ The Evaluation Office notes that Gender Equality was first introduced in the UNEP Project Review Committee Checklist in 2010 and, therefore, provides a criterion rating on gender for projects approved from 2010 onwards. Equally, it is noted that policy documents, operational guidelines and other capacity building efforts have only been developed since then and have evolved over time. https://wedocs.unep.org/bitstream/handle/20.500.11822/7655/-Gender_equality_and_the_environment_Policy_and_strategy-2015Gender_equality_and_the_environment_policy_and_strategy.pdf.pdf?sequence=3&isAllowed=y

whether UNEP requirements⁹⁰ were met to: *review* risk ratings on a regular basis; *monitor* project implementation for possible safeguard issues; *respond* (where relevant) to safeguard issues through risk avoidance, minimization, mitigation or offsetting and *report* on the implementation of safeguard management measures taken. UNEP requirements for proposed projects to be screened for any safeguarding issues; for sound environmental and social risk assessments to be conducted and initial risk ratings to be assigned are evaluated above under Quality of Project Design).

The Evaluation will also consider the extent to which the management of the project minimised UNEP's environmental footprint.

Implementation of the management measures against the Safeguards Plan submitted at CEO Approval should be reviewed, the risk classifications verified and the findings of the effectiveness of any measures or lessons learned taken to address identified risks assessed. Any supporting documents gathered by the Consultant should be shared with the Task Manager.

vi. Country Ownership and Driven-ness

The Evaluation will assess the quality and degree of engagement of government / public sector agencies in the project. While there is some overlap between Country Ownership and Institutional Sustainability, this criterion focuses primarily on the forward momentum of the intended projects results, i.e. either a) moving forwards from outputs to project outcomes or b) moving forward from project outcomes towards intermediate states. The Evaluation will consider the engagement not only of those directly involved in project execution and those participating in technical or leadership groups, but also those official representatives whose cooperation is needed for change to be embedded in their respective institutions and offices (e.g. representatives from multiple sectors or relevant ministries beyond Ministry of Environment). This factor is concerned with the level of ownership generated by the project over outputs and outcomes and that is necessary for long-lasting impact to be realised. Ownership should extend to all gendered and marginalised groups.

vii. Communication and Public Awareness

The Evaluation will assess the effectiveness of: a) communication of learning and experience sharing between project partners and interested groups arising from the project during its life and b) public awareness activities that were undertaken during the implementation of the project to influence attitudes or shape behaviour among wider communities and civil society at large. The Evaluation should consider whether existing communication channels and networks were used effectively, including meeting the differentiated needs of gendered or marginalised groups, and whether any feedback channels were established. Where knowledge sharing platforms have been established under a project the Evaluation will comment on the sustainability of the communication channel under either socio-political, institutional or financial sustainability, as appropriate.

The project's completed Knowledge Management Approach, including: Knowledge and Learning Deliverables (e.g. website/platform development); Knowledge Products/Events; Communication Strategy; Lessons Learned and Good Practice; Adaptive Management Actions should be reviewed. This should be based on the documentation approved at CEO Endorsement/Approval.

Section 3. EVALUATION APPROACH, METHODS AND DELIVERABLES

The Terminal Evaluation will be an in-depth evaluation using a participatory approach whereby key stakeholders are kept informed and consulted throughout the evaluation process. Both quantitative and qualitative evaluation methods will be used as appropriate to determine project achievements against the expected outputs, outcomes and impacts. It is highly recommended that the consultant(s) maintains close communication with the project team and promotes information exchange throughout the Evaluation implementation phase in order to increase their (and other stakeholder) ownership of the evaluation findings. Where applicable, the consultant(s) will provide a geo-referenced map that demarcates the area covered by the project and, where possible, provide geo-reference photographs of key intervention sites (e.g. sites of habitat rehabilitation and protection, pollution treatment infrastructure, etc.)

⁹⁰ For the review of project concepts and proposals, the Safeguard Risk Identification Form (SRIF) was introduced in 2019 and replaced the Environmental, Social and Economic Review note (ESERN), which had been in place since 2016. In GEF projects safeguards have been considered in project designs since 2011.

The findings of the Evaluation will be based on the following:

- (a) A **desk review** of:
 - Relevant background documentation;
 - Project design documents (including minutes of the project design review meeting at approval); Annual Work Plans and Budgets or equivalent, revisions to the project (Project Document Supplement), the logical framework and its budget;
 - Project reports such as six-monthly progress and financial reports, progress reports from collaborating partners, meeting minutes, relevant correspondence and including the Project Implementation Reviews and Tracking Tool etc.;
 - Project deliverables: [TM to list notable items];
 - Mid-Term Review or Mid-Term Evaluation of the project (*where appropriate*);
 - Evaluations/reviews of similar projects (*where appropriate*).
- (b) **Interviews** (individual or in group) with: (TM to complete)
 - UNEP Task Manager (TM); (CHECK FOR PREVIOUS TMS)
 - Project management team, including the Project Manager within the Executing Agency, where appropriate;
 - UNEP Fund Management Officer (FMO);
 - Portfolio Manager and Sub-Programme Coordinator, where appropriate;
 - Project partners, including [list];
 - Relevant resource persons;
 - Representatives from civil society and specialist groups (such as women's, farmers and trade associations etc).
- (c) **Surveys** [provide details, where appropriate]
- (d) **Field visits** [provide details, where appropriate]
- (e) Other data collection tools [provide details, where appropriate]

11. Evaluation Deliverables and Review Procedures

The Evaluation Team will prepare:

- **Inception Report:** (see Annex 1 for a list of all templates, tables and guidance notes) containing an assessment of project design quality, a draft reconstructed 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 is intended 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. In the case of highly strategic project/portfolio evaluations or evaluations with an Evaluation Reference Group, the preliminary findings may be presented as a word document for review and comment.
- **Draft and Final Evaluation Report:** containing an executive summary that can act as a stand-alone document; detailed analysis of the evaluation findings organised by evaluation criteria and supported with evidence; lessons learned and recommendations and an annotated ratings table.

