Terminal Evaluation of the UNEP Project

“Assessing key environmental issues and providing focused outlooks to strengthen science-based policy and decision making, PIMS 2041 (SMA ID 45773 & 180471)”

(2019-2025)



Evaluation Office of the United Nations Environment Programme

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Front cover: Presentation of the Adaptation Gap Report 2024 by the UNEP Executive Director at the Climate COP Summit in Baku, Azerbaijan, in December 2024

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AI tools Chat GPT and Claude were used to: transcribe and summarize interviews; auto-code interview data and align it with the Theory of Change; triangulate data to identify inconsistencies; and enhance clarity in report drafting. The consultant has reviewed the AI-generated content and takes full responsibility for its accuracy and application.

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Assessing key environmental issues and providing focused outlooks to strengthen science-based policy and decision making
SMA ID 45773 & 180471
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The evaluation consultant hopes that the findings, conclusions and recommendations will contribute to the successful finalisation of the current project, formulation of any next phases and to the continuous improvement of similar projects in other countries and regions.

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Brief consultant biography

Patrick Bréard is an independent evaluation consultant with over 20 years of professional experience in public administration reform, development effectiveness, and knowledge management. He has conducted numerous evaluations and strategic assessments for United Nations agencies, including UNEP, UNDP, FAO, UNICEF, UNECE, UNECA, UN EOSG, ILO and UNIDO. His work covers complex, multi-stakeholder programmes, with particular expertise in theory of change, results-based management, and the evaluation of knowledge and policy-oriented initiatives. He has previously evaluated UNEP's Environment under Review (EUR) Subprogramme, the organisation's main programme for global environmental assessments. Patrick Bréard holds a PhD in Strategic Foresight, an Executive MBA, and master's degrees in economics.

About the Evaluation

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ABSTRACT: This report is a Terminal Evaluation of the UNEP project: Assessing key environmental issues and providing focused outlooks to strengthen science-based policy and decision making (SMA ID 45773 & 180471)", implemented between 2019 and 2025.The project's overall goal was to strengthen the science–policy interface by producing and disseminating high-quality, open-access environmental assessments, early warning information and related knowledge products to support evidence-based decision-making. The evaluation sought to assess project performance (in terms of relevance, effectiveness and efficiency) and determine the sustainability of its results. The evaluation has two primary purposes: accountability and learning. Data collection methods included: in-depth interviews, online survey, and document reviews. Data analysis was based on applying triangulated data to assess performance against a reconstructed Theory of Change and its causal pathways. With an overall performance rating of Moderately Satisfactory, the 4th point on a six-point scale, the main findings include that : i) the project is highly relevant, but overall performance is constrained by structural design limitations, fragmented implementation, and weak portfolio-level coherence, ii) Effectiveness is uneven. While there is an evidence of uptake of the project outputs, particularly in global policy processes, scientific communities and international organizations, outcome-level results are only partially demonstrated, iii) The sustainability of the project is uneven and depends on the degree of institutionalisation of individual outputs, while the sustainability beyond individual outputs at portfolio level remains limited. The main recommendations to UNEP are to strengthen coordination, strategic positioning and internal learning across UNEP's assessment function; develop a more structured and predictable approaches to resourcing; enhance structured stakeholder engagement and co-production models across the assessment lifecycle; strengthen monitoring systems to better capture update, use, and results of UNEP assessments.

Source(s) of Funding by Country: Norway, Sweden/SIDA, Switzerland, Ireland, Belgium, Netherlands, China, Spain (AECI), Denmark/DANIDA.

Source(s) of Funding by Institution Type:

Foundation/NGO	Yes
Private Sector	Yes
UN Body	Yes
Multilateral Fund	Yes
Environment Fund	Yes

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Field mission dates: No field mission.

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List of acronyms and abbreviations

Acronym	Definition
AGR	Adaptation Gap Report
COP	Conference of Parties
CPR	Committee of Permanent Representatives
DAC	Development Assistance Committee (OECD)
EA	Expected Accomplishment
EGR	Emissions Gap Report
EOSG	Executive Office of the Secretary-General
EOU	Evaluation Office of UNEP
EUR	Environment under Review
EWAD	Early Warning and Assessment Division
FAO	Food and Agriculture Organization
GEF	Global Environment Facility
GEO	Global Environment Outlook
ILO	International Labour Organization
IPCC	Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change
IPMR	Integrated Planning, Monitoring and Reporting
IPSAS	International Public Sector Accounting Standards
MTR	Mid-Term Review
MTS	Medium-Term Strategy
NDC	Nationally Determined Contribution
NGO	Non-Governmental Organization
PoW	Programme of Work
PRC	Project Review Committee
ProDoc	Project Document
SD	Sustainable Development
SDG	Sustainable Development Goals
SPBF	Science-Policy-Business Forum
ToC	Theory of Change
ToR	Terms of Reference
UN	United Nations
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
UNEA	United Nations Environment Assembly
UNEP	United Nations Environment Programme
UNFCCC	United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change
WASP	World Adaptation Science Programme
WESR	World Environment Situation Room
WWQA	World Water Quality Assessment

Project identification table

Table 1: Project Identification Table

UNEP SMA[1] ID:	45773 & 180471	Grant ID[2] (if applicable):	SB-00823 & SB-025270
UNEP Management (Division/Branch/Unit):	*Thematic Assessment Unit, Early Warning and Assessment Division (EWAD)[3], previously known as Science Division.*		
Implementing Partners:	Multiple implementing partners such as United Nation Agencies, National Governments and related entities, Private Business community, Non-United Nations Multi-lateral and inter-Governmental Entities, National and international NGOs, and Academia and Research Institutions (A full list is available in Annex X)		
Sources of Funding:	*Countries[4]:* Extrabudgetary: Norway, Sweden/SIDA, Switzerland, Ireland, Belgium, Netherlands, China, Spain (AECI), Denmark/DANIDA.	*Institution[5] Name/Type:* *Climate works foundation (Foundation), INT. COPPER ASSOCIATION (Private Sector), IBM (Private Sector), Environment Fund, WMO (UN Body), Finland/Nordic council (Other).*	
Relevant SDG(s):	SDG 1,2,3,5,6,7,8, 9,11, 12, 13, 14, 15, 16, 17, and their related targets and indicators.		
MTS (all that apply):	MTS 2018-2021 MTS 2022-2025	MTS 2025 Outcome(s) number/reference *(applicable for projects approved from 2022):* **OR** POW Expected Accomplishment(s) number/reference *(applicable for projects approved pre-2022):*	*MTS 2025 Outcome:* SP7-EA (a): Governments and other stakeholders use quality open environmental data, analyses and participatory processes that strengthen the science-policy interface to generate evidence-based environmental assessments, identify emerging issues and foster policy action Secondary: SP1-Climate Change: EA (a)(b) SP-2 Resilience to disasters and conflicts; SP 3-Health

[1] SMA refers to the ID provided by the Integrated Planning, Management and Reporting Solution (IPMR) system, which was introduced by UNEP in July 2023. Previously, it was referred to as a PIMS ID number. In this evaluation, there are two SMA IDs (45773 & 180471). 180471 was created when the project (45773) was extended following the guidance from Policy and Programme Division (PPD), back in 2023. Consequently, there are two WBSEs (SB-00823 & SB-025270) to be covered by the evaluation. Although it seems that they are two separate projects, during the preparation meeting between EOU and the project team on 7 July 2025, the project manager confirmed that they are the same project with extension. Therefore, the evaluands of this terminal evaluation are SMA 45773 and 180471.