An **SLM Portfolio Brief** will be prepared to bring together key findings across a number of UNEP projects addressing SLM and reaching operational completion over a period of 3-4 years (2019 – 2022). This will be prepared for wider dissemination throughout UNEP. The final details of this Brief, and the contribution to be made by this project evaluation process, will be agreed with the Evaluation Manager no later than during the finalization of the Inception Report.

Review of the Draft Evaluation Report. The Evaluation Consultant(s) will submit a draft report to the Evaluation Manager and revise the draft in response to their comments and suggestions. Once a draft of adequate quality has been peer-reviewed and accepted, the Evaluation Manager will share the

cleared draft report with the Task Manager and Project Manager, who will alert the Evaluation Manager in case the report contains any blatant factual errors. The Evaluation Manager will then forward the revised draft report (corrected by the Evaluation Consultant(s) where necessary) to other project stakeholders, for their review and comments. Stakeholders may provide feedback on any errors of fact and may highlight the significance of such errors in any conclusions as well as providing feedback on the proposed recommendations and lessons. Any comments or responses to draft reports will be sent to the Evaluation Manager for consolidation. The Evaluation Manager will provide all comments to the Evaluation Consultant(s) for consideration in preparing the final report, along with guidance on areas of contradiction or issues requiring an institutional response.

Based on a careful review of the evidence collated by the Evaluation Consultants and the internal consistency of the report, the Evaluation Manager will provide an assessment of the ratings in the final evaluation report. Where there are differences of opinion between the evaluator and the Evaluation Manager on project ratings, both viewpoints will be clearly presented in the final report. The Evaluation Office ratings will be considered the final ratings for the project.

The Evaluation Manager will prepare a **quality assessment** of the first draft of the Main Evaluation Report, which acts as a tool for providing structured feedback to the Evaluation Consultant(s). The quality of the final report will be assessed and rated against the criteria specified in template listed in Annex 1 and this assessment will be appended to the Final Evaluation Report.

At the end of the evaluation process, the Evaluation Office will prepare a **Recommendations Implementation Plan** in the format of a table, to be completed and updated at regular intervals by the Task Manager. The Evaluation Office will track compliance against this plan on a six-monthly basis for a maximum of 12 months.

12. The Evaluation Consultant

For this Evaluation, the Evaluation Team will consist of an Evaluation Consultant who will work under the overall responsibility of the Evaluation Office represented by an Evaluation Manager, **Janet Wildish**, in consultation with the UNEP Task Manager, **Ersin Esen**, Fund Management Office, **George Saddimbah**, and the Sub-programme Coordinator of the Health and Productive Ecosystems Sub-programmes, **Marieta Sakalian**. The consultant will liaise with the Evaluation Manager on any procedural and methodological matters related to the Evaluation, including travel. It is, however, each consultant's individual responsibility (where applicable) to arrange for their visas and immunizations as well as to plan meetings with stakeholders, organize online surveys, obtain documentary evidence and any other logistical matters related to the assignment. The UNEP Task Manager and project team will, where possible, provide logistical support (introductions, meetings etc.) allowing the consultants to conduct the Evaluation as efficiently and independently as possible.

The Evaluation Consultant will be hired over a period of 6 months (01 April 2022 to 31 Oct 2022) and should have the following: a university degree in environmental sciences, international development or other relevant political or social sciences area is required and an advanced degree in the same areas is desirable; a minimum of 8 years of technical / evaluation experience is required, preferably including evaluating large, regional or global programmes and using a Theory of Change approach; and a good/broad understanding of Sustainable Land Management is desired. English and French are the working languages of the United Nations Secretariat. For this consultancy, fluency in oral and written English is a requirement. Working knowledge of the UN system and specifically the work of UNEP is an added advantage. The work will be home-based with possible field visits.

The Evaluation Consultant will be responsible, in close consultation with the Evaluation Office of UNEP for overall management of the Evaluation and timely provision of its outputs, described above in Section 11 Evaluation Deliverables, above. The consultant will ensure together that all evaluation criteria and questions are adequately covered.

FOR SINGLE CONSULTANTS

In close consultation with the Evaluation Manager, the Evaluation Consultant will be responsible for the overall management of the Evaluation and timely provision of its outputs, data collection and analysis and report-writing. More specifically:

Inception phase of the Evaluation, including:

- preliminary desk review and introductory interviews with project staff;
- draft the reconstructed Theory of Change of the project;
- prepare the evaluation framework;
- develop the desk review and interview protocols;
- draft the survey protocols (if relevant);
- develop and present criteria for country and/or site selection for the evaluation mission;
- plan the evaluation schedule;
- prepare the Inception Report, incorporating comments until approved by the Evaluation Manager

Data collection and analysis phase of the Evaluation, including:

- conduct further desk review and in-depth interviews with project implementing and executing agencies, project partners and project stakeholders;
- (where appropriate and agreed) conduct an evaluation mission(s) to selected countries, visit the project locations, interview project partners and stakeholders, including a good representation of local communities. Ensure independence of the Evaluation and confidentiality of evaluation interviews.
- regularly report back to the Evaluation Manager on progress and inform of any possible problems or issues encountered and;
- keep the Project/Task Manager informed of the evaluation progress.

Reporting phase, including:

- draft the Main Evaluation Report, ensuring that the evaluation report is complete, coherent and consistent with the Evaluation Manager guidelines both in substance and style;
- liaise with the Evaluation Manager on comments received and finalize the Main Evaluation Report, ensuring that comments are taken into account until approved by the Evaluation Manager
- prepare a Response to Comments annex for the main report, listing those comments not accepted by the Evaluation Consultant and indicating the reason for the rejection; and
- (where agreed with the Evaluation Manager) prepare an Evaluation Brief (2-page summary of the evaluation and the key evaluation findings and lessons)

Managing relations, including:

- maintain a positive relationship with evaluation stakeholders, ensuring that the evaluation process is as participatory as possible but at the same time maintains its independence;
- communicate in a timely manner with the Evaluation Manager on any issues requiring its attention and intervention.