[2] For example, ID references from EC, IKI, UNDA, Adaptation Fund, GCF.

[3] The name of Science Division was changed to Early Warning and Assessment Division (EWAD) around 2023. Since March 2025, there

[4] Llist countries who have provided project funds and/or co-finance.

[5] Funding institutions are any/all of the following: Foundation/NGO; Private Sector; UN Body; Multilateral Fund; Environment Fund; Other.

UNEP SMA[1] ID:	45773 & 180471	Grant ID[2] (if applicable):	SB-00823 & SB-025270
POW Direct Outcome(s) number/reference *(applicable for projects approved from 2022):* **OR** POW Output(s) number/reference *(applicable for projects approved pre-2022):*	*PoW 2020-2021, Expected Accomplishment Indicator: ii and v* *PoW 2022-2023, outcome indicators: ii and iii* *2022-2025 Climate Action Subprogramme : Direct outcome 1.1 and 1.3* *2022-2025 Nature Action Subprogramme: Direct outcome 2.3, 2.7, and 2.16* *2022-2025 Chemicals and Pollution Action Subprogramme :Direct outcome 3.2, 3.3, and 3.13*		and productive ecosystems; SP6 - Resource efficiency: EA (a)(b)
Sub-programme:	*Subprogramme 7: Environment under review (2018-2021)* *Science-Policy Subprogramme (2022-2025)*	UNEP approval date:	18 January 2019
Expected start date:[6]	01/2019	Actual start date:[7]	18 Jan 2019 (some activities were initiated before the official start date as part of the preparatory phase)
Planned completion date:[8]	31 Dec 2025 (revised date) 31 Dec 2023 (original date)	Actual operational completion date:	31 Dec 2025
Planned project budget[8] at approval:	*Planned Core Funding (regular budget, Environment Fund, etc.):* $10,000 (2019 at approval) $3,198,632 (2023 at revision)		
	Planned Extra-budgetary Funds[9]:$8,575,615 (2019), $14,182,588 (2023) *Cash: $*8,565,615 (2019), $10,983,256 (2023) *In-kind:* $2,406,963 (2019), $4,708,155 (2023)		
	Total Planned Budget: $ 10,982,578 (2019), $ 18,890,742 (2023)		
Secured budget[10]	Secured Core Funding (regular budget, Environment Fund, etc.): actual $2,951,715.80 (in Umoja)		

[6] Expected/planned dates are listed in the Project Document (PRODOC).
[7] Actual start date is the date of project approval by the Division Director.
[8] Total budget may include: Regular Budget, Environment Fund, Extra-Budgetary, including 'softly-earmarked' etc.
[9] Extra-budgetary funds may include co-finance (cash/in-kind).
[10] From last project/budget revision.

<table>
<tr><td>UNEP SMA[1] ID:</td><td colspan="2">45773 & 180471</td><td>Grant ID[2] (if applicable):</td><td>SB-00823 & SB-025270</td></tr>
<tr><td rowspan="2"></td><td colspan="4">Secured Extra-budgetary Funds:
Cash: $ 7,182,697.24
In-kind: $ 4,708,155</td></tr>
<tr><td colspan="4">Total secured budget as of 11 September 2025: $10,134,413.20</td></tr>
<tr><td rowspan="3">Actual expenditures reported (cash only):</td><td colspan="4">Actual Core Funding expenditures reported as of 11 September 2025: $2,887,622.83</td></tr>
<tr><td colspan="4">Actual Extra-budgetary Funds expenditures reported as of 11 September 2025: $7,073,656.93</td></tr>
<tr><td colspan="4">Total actual expenditures reported as of 11 September 2025: $9,961.279.76</td></tr>
<tr><td>First disbursement:</td><td colspan="2">Jan 2019</td><td>Planned date of financial closure:</td><td>Dec 2026
Estimated 1 year after operational completion</td></tr>
<tr><td>No. of formal project revisions:</td><td colspan="2">1</td><td>Date of last approved project revision:</td><td>04 Dec 2023 (for a two-year extension)</td></tr>
<tr><td>No. of Steering Committee meetings:</td><td colspan="2">N/A
There is no steering committee for the project</td><td>Date of Last Steering Committee meeting:</td><td>N/A</td></tr>
<tr><td rowspan="2">Mid-term Review/ Evaluation[11] (required or not required):</td><td>UNEP requirement:</td><td>Y</td><td rowspan="2">Mid-term Review/ Evaluation actual date:</td><td rowspan="2">Nov 2023 to Feb 2024</td></tr>
<tr><td>Donor requirement:</td><td>N</td></tr>
<tr><td>Terminal Evaluation (planned date):</td><td colspan="2">End of 2025 (revised plan with extension)
09/2023 (original plan)</td><td>Terminal Evaluation actual date:</td><td>Dec 2025-June 2026</td></tr>
<tr><td>Coverage - Countries:</td><td colspan="2">Multiple countries [12]</td><td>Coverage - Region(s):</td><td>Africa, Asia-Pacific, Central Asia, Europe, Latin America and Caribbean, North America, West Asia; Global (in the case of FRONTIERS & Oceans, for instance).</td></tr>
<tr><td>Dates of previous project phases:</td><td colspan="2">N/A</td><td>Status of future project phases:</td><td>No future project phase</td></tr>
</table>

[11] UNEP projects of four or more years duration require an MTR unless there is an exceptional circumstance. See the *Evaluation in the Project Cycle* section in the Evaluation Office's operational manual. Donor requirements may vary and should be considered in conjunction with UNEP's requirements.

[12] ***Africa:*** *All countries in Africa;* ***Asia-Pacific: Australia,*** *Bangladesh, Cambodia, India, Indonesia, Japan, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Lao PDR, Malaysia, Maldives, Mongolia, Myanmar, People's Republic of China, Pakistan, Philippines, Republic of Korea, Russian Federation, Singapore, Sri Lanka, Tajikistan, Thailand, Turkmenistan, Uzbekistan and Vietnam;* ***Europe: Estonia, France,*** *Greece, Israel, Norway, Russian Federation, Republic of Türkiye;* ***Latin American and the Caribbean:*** *Antigua and Barbuda , Bolivia, Brazil, Colombia, Costa Rica, Dominican Republic, Ecuador, El Salvador, Guatemala, Guyana, Haiti, Honduras, Mexico, Nicaragua, Panama, Peru, and Venezuela;* ***West Asian countries:*** *Palestinian Territory.*

Executive Summary

Project background

1. The project "Assessing key environmental issues and providing focused outlooks to strengthen science-based policy and decision making" (SMA IDs 45773 and 180471) (hereafter referred to as Project A3[13]) was implemented by United Nations Environment Programmes (UNEP) from 2019 to 2025. It aimed to strengthen the science–policy interface by producing and disseminating high-quality, open-access environmental assessments, early warning information and related knowledge products to support evidence-based decision-making.