13. Schedule of the Evaluation

The table below presents the tentative schedule for the Evaluation.

Table 3. Tentative schedule for the Evaluation

Milestone	Tentative Dates
Evaluation Initiation Meeting	
Inception Report	
Evaluation Mission (where appropriate and feasible)	
E-based interviews, surveys etc.	
PowerPoint/presentation on preliminary findings and recommendations	

Milestone	Tentative Dates
Draft report to Evaluation Manager (and Peer Reviewer)	
Draft Report shared with UNEP Project Manager and team	
Draft Report shared with wider group of stakeholders	
Final Report	
Final Report shared with all respondents	

14. Contractual Arrangements

Evaluation Consultants will be selected and recruited by the Evaluation Office of UNEP under an individual Special Service Agreement (SSA) on a “fees only” basis (see below). By signing the service contract with UNEP /UNON, the consultant(s) certify that they have not been associated with the design and implementation of the project in any way which may jeopardize their independence and impartiality towards project achievements and project partner performance. In addition, they will not have any future interests (within six months after completion of the contract) with the project’s executing or implementing units. All consultants are required to sign the Code of Conduct Agreement Form.

Fees will be paid on an instalment basis, paid on acceptance by the Evaluation Manager of expected key deliverables. The schedule of payment is as follows:

Schedule of Payment for the Evaluation Consultant:

Deliverable	Percentage Payment
Approved Inception Report (as per annex document #9)	30%
Approved Draft Main Evaluation Report (as per annex document #10)	30%
Approved Final Main Evaluation Report	40%

Fees only contracts: Where applicable, air tickets will be purchased by UNEP and 75% of the Daily Subsistence Allowance for each authorised travel mission will be paid up front. Local in-country travel will only be reimbursed where agreed in advance with the Evaluation Manager and on the production of acceptable receipts. Terminal expenses and residual DSA entitlements (25%) will be paid after mission completion.

The consultants may be provided with access to UNEP’s information management systems (e.g PIMS, Anubis, Sharepoint etc) and if such access is granted, the consultants agree not to disclose information from that system to third parties beyond information required for, and included in, the evaluation report.

In case the consultants are not able to provide the deliverables in accordance with these guidelines, and in line with the expected quality standards by the UNEP Evaluation Office, payment may be withheld at the discretion of the Director of the Evaluation Office until the consultants have improved the deliverables to meet UNEP’s quality standards.

If the consultant(s) fail to submit a satisfactory final product to UNEP in a timely manner, i.e. before the end date of their contract, the Evaluation Office reserves the right to employ additional human resources to finalize the report, and to reduce the consultants’ fees by an amount equal to the additional costs borne by the Evaluation Office to bring the report up to standard.

ANNEX 7: QUALITY ASSESSMENT OF THE TERMINAL REVIEW REPORT

Terminal Evaluation of a UNEP/UNDP/GEF “Enhanced cross-sectoral land management through land use pressure reduction planning” (GEF ID: 5822)

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
Substantive Report Quality Criteria		
Quality of the Executive Summary: The Summary should be able to stand alone as an accurate summary of the main evaluation product. It should include a 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 (plus reference to where the evaluation ratings table can be found within the report); summary of the main findings of the exercise, including a synthesis of main conclusions (which include a summary response to key strategic evaluation questions), lessons learned and recommendations.	Final report: A concise and detailed section covering all elements.	5.5
I. Introduction A brief introduction should be given identifying, where possible and relevant, the following: institutional context of the project (sub-programme, Division, regions/countries where implemented) and coverage of the evaluation; date of PRC approval and project document signature); results frameworks to which it contributes (e.g. Expected Accomplishment in POW); project duration and start/end dates; number of project phases (where appropriate); implementing partners; total secured budget and whether the project has been evaluated in the past (e.g. mid-term, part of a synthesis evaluation, evaluated by another agency etc.) Consider the extent to which the introduction includes a concise statement of the purpose of the evaluation and the key intended audience for the findings?	Final report: All elements provided.	5.5
II. Evaluation Methods A data collection section should include: a description of evaluation methods and information sources used, including the number and type of respondents; justification for methods used (e.g. qualitative/quantitative; electronic/face-to-face); any selection criteria used to identify respondents, case studies or sites/countries visited; strategies used to increase stakeholder engagement and consultation; details of how data were verified (e.g. triangulation, review by stakeholders etc.). Efforts to include the voices of different groups, e.g. vulnerable, gender, marginalised etc) should be described. Methods to ensure that potentially excluded groups (excluded by gender, vulnerability or marginalisation) are reached and their experiences captured effectively, should be made explicit in this section. The methods used to analyse data (e.g. scoring; coding; thematic analysis etc.) should be described. It should also address evaluation limitations such as: low or imbalanced response rates across different groups; gaps in documentation; extent to which findings can be either generalised to	Final report: A complete section including table describing respondents and rationale for site selections.	5.5

	UNEP Evaluation Office Comments	Final Report Rating
wider evaluation questions or constraints on aggregation/disaggregation; any potential or apparent biases; language barriers and ways they were overcome. Ethics and human rights issues should be highlighted including: how anonymity and confidentiality were protected, and strategies used to include the views of marginalised or potentially disadvantaged groups and/or divergent views. 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>		
III. The Project This section should 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>: A 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: Detailed section covering all elements.	5.5
IV. Theory of Change The <i>TOC at Evaluation</i> should be presented clearly in both diagrammatic and narrative forms. Clear articulation of each major causal pathway is expected, (starting from outputs to long term impact), including explanations of all drivers and assumptions as well as the expected roles of key actors. This section should include a description of how the <i>TOC at Evaluation</i>⁹¹ was designed (who was involved etc.) and applied to the context of the project? Where the project results as stated in the project design documents (or formal revisions of the project design) are not an accurate reflection of the project's intentions or do not follow UNEP's definitions of different results levels, project results may need to be re-phrased or reformulated. In such cases, a summary of the project's results hierarchy should be presented for: a) the results as stated in the approved/revised Prodoc logframe/TOC and b) as formulated in the <i>TOC at Evaluation</i>. <i>The two results hierarchies 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 Review report.	Final report: Good narrative section detailing the causal pathways and appropriate diagram.	5.5