2. The project was implemented globally through a portfolio of components covering climate change, water, oceans, pollution and emerging environmental issues as well as science-policy-business forum (SPBF). It was anchored within UNEP's Early Warning and Assessment Division (EWAD) and aligned with successive Medium-Term Strategies (MTS) and Programmes of Work (PoW). Following a 2023 revision, the project was extended to December 2025 and its budget envelope expanded.

This evaluation

3. This Terminal Evaluation (TE) assesses project performance against nine evaluation criteria[14], including relevance, effectiveness and efficiency, using a six-point rating scale[15]. It serves both accountability and learning purposes and is based on a theory-based approach using a reconstructed Theory of Change.

4. The evaluation draws on document review, 28 stakeholder interviews, a survey of 21 respondents, and analysis of web analytics and policy citation data. Given the knowledge-based nature of the intervention, it adopts a contribution-oriented approach, assessing the project's plausible influence on policy processes rather than direct attribution.

Key findings and performance ratings

5. The evaluation finds that Project A3 is highly relevant and has delivered important results, but its overall performance is constrained by structural design limitations, fragmented implementation, and weak portfolio-level coherence. As a result, its contribution is significant but uneven, driven primarily by a limited number of well-established outputs by different components rather than by the project as a fully integrated system.

6. The project is firmly anchored in UNEP's mandate to strengthen the science–policy interface and to keep the global environment under review. It is strongly aligned with successive MTS and POW, as well as with major global frameworks such as the Paris Agreement and the Sustainable Development Goals. Several outputs -notably the

[13] The Project "Assessing key environmental issues and providing focused outlooks to strengthen science-based policy and decision making" (SMA ID 45773 & 180471) was formally known as Project A3: Thematic Assessments, in Project Preparation Phase [PPP] document, previously conceptualized in the 2018-2021 SP7 Portfolio of Project; PIMS code 01979 - 05-09-2018.
[14] Evaluation Criteria: (1) Strategic Relevance, including Complementarity; (2) Quality of Project Design; (3) Nature of External Context; (4) Effectiveness (incl. availability of outputs; achievement of outcomes and likelihood of impact); (5) Financial Management; (6) Efficiency; (7) Monitoring and Reporting; (8) Sustainability and (9) Factors Affecting Project Performance and Cross-Cutting Issues.
[15] The six-point scale is as follows: Highly Satisfactory (HS); Satisfactory (S); Moderately Satisfactory (MS); Moderately Unsatisfactory (MU); Unsatisfactory (U); Highly Unsatisfactory (HU). Sustainability and Likelihood of Impact are rated from Highly Likely (HL) down to Highly Unlikely (HU) and Nature of External Context is rated from Highly Favourable (HF) to Highly Unfavourable (HU). The ratings against each criterion are 'weighted' to derive the Overall Project Performance Rating. The greatest weight is placed on the achievement of outcomes, followed by dimensions of sustainability.

Emissions Gap Report (EGR), Adaptation Gap Report (AGR) and the Frontiers series- are widely perceived as core UNEP normative products. However, this alignment remains largely structural. The project functions largely as a vehicle for delivering existing UNEP functions rather than as a clearly differentiated intervention. The 2023 revision reinforced alignment with corporate frameworks but did not substantially strengthen the project's strategic focus or internal coherence.

7. Project A3 operated as an aggregation of largely independent components rather than as a coherent programme. While individual outputs of multiple components are often highly relevant and well aligned with policy processes, complementarities and synergies across components were not systematically developed. Coordination mechanisms remained limited, and project-level governance arrangements were not effectively operationalised. Funding and implementation largely followed parallel, component-driven trajectories shaped by donor priorities. As a result, the project reinforced UNEP's role through a set of influential outputs but did not significantly strengthen its assessment function as an integrated system.

8. Effectiveness is uneven across the portfolio. A limited number of institutionalised outputs -particularly the EGR, AGR and the Frontiers series- demonstrate strong and consistent performance, supported by regular production cycles, scientific credibility, and alignment with global policy processes. In the case of Frontiers, these strengths were reflected in the series' ability to translate emerging scientific issues into policy-relevant and widely usable assessment outputs, supported by strong editorial coordination, design and delivery. By contrast, other components were only partially delivered or not completed, often due to funding constraints and limited institutional anchoring. This results in a tiered performance pattern in which a small number of flagship outputs account for most of the project's visibility and influence.

9. There is strong evidence of uptake of project outputs, particularly in global policy processes, scientific communities and international organisations. Climate-related assessments are widely used in UNFCCC negotiations, national policy discussions and multilateral finance processes, confirming UNEP's comparative advantage in producing timely, policy-relevant assessments that complement intergovernmental processes such as the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC). However, uptake remains uneven across outputs, regions and user groups. It is strongest at the level of agenda-setting and policy discourse, and more limited in terms of direct application in policy design and implementation. Engagement with private sector actors and financial institutions remains relatively limited. At national level, use is evident but not systematically documented.

10. While reported results suggest high levels of achievement, outcome-level results are only partially demonstrated. Several outcome indicators were not sufficiently specific or measurable to allow credible assessment of outcome achievement, particularly those intended to measure changes in national environmental reporting systems and the strengthening of science–policy mechanisms and processes. In practice, monitoring relied heavily on proxy measures such as citations, references, participation levels, downloads and dissemination metrics. While these measures capture visibility, reach and engagement, they do not adequately demonstrate achievement of the intended outcome indicators or allow robust assessment of changes in country reporting systems, institutional practices, policy implementation or science-policy capacities. Reported achievements may therefore overstate the extent to which intended outcome-level changes were actually realised. The evidence nevertheless supports a clear contribution to agenda-setting, policy discussions and science–policy processes, particularly for flagship assessments

11. The likelihood of sustained impact is assessed as moderate. Institutionalised outputs benefit from strong enabling conditions, including scientific credibility, recurring production cycles and alignment with global policy processes. However, pathways from knowledge production to policy or behavioural change are not systematically developed or supported. Dissemination is often limited to publication and launch events, with insufficient follow-up or sustained engagement. As a result, influence is strongest at the level of policy discourse, with more limited evidence of downstream change.

12. These performance patterns reflect limitations in project design. The project was conceived as a broad portfolio without a clearly articulated portfolio logic or integrated theory of change. It did not define how components were expected to interact or contribute collectively to strengthening UNEP's assessment function. The scope was ambitious relative to available resources, and prioritisation remained limited. Outcome-level indicators were not clearly defined, limiting evaluability from the outset.

13. Financial management was moderately satisfactory overall. The project used UNEP's standard financial procedures, Umoja provided the authoritative record of UNEP-managed expenditure, and no evidence of systemic non-compliance with UNEP or donor requirements was identified. Available resources recorded in Umoja were largely absorbed. Financial data should therefore be interpreted on the understanding that Umoja records resources under UNEP's control, while partner co-financing and some in-kind contributions form part of the broader project resource envelope without being recorded as UNEP expenditure. This distinction is consistent with International Public Sector Accounting Standards (IPSAS) requirements and is important when comparing the revised budget, secured resources and reported expenditure. Financial information was adequate for donor reporting, agreement-level accountability and internal project management, but was not available to the evaluation in a single consolidated project-level format linking UNEP-managed expenditure, partner co-financing, in-kind contributions, components, outputs and outcomes. This limited project-level consolidation, traceability, evaluability and strategic financial analysis, without indicating systemic financial non-compliance. Donor-level financial reporting and closure processes were still ongoing after operational completion, in line with UNEP's normal closure timeline.