⁹¹ 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
V. Key Findings A. Strategic relevance: This section should include an assessment of the project's relevance in relation to UNEP's mandate and its alignment with UNEP's policies and strategies at the time of project approval. An assessment of the complementarity of the project at design (or during inception/mobilisation ⁹²), with other interventions addressing the needs of the same target groups should be included. Consider the extent to which all four elements have been addressed: i. Alignment to the UNEP Medium Term Strategy (MTS), Programme of Work (POW) and Strategic Priorities ii. Alignment to Donor/GEF/Partners Strategic Priorities iii. Relevance to Regional, Sub-regional and National Environmental Priorities iv. Complementarity with Existing Interventions	Final report: All elements covered well.	5.5
B. Quality of Project Design To what extent are the strength and weaknesses of the project design effectively <u>summarized</u> ?	Final report: Appropriate summary of strengths and weaknesses at design.	5.5
C. Nature of the External Context For projects where this is appropriate, key <u>external</u> features of the project's implementing context that limited the project's performance (e.g. conflict, natural disaster, political upheaval ⁹³), and how they affected performance, should be described.	Final report: Appropriate background.	5.5
D. Effectiveness (i) Outputs and Project Outcomes: How well does the report present a well-reasoned, complete and evidence-based assessment of the a) availability of outputs, and b) achievement of project outcomes? How convincing is the discussion of attribution and contribution, as well as the constraints to attributing effects to the intervention? The effects of the intervention on differentiated groups, including those with specific needs due to gender, vulnerability or marginalisation, should be discussed explicitly.	Final report: Clear, detailed and useful sections detailing performance at output and outcome levels.	5.5
(ii) Likelihood of Impact: How well does the report present an integrated analysis, guided by the causal pathways represented by the TOC, of all evidence relating to likelihood of impact? How well are change processes explained and the roles of key actors, as well as drivers and assumptions, explicitly discussed? Any unintended negative effects of the project should be discussed under Effectiveness, especially negative effects on disadvantaged groups.	Final report: Good discussion, including consideration of assumptions.	5.5

⁹² 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.

⁹³ 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
E. Financial Management This section should contain an integrated analysis of all dimensions evaluated under financial management and include a completed 'financial management' table. 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 • <i>communication</i> between financial and project management staff	Final report: All elements covered, including table as annex.	5.5
F. Efficiency To what extent, and how well, does the report present a well-reasoned, complete and evidence-based assessment of efficiency under the primary categories of cost-effectiveness and timeliness including: • Implications of delays and no cost extensions • 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. • The extent to which the management of the project minimised UNEP's environmental footprint.	Final report: Good discussion.	5.5
G. Monitoring and Reporting How well does the report assess: • Monitoring design and budgeting (<i>including SMART results with measurable indicators, resources for MTE/R etc.</i>) • Monitoring of project implementation (<i>including use of monitoring data for adaptive management</i>) • Project reporting (<i>e.g. PIMS and donor reports</i>)	Final report: All elements covered.	5
H. Sustainability How well does the evaluation identify and assess the key conditions or factors that are likely to undermine or contribute to the persistence of achieved project outcomes including: • Socio-political Sustainability • Financial Sustainability • Institutional Sustainability	Final report: Good discussion.	5.5
I. Factors Affecting Performance These factors are <u>not</u> discussed in stand-alone sections but are integrated in criteria A-H as appropriate. Note that these are described in the Evaluation Criteria Ratings Matrix. To what extent, and how well, does the evaluation report cover the following cross-cutting themes: • Preparation and readiness	Final report: All elements adequately covered.	5.5

	UNEP Evaluation Office Comments	Final Report Rating
• Quality of project management and supervision⁹⁴ • 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		
VI. Conclusions and Recommendations i) Quality of the conclusions: The key strategic questions should be clearly and succinctly addressed within the conclusions section. 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. It is expected that the conclusions will highlight the main strengths and weaknesses of the project and connect them in a compelling story line. Human rights and gender dimensions of the intervention (e.g. how these dimensions were considered, addressed or impacted on) should be discussed explicitly. Conclusions, as well as lessons and recommendations, should be consistent with the evidence presented in the main body of the report.	Final report: Readable conclusions and completed performance ratings table.	5.5
ii) Quality and utility of the lessons: Both positive and negative lessons are expected and duplication with recommendations should be avoided. Based on explicit evaluation findings, lessons should be rooted in real project experiences or derived from problems encountered and mistakes made that should be avoided in the future. Lessons are intended to be adopted any time they are deemed to be relevant in the future and must have the potential for wider application (replication and generalization) and use and should briefly describe the context from which they are derived and those contexts in which they may be useful.	Final report: Useful lessons	5.5
iii) Quality and utility of the recommendations: To what extent are the recommendations 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? They should be feasible to implement within the timeframe and resources available (including local capacities) and specific in terms of who would do what and when. At least one recommendation relating to strengthening the human rights and gender dimensions of UNEP interventions, should be given. Recommendations should represent a measurable performance target in order that the Evaluation Office can monitor and assess compliance with the recommendations. 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	Final report: Appropriate recommendations, endorsed by project stakeholders.	5.5

⁹⁴ 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
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. 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.		
VII. Report Structure and Presentation Quality		
i) Structure and completeness of the report: To what extent does the report follow the Evaluation Office guidelines? Are all requested Annexes included and complete?	Final report: All guidelines followed and annexes complete.	5.5
ii) Quality of 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? Does the report follow Evaluation Office formatting guidelines?	Final report: An excellent report, much appreciated by the Evaluation Office and project team.	5.5
OVERALL REPORT QUALITY RATING		5.5

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?	Y	
2. Were possible conflicts of interest of proposed Evaluation Consultant(s) appraised and addressed in the final selection?	Y	
3. Was the final selection of the Evaluation Consultant(s) made by the Evaluation Office?	Y	
4. Was the evaluator contracted directly by the Evaluation Office?	Y	
5. Was the Evaluation Consultant given direct access to identified external stakeholders in order to adequately present and discuss the findings, as appropriate?	Y	
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?		N
7. If Yes to Q6: Were these concerns resolved to the mutual satisfaction of both the Evaluation Consultant and the Evaluation Manager?	N/A	
Financial Management:		
8. Was the evaluation budget approved at project design available for the evaluation?	Y	
9. Was the final evaluation budget agreed and approved by the Evaluation Office?	Y	
10. Were the agreed evaluation funds readily available to support the payment of the evaluation contract throughout the payment process?	Y	
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?	N	
12. Were all deadlines set in the Terms of Reference respected, as far as unforeseen circumstances allowed?	Y	
13. Was the inception report delivered and reviewed/approved prior to commencing any travel?	Y	
Project's engagement and support:		
14. Did the project team, Sub-Programme Coordinator and identified project stakeholders provide comments on the evaluation Terms of Reference?	Y	
15. Did the project make available all required/requested documents?	Y	
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?	Y	
17. Was adequate support provided by the project to the evaluator(s) in planning and conducting evaluation missions?	Y	
18. Was close communication between the Evaluation Consultant, Evaluation Office and project team maintained throughout the evaluation?	Y	
19. Were evaluation findings, lessons and recommendations adequately discussed with the project team for ownership to be established?	Y	
20. Did the project team, Sub-Programme Coordinator and any identified project stakeholders provide comments on the draft evaluation report?	Y	
Quality assurance:		
21. Were the evaluation Terms of Reference, including the key evaluation questions, peer-reviewed?	Y	

22. Was the TOC in the inception report peer-reviewed?	Y	
23. Was the quality of the draft/cleared report checked by the Evaluation Manager and Peer Reviewer prior to dissemination to stakeholders for comments?	Y	
24. Did the Evaluation Office complete an assessment of the quality of both the draft and final reports?	Y	
Transparency:		
25. Was the draft evaluation report sent directly by the Evaluation Consultant to the Evaluation Office?	Y	
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?	Y	
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?	Y	
28. Were all stakeholder comments to the draft evaluation report sent directly to the Evaluation Office	Y	
29. Did the Evaluation Consultant(s) respond adequately to all factual corrections and comments?	Y	
30. Did the Evaluation Office share substantive comments and Evaluation Consultant responses with those who commented, as appropriate?	Y	

Provide comments / explanations / mitigating circumstances below for any non-compliant process issues.

<u>Process Criterion Number</u>	<u>Evaluation Office Comments</u>

ANNEX 8: JUSTIFICATION FOR REFORMULATION OF PROJECT RESULTS STATEMENTS FOR THE RECONSTRUCTION OF THE TOC

Table 17. Justification for Reformulation of Results Statements for the purpose of the reconstruction of the TOC to guide the Terminal Evaluation of the ILM Serbia

Formulation in original project document(s)	Formulation of Reconstructed TOC at Mid Term Review (RTOC)	Formulation for Reconstructed ToC at Evaluation Inception (RTOC)	Justification for Reformulation	Project Indicators (Source: Project Document)
LONG TERM IMPACT				
<i>Expected long-term impacts as outlined in the Project Document summary are:</i>				
Remediation and amelioration of degraded “hotspots” and improved soil quality and capacity for utilization, enhanced pollution control and reduced pollution impact on the ecosystem and human health as a whole, prevention of further soil loss and maintenance of its quality, especially in the fields of industry, mining, power production and agriculture which are major economic driver in Serbia.	Instruments and mechanisms for integrated land use management developed Instruments and mechanisms for remediation developed Remediation and amelioration of degraded hotspots Improved soil quality and improved capacities of institutions (SEPA, LAs) Enhanced pollution control and reduced pollution impact on the ecosystem and human health as a whole Prevention of further soil loss and maintenance of its quality, especially in the fields of industry, mining, power production and agriculture	Enhanced soil quality and capacity for utilisation Healthy and resilient soils in Serbia Improved health of ecosystems and people of Serbia	Impacts at design were only in the summary and did not form part of the overall narrative or results framework, they also read (predominantly) more like Intermediate States, as do some of the MTR impact statements.	Objective level: 1. % of major hotspots (caused by operation of energy sector, industry, mining and agriculture) identified 2. Availability of integrated land management (ILM) planning tools and monitoring framework 3. Number of authorities piloting community trade-offs, and development alternatives from ILM
INTERMEDIATE STATES				
<i>Refers to “intermediate positive results” in the Project Document summary:</i>	1. Institutional, policy and scientific environment for long-term integrated land use management enabled	Enhanced pollution control	Intermediate states are not project outcomes, they are states that are necessary for the project outcomes to reach long-lasting impact. Some of the impacts the project document alluded to read more like intermediate states, and	

Formulation in original project document(s)	Formulation of Reconstructed TOC at Mid Term Review (RTOC)	Formulation for Reconstructed ToC at Evaluation Inception (RTOC)	Justification for Reformulation	Project Indicators (Source: Project Document)
			for this reason, these have been placed as intermediate states (as well as from the MTR).	
Number of strategic documents and tools for application such as Environmental and Social Assessments, cadaster of degraded hotspots, Integrated Land Planning Management Framework, please refer to Outcomes.	2. Landscape-level management of natural resources in Serbia improved and achieved	Prevention of further soil loss and maintenance of its quality		
	3. Capacity-building, awareness raising and sharing lessons learned with main stakeholders and wider public based on sustainable monitoring system	Replication of ILM into all regions of Serbia (including the remediation of hotspots), nation-wide use of monitoring		
PROJECT OUTCOMES				
1.1. ILM tools available to land users for an increased understanding of land degradation and remediation measures, based on identified environmental/industrial hotspots	unchanged	1.1. Demonstrated commitment (including through finance and institutional mechanism) towards the remediation of identified hotspots using the ILM tools developed <i>(improvement of ILM at specific sites, but tools and methodologies for wider use for national improvement)</i>	This outcome reads more like an output, and this the outputs have been reformulated under one "umbrella output" (see below under Output 1.1.1), outcomes need to demonstrate some sort of behaviour change in the relevant target group. Given that the first and second outcomes are specifically revolving remediation of the prioritised hotspots, these two outcomes were simplified into one that covers the tool use and commitment towards the remediation of hotspots	No of hotspots identified using participatory tools No of ILM tools developed, based on the assessment of major environmental and socio-economic risks and the hotspots
1.2. Mechanisms and responsibilities agreed upon for the implementation and financing of remediation of identified priority sites	unchanged	Changed to be included in the above.		Priority hotspots for remediation are identified in a participatory manner Availability of a hotspot cadaster Existence of binding documents (such as contracts, government decisions and bylaws)