14. Monitoring and reporting systems ensured compliance with UNEP requirements but had limited utility for adaptive management and strategic decision-making. Reporting was often perceived as compliance-driven, resource-intensive and not always well adapted to the diverse nature of component activities. Monitoring relied substantially on proxy or indicative information, including citations, references, downloads, participation and dissemination metrics. These data provided useful evidence of reach and visibility but only partially captured substantive achievements, institutional uptake, sustained use or outcome-level change.

15. Sustainability is uneven and depends largely on the degree of institutionalisation of individual outputs. Flagship assessments such as the EGR and AGR are well embedded within UNEP's mandate and global policy processes and are likely to continue. Other components remain more dependent on project-based funding, partner contributions or less stable institutional arrangements. At portfolio level, the absence of a consolidated successor framework, post-project financing strategy or mechanism for sustaining synergies limits sustainability beyond individual outputs.

16. Stakeholder engagement is a clear strength, particularly in well-established assessment processes and partnerships. However, engagement remains uneven and largely component-driven. Communication and visibility show a strong contrast between highly visible flagship outputs and less visible products that rely on passive dissemination. The

absence of a coordinated communication strategy limits the overall reach and impact of the portfolio. Cross-cutting issues such as gender equality, human rights and private sector engagement were partially addressed at output level but not systematically embedded in project design or monitoring. The evaluation did not identify clear evidence of unintended negative effects on disadvantaged or marginalised groups, but the project was not designed or monitored in a way that systematically captured differentiated effects by gender, vulnerability, disability or marginalisation.

17. Overall, the project confirms UNEP's ability to deliver high-quality and influential environmental assessments but also highlights a central limitation: the absence of a sufficiently integrated, strategically managed and outcome-oriented approach to its assessment function.

Table 2: Summary of project ratings

Criterion	Rating
Strategic Relevance	Highly Satisfactory
Quality of Project Design	Moderately Satisfactory
Nature of External Context	Moderately Unfavourable
Effectiveness	Moderately Satisfactory
Financial Management	Moderately Satisfactory
Efficiency	Moderately Satisfactory
Monitoring and Reporting	Moderately Unsatisfactory
Sustainability	Moderately Likely
Factors Affecting Performance	Moderately Satisfactory
Overall Project Performance Rating	Moderately Satisfactory

Conclusions summary

18. Project A3 performed at a moderately satisfactory level, combining strong achievements in a limited number of institutionalised outputs with structural shortcomings affecting coherence, efficiency, financial predictability and sustainability across the broader portfolio.

19. The project delivered a substantial body of environmental assessments and reinforced UNEP's role as a provider of high-value global environmental knowledge. Its most significant results are concentrated in flagship outputs -particularly the Emissions Gap Report and Adaptation Gap Report- which are firmly embedded in global policy processes and widely used by governments, international organisations and financial institutions.

20. UNEP's ability to produce timely, policy-relevant assessments aligned with policy cycles constitutes a clear comparative advantage, complementing intergovernmental processes and supporting agenda-setting and policy influence.

21. At the same time, the absence of a coherent portfolio approach limited the project's overall added value. The project functioned as an aggregation of largely independent components, with limited integration, coordination and results measurement at portfolio level.

22. Outcome-level effectiveness was therefore uneven. While selected outputs achieved strong uptake and influence, most outputs showed more limited visibility and evidence of

use. Linkages to UNEP programming and national-level processes remained limited and largely ad hoc.

23. Efficiency gains at component level were offset by structural inefficiencies at portfolio level. Financial management was functional at the level of transaction processing, donor reporting and agreement-level accountability, and Umoja/IPMR provided official financial data for UNEP-managed resources. However, the umbrella funding architecture, uneven resourcing across components and separation between UNEP-managed expenditure, partner co-financing and in-kind contributions limited consolidated project-level financial analysis and made it difficult for the evaluation to link financial inputs systematically to outputs, outcomes and component-level performance. Sustainability is similarly uneven, with strong prospects for institutionalised outputs and more uncertain outlooks for others.

24. Overall, the project confirms the relevance and value of UNEP's assessment function, while highlighting the limitations of managing it through a loosely structured umbrella project. Future efforts would benefit from a more coherent, system-oriented approach that strengthens integration, strategic alignment and the translation of knowledge into policy and implementation.

25. The evaluation Terms of Reference included a set of strategic questions of interest to UNEP.

- *To what extent have the project design and implementation structure supported the achievement of project results?* The project's umbrella structure provided flexibility and facilitated resource mobilisation across a diverse portfolio of assessment activities. However, components largely operated independently, with limited strategic integration, coordination or operational synergies across the portfolio. As a result, the structure only partially strengthened overall effectiveness beyond the achievements of individual components.
- *To what extent has the project been able to ensure adequate and predictable funding to deliver strategically important knowledge products?* The project successfully mobilised substantial cash and in-kind resources over its lifetime and sustained several strategically important flagship outputs, particularly through extra-budgetary funding. Funding nevertheless remained uneven, donor-driven and insufficiently predictable across components, resulting in significant differences in resourcing levels and continuity across the portfolio. The funding model proved effective for sustaining priority outputs but did not provide a balanced or stable basis for the broader assessment portfolio or a consolidated post-project financing strategy.
- *What are the long-lasting results of the project components that UNEP should consider continuing or scaling up?* The most significant and lasting results are associated with institutionalised flagship assessments, notably the Emissions Gap Report and Adaptation Gap Report, which are strongly embedded in global policy processes and widely recognised for their scientific credibility and policy relevance. Other components contributed to agenda-setting, emerging issue identification and knowledge exchange, though with more variable long-term influence and sustainability. While the project strengthened UNEP's experience and capacity in environmental assessment production, these gains were not systematically consolidated into a more coherent institutional assessment system.
- *What lessons have emerged that UNEP should adopt or avoid in future programming?* Key lessons include the need for a clearer portfolio logic when grouping diverse components under a single project framework, more predictable and strategically allocated funding, and monitoring systems focused more strongly on uptake, influence and use rather than outputs alone. The evaluation also highlights the

importance of stronger coherence, prioritisation and institutional learning across UNEP's assessment portfolio. Greater attention to communication, stakeholder engagement and links to implementation processes is needed to strengthen the practical uptake and long-term influence of UNEP's science-policy work.

Lessons Learned

26. **Lesson 1:** Cross-cutting science–policy initiatives require explicit institutional mandates and dedicated resourcing to achieve systemic coherence and effective monitoring.

27. **Lesson 2:** Umbrella project structures offer administrative flexibility but risk limiting strategic coherence and impact.

28. **Lesson 3:** Institutional anchoring, governance arrangements and alignment with policy processes are the primary determinants of uptake of scientific assessments, not technical quality alone.

29. **Lesson 4:** Monitoring systems for knowledge-based interventions must go beyond proxy indicators and be explicitly designed to capture different types and levels of use and influence.

30. **Lesson 5:** Integrating gender equality and human rights in environmental assessments requires explicit analytical frameworks and cannot rely solely on institutional quality assurance processes.