Formulation in original project document(s)	Formulation of Reconstructed TOC at Mid Term Review (RTOC)	Formulation for Reconstructed ToC at Evaluation Inception (RTOC)	Justification for Reformulation	Project Indicators (Source: Project Document)
1.3. Developed/enhanced policy framework for ILM in Serbia with the application of international policy recommendations such as the UNCCD process	unchanged	1.2. Enhanced enabling legal and decision-making environment for ILM in Serbia <i>(movement towards national approach to improved ILM)</i>	Slight re-wording to ensure that the outcome is not purely a product, but that is instead actually taken up in decision-making, and movement of outputs to fall under legal frameworks NOTE: this outcome relies on the assumption that political will exists to pass new policy frameworks and enact them into enforced law (which is outside of the direct influence of the project)	Availability of policy mechanisms to ensure remediation of land under ILM approach Land/Soil Action Plan developed, based on the National Strategy for Sustainable NRM (2012) and in participatory manner
2.1. Principles for management of natural resources are agreed upon and allow multi-purpose use of resources	unchanged	2.1. Demonstrated improvement of ILM at specific sites	Current outcome does not demonstrate any actual change to the improvement of land...Two outputs contribute to the outcome: methodology compiled for ILM at local level, and a package of trade-off measures tested at certain areas - these together should provide the basis for improved management at these sites, and not just how principles of management are agreed upon - i.e. the outcome needs to be more tangible and ambitious than was stated at design	Guidelines for implementation of ILM framework at the local level Trade-off measures tested at local level
3.1. Strengthened capacities of major stakeholders for sustainable practices in sectors competing for land area and natural resources	unchanged	3.1. Key stakeholders demonstrate strengthened capacity for improved monitoring and reporting on soil quality and LD	The original outcome does now show any change or call for action and is overall vague (or at least not context specific, which the project is). The evaluator thinks that Project Output 3.1.3 would be better fit under Outcome 3.2, and Output 3.2.2 would be better fit under Outcome 3.1. This has been changed under Outputs below.	Availability of analytical methods for monitoring the soil quality Staff trained (both fe/male) Local and regional authorities include sustainable land use practices in ILM principles in development of new strategies and action plans Local stakeholders (both fe/male) participating in ILM planning

Formulation in original project document(s)	Formulation of Reconstructed TOC at Mid Term Review (RTOC)	Formulation for Reconstructed ToC at Evaluation Inception (RTOC)	Justification for Reformulation	Project Indicators (Source: Project Document)
				Academia, authorities and production sectors communicate regularly Availability of videos, manuals guidelines, and interactive maps regarding land use in Serbia
3.2. Ensured broad and high level commitment to expanding and replicating measures for integrated SLM; ensured public support for remediation and SLM of environmental/industrial hotspots	unchanged	3.3. Target groups, including policy makers, of outreach and communication demonstrate increased awareness and understanding and demonstrate support towards remediation	There do not seem to be outputs toward original outcome - high-level commitment...how is there high-level commitment ensured by some outreach and a conference on ILM practices? Indicator speaks to documented support of major stakeholders - this will be tested during the evaluation	Documented support of major stakeholders for ILM policies and actions Scientific articles and research papers are published in Serbia on LD, and planning options is low among public and local and regional governments
OUTPUTS				No output-level indicators at design
1.1.1. Pollution sources and land pressures from production sectors (spatial distribution, soil quality, pollutants) are identified and mapped	unchanged	Output 1.1.1. Development of ILM tools toward remediation of contaminated sites and ILM in Serbia, including (a) Mapping of pollution sources and land pressures from production sectors (including spatial distribution, soil quality and pollutants) (b) ILM tools developed related to mitigating environmental, social and economic risks of productions sectors related to land use patterns (c) Cadaster of environmental/industrial hotspots in Serbia with GPS database developed	Changed original outcome to one output, which essentially is a range of tools, and then outlined the different tools to be developed, to simplify and harmonize the project's intentions.	
1.1.2. Environmental, social and economic risks of the production sectors related to land use patterns are assessed and ILM tools developed on this basis	unchanged	Changed to Output 1.1.1.b	One of the suite of tools developed thus changed to be added to Output 1.1.1.	