Recommendations

31. **Recommendation 1:** Strengthen coordination, strategic positioning and internal learning across UNEP's assessment function.

32. **Recommendation 2:** Develop a more structured and predictable approach to resourcing UNEP's assessment function.

33. **Recommendation 3:** Strengthen the uptake and use of assessments in UNEP programming and policy processes.

34. **Recommendation 4:** Strengthen structured stakeholder engagement and co-production models across the assessment lifecycle.

35. **Recommendation 5:** Strengthen monitoring systems to better capture uptake, use and results of UNEP assessments.

36. **Recommendation 6:** Operationalise gender equality, human rights and inclusion in UNEP environmental assessments.

1 THE PROJECT

1.1 Context

1.1.1 Intervention context

38. The project "Assessing key environmental issues and providing focused outlooks to strengthen science-based policy and decision making" (SMA IDs 45773 and 180471) was designed to address persistent gaps in the availability, accessibility and use of high-quality, policy-relevant environmental data, assessments and early-warning information by governments and other stakeholders. Despite increasing demand for science-based evidence to inform environmental decision-making, many stakeholders continue to face limitations in access to robust assessments, harmonised data, and credible analysis capable of supporting policy formulation, implementation and monitoring. These challenges undermine the effectiveness of the science-policy interface and constrain informed responses to emerging and complex environmental issues.

39. In response, the project sought to strengthen the science-policy interface by producing and disseminating open-access global and regional environmental assessments, outlooks and early-warning products, while fostering participatory processes, communities of practice and institutional capacity development. The intervention was justified by explicit requests from governments and stakeholders for authoritative, integrated and policy-relevant environmental knowledge across a range of thematic areas.

40. The project had a global and multi-regional scope, with activities and products covering Africa, Asia-Pacific, Europe, Latin America and the Caribbean, North America, West Asia, and global processes. Geographic coverage varied by component and included both global assessments (e.g. Frontiers, Gap Reports, World Oceans Assessment) and region-specific assessments and capacity-building activities.

1.1.2 Institutional context

41. The project was managed by the Thematic Assessment Unit within the Scientific Assessment Branch of UNEP's Early Warning and Assessment Division (formerly the Science Division). It was implemented under Subprogramme 7: Environment under Review (2018-2021) and subsequently under the Science-Policy Subprogramme of UNEP's Medium-Term Strategies 2022-2025, aligned with successive Programmes of Work (PoW). The overall project did not have a single Steering Committee; several components (e.g., gap reports/ World Adaptation Science Programme (WASP)) had their own governance bodies.

42. The project was implemented through a complex institutional arrangement involving multiple UNEP divisions and regional offices, and a wide range of implementing and collaborating partners, including UN agencies, UNEP collaborating centres, research institutions, international and national NGOs, and expert networks. Key partners included, inter alia, Joint Group of Experts on the Scientific Aspects of Marine Environmental Protection (GESAMP), UN Environment Programme Copenhagen Climate Centre (UNEP-CCC), UN Office for Project Services (UNOPS), Stockholm Environment Institute (SEI), CONCITO, Ouranos, and other scientific and policy institutions contributing to specific assessment components.

43. The project was approved on 18 January 2019 and implemented from January 2019 to December 2025, following a two-year extension approved in December 2023. The project builds on a prior Project Preparation Phase (2017-2018) and constitutes a single evaluand covering both SMA IDs, with the latter reflecting the approved project extension. The project underwent a management-led Mid Term Review(MTR) of the first five years of implementation, covering the period January 2019 - December 2023.

44. The total planned budget at approval amounted to approximately USD 11.0 million, increasing to an estimated USD 18.9 million following the 2023 revision, with a secured budget of approximately USD 10.1 million as of September 2025.

1.2 Results Framework

45. The project was designed to contribute to UNEP's Subprogramme 7: *Environment under Review* (2018-2021), and subsequently to the *Science-Policy Subprogramme* under the 2022-2025 Medium-Term Strategy.

46. The original Project Document (PRODOC, 2019) presented a results framework structured around a **project objective**, a single **project outcome**, and five **outputs (A-E)**. The logframe did not formally include a distinct impact, development outcome, or intermediate state tier. The objective and outcome were aligned with SP7 Expected Accomplishment (a): that governments and stakeholders use quality open-access environmental data and analyses to strengthen the science-policy interface and foster policy action.

47. The **project objective**, as stated in the PRODOC and maintained in the 2023 revision, is:

    Governments and other stakeholders increasingly use high-quality open-access assessment information and knowledge on environmental issues for decision-making to inform policies, practices, solutions, and actions to tackle environmental issues and identify emerging issues.

48. The **project outcome** mirrors this formulation and specifies use by global and regional forums, governments and other stakeholders for decision-making related to environmental challenges and emerging issues.

49. The **outputs** were grouped under five output categories (A-E), covering the production and dissemination of environmental assessments, standards and information systems, early warning reports, capacity-building activities, and communities of practice. These outputs were operationalised through seven thematic components:

    - **World Oceans Assessment (WOA)**: This component aimed to strengthen the scientific basis for global ocean governance by supporting assessments related to marine environmental conditions, pressures and trends. It contributed to UNEP's engagement in global ocean assessment processes and promoted the use of integrated marine environmental information to inform international policy discussions and sustainable ocean management.
    - **Belt and Road Environmental Outlook (BREO)**: The BREO component aimed to assess environmental risks, trends and sustainability challenges associated with the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI). It sought to provide evidence-based analysis and policy guidance to support greener infrastructure development, sustainable investment and environmental cooperation among participating countries.
    - **Atlas on African Rangelands and Grasslands and African Deserts Atlas**: This component aimed to produce spatially-based assessments and atlases documenting

the condition, trends and pressures affecting African rangelands, grasslands and desert ecosystems. The atlases were intended to support awareness, policy dialogue and sustainable land management by providing accessible environmental information and visual analysis.

- **World Water Quality Assessment (WWQA)**: The WWQA component aimed to strengthen global understanding of freshwater quality trends and challenges through the development of a World Water Quality Assessment and related knowledge products. It also sought to improve collaboration, data sharing and monitoring capacities through the World Water Quality Alliance and associated partnerships.
- **Assessment of Marine Plastic Pollution from Asian Coasts (AMPPAC)**: This component focused on assessing the sources, pathways and impacts of marine plastic pollution in the Asia-Pacific region. It aimed to strengthen the evidence base for regional and national policy responses by producing scientific assessments and promoting awareness of the environmental and health implications of marine litter and plastic pollution.
- **Frontiers Report - Emerging Issues of Environmental Concern**: The Frontiers component aimed to identify and communicate emerging environmental issues with potential global significance. Through accessible, science-based reports, it sought to raise awareness among policymakers and the wider public about emerging risks, innovative solutions and new areas requiring policy attention.
- **Climate Science Products and Services (CLIMASCI, including the Emissions Gap Reports, Adaptation Gap Reports and WASP-related products and services)**: This component aimed to strengthen the science–policy interface on climate change by producing authoritative assessments and science-based policy analysis. Key outputs included the Emissions Gap Report and Adaptation Gap Report, which assess progress, gaps and trends in climate mitigation and adaptation, support international climate negotiations, and inform policymakers, researchers and other stakeholders.