Formulation in original project document(s)	Formulation of Reconstructed TOC at Mid Term Review (RTOC)	Formulation for Reconstructed ToC at Evaluation Inception (RTOC)	Justification for Reformulation	Project Indicators (Source: Project Document)
1.2.1. Remediation priorities are established in accordance with Regulation 22/2010 and stakeholder consultations	unchanged	Output 1.1.2. Remediation priorities are established in accordance with Regulation 22/2010 and stakeholder consultations	This is part of the legal and regulatory framework and thus added it to Outcome 1.2.	
1.2.2. Cadaster of environmental/industrial hotspots in Serbia with GPS database developed	unchanged	Changed to Output 1.1.c	Part of the suite of tools under Output 1.1.1.	
1.3.1. An <i>Integrated Land Planning and Management Framework (ILMF)</i> for Serbia developed in accordance with the requirements of SSNRM and its implementation mechanisms	unchanged	1.2.1. An Integrated Land Planning Management Framework (ILMF) for Serbia developed in accordance with the requirements of SSNRM and its implementation mechanisms as well as international policy recommendations (such as the UNCCD process)	Slightly reworded to include some of the project original outcome-level wording.	
2.1.1. A methodology compiled for implementation of ILMF practice at the local level	unchanged	unchanged		
2.1.2. A package of trade-off measures developed and tested at community and local levels	unchanged	unchanged		
3.1.1. Support to the National Laboratory within SEPA for soil sampling and quality analysis is provided	unchanged	3.1.1. Technical support and capacity development to the National Laboratory within SEPA for soil sampling and quality analysis is provided	Output needs to be more clear as to what kind of support is provided	
3.1.2. Baseline information and methods established, and capacity strengthened for a monitoring and reporting system on soil quality and land degradation	unchanged	unchanged		
3.1.3. Communication and outreach conducted in different regions of Serbia	unchanged	3.2.2. Communication and outreach conducted in different regions of Serbia	Is more appropriate to have this output under improved public support outcome (3.2)	
3.2.1. A conference aimed at presenting best practices in integrated land management in Serbia and the region is organised	unchanged	unchanged		
3.3.1. A platform for monitoring of impact on land degradation (physical, environmental, social and economic impacts) is created		3.1.3. A platform for monitoring of impact on land degradation (physical, environmental, social and economic impacts) is created	Is more appropriate under Outcome 3.1. because it supports strengthened capacity to properly monitor impact of LD	

Formulation in original project document(s)	Formulation of Reconstructed TOC at Mid Term Review (RTOC)	Formulation for Reconstructed ToC at Evaluation Inception (RTOC)	Justification for Reformulation	Project Indicators (Source: Project Document)
			(arguably it could also have been appropriately placed under Output 1.1.1)	

ANNEX 9: EVALUATION FRAMEWORK

The strategic questions set out in the evaluation TOR are highlighted (orange shading).

Main Evaluation Criteria / Questions	Evaluation Indicators	Means of Verification
Criterion A: Strategic Relevance		
A.1. Alignment to MTS and POW	Fit to UNEP mandate – qualitative	Comparison of ProDoc and annual reports with UNEP MTS and PoWs, PIMS, interview with Task Manager
1. Were the project objectives and outcomes consistent with UNEP's Medium Term Strategy, its Sub-programmes and Expected Accomplishments, as well as the PoWs? What were the linkages?	Alignment and continuation to MTS and PoWs (2014-15, check also 2016-17,2017-18) – qualitative, possible indicators in PIMS	
A.2. Alignment to Donor/Strategic Priorities	Level of alignment GEF	Comparison of ProDoc and annual reports (possibly interview with Project Manager, UNEP Divisions)
2. Was the project aligned to GEF FAs and Strategic Areas?		
A.3. Relevance to regional, sub-regional and national environmental priorities	Descriptive input on match, evidence of stakeholders' participation and cooperation; ownership	GEF case project manager interviews, assessment of <u>ownership</u>
3. Did the project respond to the environmental concerns and needs of the countries?		
A.4. Complementarity with existing interventions	Evidence of appropriate actions (discussions, adaptation of strategies, collaboration etc)	Review of project documents, interviews with partners
4. To what extent did the project take account of ongoing and planned initiatives (under the same sub-programme, other UNEP sub-programmes, GEF projects in other countries) that address similar needs of the same target groups.		
5. Were cross cutting issues including human rights and gender equality adequately considered in project design and implementation?	Qualitative	Project documents, interviews / questionnaires with country level and other internal/ external stakeholders, project products (studies, guidelines)

Main Evaluation Criteria / Questions	Evaluation Indicators	Means of Verification
6. What is the contribution of this project for the common aims of the UNCCD and UNFCCC to identify and promote best practices for the maintenance and buildup of soil organic matter (which contributes to land degradation neutrality and carbon sequestration)? (linked to relevance)	Qualitative	Interviews with project partners, possible interviews with UNCCD and UNFCCC Sec
Criterion B. Quality of Project Design	See quality of design matrix attached – Annex A	
Criterion C. Nature of External Context		
7. Did the political, environmental, social or institutional context change during the project implementation and how did the project adapt to this? (related to COVID-19, but not exclusively)	Descriptive; potential to measure effect in months of delay	Interviews with key project partners
Criterion D. Effectiveness		
D1. Availability of Outputs		
Availability of outputs	Logframe indicators	PIMs, annual reporting, final project report, as well as interview with project leaders and partners
8. Was the project successful in producing its programmed outputs and milestones as per the ProDoc and workplan, as well as its usefulness and timeliness?		
9. What were the reasons behind any failures/successes of the project in producing its different outputs?	Consider preparation and readiness; quality of project management and supervision, external context	Interviews with all project partners involved in implementation
10. Were stakeholders appropriately involved in producing programmed outputs?	Stakeholder participation and cooperation	Interviews with cross section of internal and external stakeholders (particularly GEF Agencies and GEF project managers – those involved in training)
D2. Achievement of Project Outcomes		

Main Evaluation Criteria / Questions	Evaluation Indicators	Means of Verification
11. To what extent has the project achieved the enhancement of capacity of GEF project managers and selected GEF agency personnel to monitor carbon and climate co-benefits from SLM projects (Outcome 1)?	Logframe indicators	PIMS reporting, interviews
12. To what extent are SLM projects using combined tools sets to identify appropriate C practices? What is the added value of the linkage between the CBP tools and the WOCAT Questionnaire on SLM Technologies for (a) GEF projects (b) other projects (c) stakeholder groups at different scales, and how is it perceived? (Outcome 2)?	Logframe indicators	PIMS reporting, discussions with partner implementers and Steering Committee members,
13. To what extent have GEF and other SLM project managers enhanced their understanding of the wide range of tools available – are they able to choose which ones suit their needs? (Outcome 3)?	Qualitative, Logframe indicators	Survey of training, interviews with project partner implementers
D3. Achievement of likelihood of impact To what extent has the project allowed for effective mainstreaming of carbon monitoring into the greater programmatic implementation of GEF projects and more widely beyond GEF, in general, the Global Agenda 2030? (related to impact)	Consideration of Theory of Change including assumptions and drivers: • Stakeholders participation and cooperation • Responsiveness to human rights and gender equity • Country ownership and driven-ness • Communication and public awareness • Catalytic role and replication	Interviews project team, partners,
E. Financial Management		