50. The Mid-Term Review (2023) discussed the project's higher-level intended results and articulated additional levels (i.e. impact, development outcome and immediate outcome) in order to clarify the broader results logic of the intervention. These formulations were presented in the analytical section of the MTR and linked to the reconstructed Theory of Change.

51. However, these additional levels were not incorporated into the formally approved logframe. The 2023 Project Revision and extension maintained the original structure of the results framework (i.e. comprising a project objective, a single project outcome, and Outputs A-E) while updating duration, milestones, indicators and funding parameters. The impact statement articulated in the MTR therefore represents an analytical clarification of the project's intended long-term contribution rather than a formally adopted results level within the approved results framework.

Table 3: Summary of project's latest approved results framework

Results Level	Results Statement
Project objective	Governments and other stakeholders increasingly use high-quality open-access assessment information and knowledge on environmental issues for decision-making to inform policies, practices, solutions, and actions to tackle environmental issues and identify emerging issues.
Project outcome	Global/regional forums, Governments and other stakeholders increasingly use open-access assessment information and knowledge on environmental issues for decision-making to inform development and implementation of

Results Level	Results Statement
	policies, practices, solutions, and actions to tackle environmental issues, and identify emerging issues.
Outputs	**Output A**: Environmental Assessments publications, technical and scientific services, and data, made accessible and available to member states and scientific community in support of SDG indicator measurements.
	Output B: Standards and principles for environmental information systems and data for assessments (WOA, BREO, AARG-ADA, WWQA) provided and their related web-based knowledge platforms being used.
	Output C: Technical early warning information provided to countries and institutions on emerging issues through reports and forums (Frontiers publication).
	Output D: Built capacity in countries and institutions to further produce and improve scientific assessment and early warning information and to use online platforms and data.
	Output E: Participatory Communities of Practices formed and operational for the following assessments: WOA, BREO, AARGADA.

(sources: PRODOC, 2019; MTR, 2023)

1.3 Project Implementation Structure and Partners

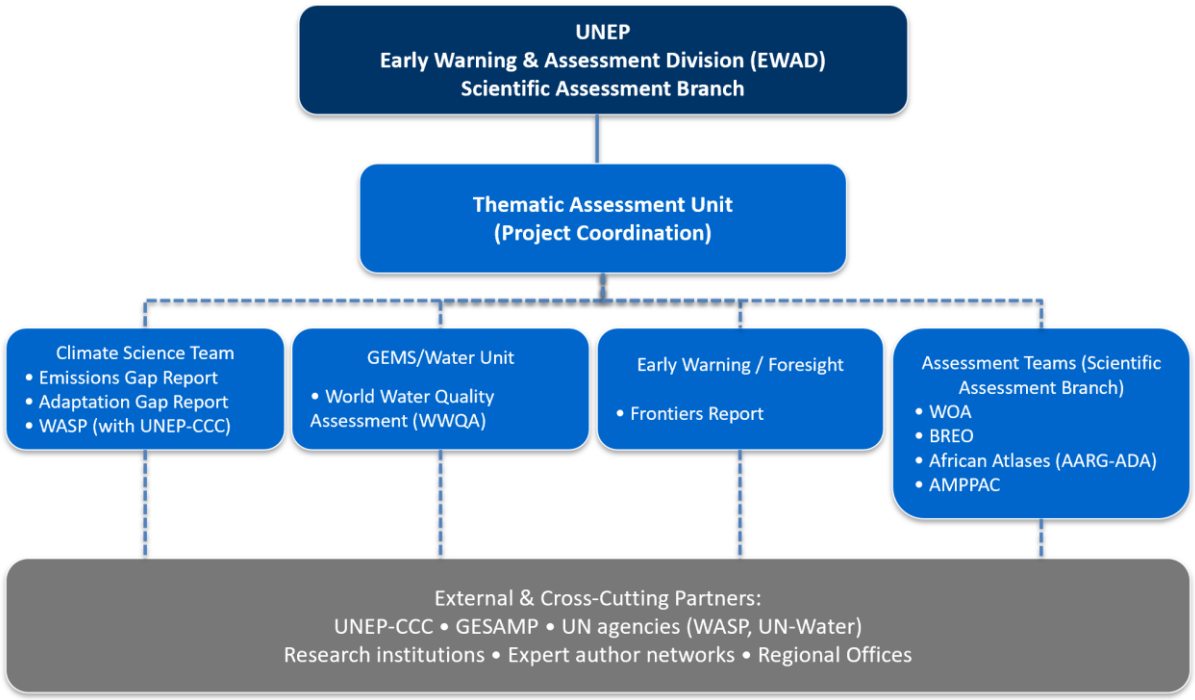
52. Project A3 was implemented by the UNEP and institutionally anchored within the **EWAD**. Within EWAD, the project was housed in the **Scientific Assessment Branch**, with overall coordination provided by the **Thematic Assessment Unit**, which ensured strategic alignment, quality assurance and consolidated reporting across components.

53. The project followed a **portfolio-based implementation model**, whereby individual assessment components were anchored in different UNEP technical teams and regional offices. The **World Water Quality Assessment** was institutionally linked to the **GEMS/Water Unit**; the **Frontiers Report** was anchored within the **early warning and foresight function**; and the Climate Science Products and Services component (CLIMASCI, including the **Emissions Gap Report, Adaptation Gap Report and the World Adaptation Science Programme** - WASP) was led by the **climate science team** within EWAD, in close collaboration with the **UNEP Copenhagen Climate Centre** (UNEP-CCC). The **African Atlases** and the **Assessment of Marine Plastic Pollution from Asian Coasts** were coordinated by the **UNEP Regional Office for Africa** and the U**NEP Regional Office for Asia and the Pacific**, respectively, with support from the EWAD/Thematic Assessment Unit where relevant. Other components, including the **World Oceans Assessment** and the Belt and Road Environmental Outlook, involved collaboration between relevant UNEP technical teams, regional offices and external partners.

54. While the original Project Document envisaged a Project Steering Committee as a governance mechanism, review of progress reports, the Project Revision and the Mid-Term Review did not identify evidence of a single project-wide steering body having been convened. Instead, governance was exercised through component-specific steering committees, advisory groups and expert networks. For example, the climate assessments (EGR and AGR) operate through dedicated steering committees and global author teams; the World Water Quality Assessment functions under the multi-stakeholder World Water Quality Alliance, including its Strategic and Technical Advisory Committees and thematic workstreams; and the World Oceans Assessment interfaces with the UN Regular Process structures. The project therefore operated under a decentralized governance model, with overall strategic oversight embedded within EWAD management rather than through a formal portfolio-level steering mechanism.

55. Delivery relied extensively on collaboration with external partners. Key partners included intergovernmental scientific bodies (e.g., GESAMP), UN agencies (including WASP member agencies and UN-Water partners), UNEP collaborating centres (notably UNEP-CCC), research institutions (e.g., Stockholm Environment Institute, Ouranos and others), international and national NGOs, expert author groups and peer reviewers. These partners contributed technical expertise, modelling and scenario analysis, data provision, peer review, outreach and capacity-building. The resulting structure can be characterised as a central coordinating hub within EWAD supported by distributed thematic leadership and broad scientific networks.

Figure 1: Organigram of the project with key project stakeholders



(Source: Evaluation reconstruction based on the Project Document governance and implementation arrangements, updated with evidence from the MTR, TOR and interviews.)

** Solid line: Institutional anchor, Dotted lines: Functional collaboration*

1.4 Stakeholders

56. The ProDoc presents a structured stakeholder analysis based on power and interest. Governments are identified as the primary **Type A stakeholders (high power / high interest)** and constitute the main intended users and key change agents. Governments provide political mandate, strategic direction and, in some cases, financial support. They are expected to use project outputs, particularly global and regional environmental assessments, to inform policy enactment, environmental management strategies and SDG implementation.

57. United Nations specialised agencies are also classified as high-power stakeholders. They contribute technical expertise, data, research networks and credibility to assessment processes, while also using outputs to inform intergovernmental deliberations and thematic initiatives. Their role is both contributory and amplificatory.

58. Academia and research institutions are identified as key technical contributors, providing scientific data, modelling, peer review and thematic expertise. Their involvement strengthens methodological rigour and enhances confidence among policy-makers. Civil

society organisations (including environmental NGOs and INGOs) are recognised as important knowledge intermediaries and dissemination actors. The ProDoc notes their capacity to influence debate and promote particular environmental priorities, while also strengthening trust between governments and non-state actors through joint engagement.

59. Other UNEP entities (e.g., divisions and regional offices) are identified as internal stakeholders providing quality assurance, sectoral expertise and political alignment. Their ownership and substantive input are considered important for ensuring credibility and institutional coherence.

60. Private sector actors are categorised as **Type B stakeholders (high power / lower interest)**, though the ProDoc recognises that in certain thematic areas -particularly climate-related assessments- the private sector may also function as high-interest actors through data provision platforms and technological contributions.

61. The ProDoc does not identify specific Type C or Type D stakeholder groups. While broader societal groups, including women and local communities, are acknowledged as ultimate beneficiaries and the importance of gender-disaggregated data is mentioned, the stakeholder analysis remains largely institutional and expert-oriented. Engagement of marginalised groups, including persons living with disabilities, is not explicitly operationalised in the project design and is primarily indirect, mediated through governmental and civil society actors. Civil society organisations, NGOs and other non-state actors are mainly positioned as knowledge-sharing, advocacy and dissemination partners rather than decision-making actors, while the general public and media are treated largely as indirect beneficiaries and end users of project outputs.

1.5 Changes in Design during Implementation

62. The project was approved in January 2019 with an initial implementation period to December 2023 and a planned budget of approximately USD 11 million. During implementation, no formal revision of the overall project objective was recorded but several adjustments affected scope, outputs and institutional arrangements. In 2020-2022, the COVID-19 pandemic significantly altered delivery modalities, with workshops, expert meetings and consultations (notably under WOA-GESAMP and WWQA) shifting to virtual formats. While outputs remained formally unchanged, implementation costs and engagement modalities were adjusted accordingly. Recurrent funding constraints across several components (including EGR, AGR, WASP and WOA-GESAMP) required phased implementation, continuous resource mobilisation and greater reliance on multi-year financing arrangements. In some cases, this affected the timing, scale or frequency of planned activities, including consultations, outreach activities and production cycles.

63. From 2022 onwards, elements of the original output structure were repositioned or narrowed. The WWQA was formally moved to another project, and AMPPAC-related reporting was completed and no longer continued under A3. BREO-related outputs ceased to be substantively reported in later cycles, reflecting de facto discontinuation. In parallel, institutional restructuring affected implementation arrangements: the transition of the UNEP DTU Partnership to the UNEP-CCC under United Nations Office for Project Services (UNOPS) influenced operational procedures for the climate gap reports, and in 2024 the Science-Policy-Business Forum was repositioned institutionally. In December 2023, a two-year extension to December 2025 was approved (SMA 180471), increasing the overall budget envelope to approximately USD 18.9 million, although secured funding remained lower. Overall, while the project's strategic objective remained stable, its output configuration and institutional anchoring evolved over time through portfolio restructuring,

funding variability and organisational adjustments rather than through formal revisions to the results framework.

1.6 Project Financing

64. Project A3 was financed through a combination of core UNEP resources and earmarked extra-budgetary contributions. Core funding was provided through the Environment Fund, complemented by contributions from the Regular Budget. In addition, a significant share of project resources was mobilised through bilateral donor agreements and contributions from international partners, reflecting the project's reliance on a diversified and largely earmarked funding base.

65. The project was subject to a formal revision in 2023, which constituted an important adjustment in its financing and implementation framework. The revision extended the project duration to December 2025, incorporated additional funding mobilised during implementation, and aligned the project with UNEP's Medium-Term Strategy 2022–2025 and corresponding Programme of Work. It also introduced updated milestones and indicators, reflecting the continued expansion and evolution of project activities.

66. Extra-budgetary funding was provided by a wide range of government partners and institutions, including Belgium, China, ClimateWorks Foundation, Finland/Nordic Council, Ireland, the Netherlands, Norway, Spain, Sweden/Sida, Switzerland, the World Meteorological Organization (WMO), and a group of supporting partners. This diversity of funding sources reflected broad partner interest in UNEP's science-policy work and helped sustain several components. Financially, the project was managed through UNEP's Umoja/IPMR structure, with funding sources linked to the relevant project coding structure. At the same time, most contributions were earmarked to specific components or outputs, resulting in a funding structure characterised by multiple parallel donor and partner arrangements rather than a fully flexible portfolio-level resource base.

67. Overall, planned funding amounted to approximately USD 10.7 million in cash contributions, of which around USD 10.1 million was secured and USD 10.0 million expended. Following the project revision, the total planned budget increased substantially, reaching approximately USD 18.9 million, reflecting both additional resource mobilisation and the extended implementation period.

68. In-kind contributions, including staff time financed through the Environment Fund, Regular Budget and partner institutions, also supported project implementation, although these were not systematically quantified across all components.

69. In addition to funding channelled through UNEP accounts, the project benefited from co-financing provided directly to collaborating partners. Notable contributions included support from the Helmholtz Centre for Environmental Research and the GEMS/Water Data Centre. These resources were used to deliver project-related outputs but were not managed through UNEP financial systems.