Main Evaluation Criteria / Questions	Evaluation Indicators	Means of Verification
E.1. Adherence to UNEP's policies and procedures 14. How did the financial reporting and management adhere to the policies and procedures of UNEP 15. The evaluation will also address the two areas identified in the TOR (E.2. completeness of financial information; E.3. communication between financial and project management staff)	Descriptive with reference to norms as benchmarks	Interviews with Task Manager, FMO, Starfish Review of contracts /agreement Financial reports
16. Were there any aspects of financial management that affected project performance?	Descriptive, with reference to timing	Interviews with Task Manager/FMO Interviews with Implementing Partners Review of income
F. Efficiency		
17. To what extent did the project build on existing institutions, lessons of other initiatives and ongoing projects (how well did the project align to the greater programmatic approach i.e. follow on from previous projects)?	Descriptive	Background documentation, partner interviews
18. To what extent did the project leverage efforts of partners and of possible champions towards achievement of its outcomes, impact and sustainability	Qualitative	Interviews with partners, Technical Steering Committee
19. What have been the main reasons for delay/changes in implementation, if any? What lessons can be learnt from this? To what extent did the delays have an impact on the delivery of project outcomes?	Comparison of actual and planned deliverables timing	Interviews with Project implementers, Members of Steering Committee Review of documentation related to extensions
20. Were financial means sufficient to deliver planned project outputs?	Review of income and expenditure relative to original budget	Review of income and expenditure relative to original budget
21. Were available human resources (skills, number) sufficient to deliver planned project outputs in a timely manner?	Review of staffing arrangements relative to original plans and to actual requirements	Review of staffing arrangements relative to original plans and to actual requirements (check with UNEP and CSU)

Main Evaluation Criteria / Questions	Evaluation Indicators	Means of Verification
G. Monitoring and Reporting		
1. Project reporting		
22. To what extent have UNEP reporting requirements been fulfilled	Comparison of actual reporting to requirements	Availability of reporting
2. Monitoring Design and Budgeting		
23. What tools and procedures are in place for project monitoring?	Availability of log-frame, PIMS, workplans, roles of oversight bodies	Availability of monitoring tools, interviews with Project Team
3. Monitoring Implementation		
24. How has monitoring been conducted, and how have results been used to adapt implementation approach?	Review of monitoring practice Review of oversight arrangements	Availability of monitoring results, project team interviews, Steering Committee
H. Sustainability		
H.1. Socio-political sustainability		
25. Are there any social or political factors that may influence positively or negatively the sustenance of project results and progress towards impact?	Qualitative	Interviews with Steering Committee, key agencies, project implementers
26. Is the level of ownership by GEF sufficient to allow for the project results to be sustained?	Qualitative	Interviews with Steering Committee, key agencies, project implementers, particularly GEF
27. Are there sufficient government and other stakeholder awareness, interests, commitment and incentives to mainstream carbon monitoring?	Qualitative	Interviews with Steering Committee, key agencies, project implementers
H.2. Financial sustainability		

Main Evaluation Criteria / Questions	Evaluation Indicators	Means of Verification
28. To what extent are the continuation of project results (direct outcomes) and the eventual impact of the project dependent on financial resources?	Qualitative	Interviews with Steering Committee, key agencies, project implementers
29. What is the likelihood that adequate financial resources will be or will become available to use capacities built by the project?	Qualitative, possible data on onward funding	Interviews with Steering Committee, key agencies, project implementers
H.3. Institutional sustainability		
30. To what extent is the sustainability of the results and onward progress towards impact dependent on issues relating to institutional frameworks and governance?	Qualitative	Interviews with Steering Committee, key agencies, project implementers
I. Factors Affecting Project Performance (x-cutting in narrative of above)		
I.1. Preparation and readiness (included in design)		
I.2. Quality of Project Management and Supervision		
31. Was leadership and (adaptive) direction towards achieving planned outcomes sufficient in the project? (includes Steering Committee)	Qualitative, adaptation mechanism	Interviews with all project implementers
32. What adjustments, if any, were made to the project as a direct consequence of the COVID-19 pandemic, and to what extent did the adjustments allow the project to effectively respond to the new priorities that emerged in relation to COVID-19? How did the adjustments affect the achievement of the project's expected results? (related to risk, particularly for learning for future projects which will be faced with more and more global risk factors).	Qualitative, adaptation mechanism	Interviews with all project implementers

Main Evaluation Criteria / Questions	Evaluation Indicators	Means of Verification
I.3. Stakeholder Participation and Cooperation		
33. What has been the degree and effectiveness of partnership collaboration with stakeholders? What are the opportunities to engage with more stakeholders?	Participation and involvement, ownership, qualitative	Interviews with all project implementers
I.4. Responsiveness to Human Rights and Gender Equity		
34. Were cross cutting issues including human rights and gender equality adequately considered in project design and implementation?		
I.4. Communication and Public Awareness		
35. What was the level of learning and sharing among project partners?	Qualitative	Interviews with project implementers
36. What public awareness activities took place, and how effective were they in supporting the realization (and further sustaining) of project results?	Level of events, event impact	Interviews with project implementers
I.5. Environmental and social safeguards		
37. To what extent did the project adhere to the environmental and social safeguards laid out in UNEP policy?		
I.6. Country ownership and drivenness/championship		
38. To what extent has the project created opportunities for particular individuals or institutions (champions) to catalyse change (without which the project would not have achieved its results)?	Level of national and global leadership	Interviews
39. Did the projects successfully test carbon monitoring? Are other national-level projects taking on the tools as a result of project intervention?	Level of success in testing in 4 case studies	Interviews

Main Evaluation Criteria / Questions	Evaluation Indicators	Means of Verification
40. Are there lessons and experience coming out of the project that are replicated and scaled up? What are the factors that may influence replication and scaling up of project experience and lessons?	Qualitative	Interviews