Table 4: Project funding sources[16]

Funding source *All figures as USD*	**Planned funding**	**% of planned funding**	**Secured funding[17]**	**% of secured funding**	**Expended**
Cash					
Funds from the Environment Fund	$3 198 632	29.87%	$3 037 696	30.11%	$2 887 623
Funds from the Regular Budget	$0		$0		$0
Extra-budgetary funding (listed per donor):					
Donor A: Belgium	$180 000	1.68%	$402 954	3.99%	$399 714
Donor B: China		0.00%	$21 639	0.21%	$20 213
Donor C: ClimateWorks Foundation	$100 000	0.93%	$99 010	0.98%	$96 159
Donor D: Finland/Nordic Council		0.00%	$42 805	0.42%	$42 804
Donor E: Ireland	$1 186 866	11.08%	$551 263	5.46%	$550 763
Donor F: Netherlands	$269 210	2.51%	$417 386	4.14%	$365 631
Donor G: Norway	$1 404 637	13.12%	$1 405 987	13.94%	$1 399 549
Donor H: Spain		0.00%	$105 590	1.05%	$123 227
Donor I: Sweden/Sida	$883 431	8.25%	$897 309	8.89%	$896 131
Donor J: Switzerland	$1 800 000	16.81%	$1 643 364	16.29%	$1 643 364
Donor K: WMO		0.00%	$45 000	0.45%	$43 465
Donor L: Group of Sponsors	$1 684 811	15.73%	$1 418 763	14.06%	$1 404 827
Donor M: UNEP CPL 2025 allocation of Unspent balance from closed grants		0.00%		0.00%	$86 067
Sub-total: Cash contributions	**$10 707 587**		**$10 088 766**		**$9 959 540**
In-kind					
Environment Fund staff-post costs					
Regular Budget staff-post costs					
Extra-budgetary funding for staff-posts (listed per donor)					
Sub-total: In-kind contributions					
Co-financing*					
Co-financing cash contribution					
Co-financing in-kind contribution					
Helmholtz-Centre for Environmental Research	$350,000				
GEMS Water Data Centre	$250,000				
Sub-total: Co-financing contributions					
Total					

(Source: UNEP Project A3)

*Funding from a donor to a partner which is not received into UNEP accounts but is used by a UNEP partner or collaborating centre to deliver the results in a UNEP-approved project.

[16] The data was shared by the UNEP FMO in March 2026, but figures in Table 4 are not the final.
[17] Secured funding refers to received funds and does not include funding commitments not yet realised.

2 EVALUATION METHODS

2.1 UNEP's Evaluation Approach

70. In line with the UNEP Evaluation Policy and the UNEP Programme and Project Management Manual, this Terminal Evaluation was undertaken at operational completion of the project to assess performance (in terms of relevance, effectiveness and efficiency), and to determine outcomes and the likelihood of impact (actual and potential), including their sustainability.

71. 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, lessons learned and recommendations. The principal intended audiences are UNEP senior management, the EWAD and associated units responsible for the project components, the Science-Policy Subprogramme, the UNEP Evaluation Office, and key partners contributing to the delivery of the assessment products (e.g. collaborating centres, UN agencies and technical partners).

72. In line with the UNEP Evaluation Policy and the UNEP Programme Manual, the evaluation has been carried out using a set of 9 commonly applied evaluation criteria which include: (1) Strategic Relevance , (2) Quality of Project Design, (3) Nature of External Context, (4) Effectiveness (incl. availability of outputs; achievement of outcomes and likelihood of impact), (5) Financial Management, (6) Efficiency, (7) Monitoring and Reporting, (8) Sustainability and (9) Factors Affecting Project Performance and Cross-Cutting Issues (see Annex II: Evaluation Framework for more details on each evaluation criterion).

73. Most criteria are rated on a six-point scale: Highly Satisfactory (HS), Satisfactory (S), Moderately Satisfactory (MS), Moderately Unsatisfactory (MU), Unsatisfactory (U), and Highly Unsatisfactory (HU). Sustainability and Likelihood of Impact are rated from Highly Likely (HL) to Highly Unlikely (HU), while Nature of the External Context is rated from Highly Favourable (HF) to Highly Unfavourable (HU). The achievement of outcomes carries the greatest weight in determining the Overall Project Performance Rating, followed by sustainability dimensions.

74. The evaluation assessed all available evidence against UNEP's detailed rating matrices to derive performance ratings.

75. In addition to the standard evaluation criteria, the evaluation addressed strategic questions identified in the Terms of Reference, particularly concerning:

- The extent to which the project design and multi-component implementation structure supported the achievement of results;
- The effectiveness of the science-policy interface and the extent to which assessment products influenced policy processes and stakeholder action;
- The adequacy and predictability of funding arrangements, particularly for institutional knowledge products such as the Gap Reports;
- The coherence, complementarity and added value of UNEP as a knowledge broker and convener across thematic components;
- The long-lasting results and institutional contributions of project components, including lessons for future institutional strategy;
- The specific contribution, sustainability and lessons emerging from the SPBF multi-stakeholder model (case study).

76. The evaluation adopted a participatory and theory-based approach. During the inception phase, the project's Theory of Change (ToC) was reconstructed and refined through consultations with the project team. The ToC clarifies causal pathways linking outputs (assessments, data products, early warning services, participatory processes and capacity-building) to outcomes (increased use of open-access environmental assessment information) and longer-term impact (integration of environmental information into cross-sectoral policy processes in support of sustainable development). The ToC guided data collection, analysis and interpretation of findings.

77. To deepen the assessment of how project outputs translate into policy dialogue and influence, the evaluation incorporated a case study approach focusing on the Science-Policy-Business Forum (SPBF). The SPBF was selected as an illustrative lens through which to examine the operationalisation, limits and sustainability of science-policy-business engagement within UNEP, including the extent to which such a platform could support the uptake of assessment findings in multi-stakeholder policy spaces.

2.2 Data Collection

2.2.1 Primary data sources

78. Primary data were collected through:

- **Semi-structured interviews** with UNEP staff (project management, component leads, SPBF-related and technical officers), regional office representative, collaborating partners, advisory body members, and selected government and stakeholder representatives (Annex II). Informants (n=29) were selected purposively to ensure representation across:
  - Different project components;
  - UNEP divisions and regional offices;
  - Partner institutions;
  - Geographic regions;
  - Gender[18] and institutional roles (technical, policy and management).

- **An online survey** purposively targeting potential users (i.e. UNFCCC Focal Points) and contributors to as well as potential users of selected Project A3's Knowledge Products (i.e. Frontiers Report, Emissions Gap Report, Adaptation Gap Report, World Water Quality Alliance outputs)[19]. The survey was received by 115 contact persons and remained open for 3.5 weeks. The questionnaire was available in English. To mitigate non-response, three communications were issued: (i) a launch message; (ii) a reminder; and (iii) an extension notice. Findings from the survey (Annex VI) have been interpreted with caution given the limited number of responses (n=21) and potential self-selection bias. In addition, the respondent group was composed largely of individuals who had contributed to, or were closely engaged with, UNEP assessment and early-warning outputs. As a result, the survey provides a strong indication of perceived usefulness, relevance and scientific credibility among

[18] Gender was considered as one of the selection criteria for interviewees in order to ensure reasonably balanced representation of women and men across the sample, taking into account the composition of project teams, partner institutions and stakeholder groups. No specific gender-based sampling methodology was applied beyond seeking balanced representation where feasible.
[19] A total of 131 stakeholders were contacted, including 29 UNFCCC focal points, 27 contributors to the Emissions Gap Report, 23 to the Adaptation Gap Report, 27 to the Frontiers Report, and 25 to the World Water Quality Alliance. For the Emissions Gap Report, all available contact email addresses were used, while for the other products, contact persons were randomly selected from available lists. In total, 16 email addresses bounced back.

engaged stakeholders, but offers more limited insight into the extent of uptake and institutionalisation across the broader policy community, particularly at national level. The survey results have been used primarily to illustrate trends and complement qualitative evidence. Survey responses reflect the perceptions of participants and are not statistically generalisable to the entire user community.

- **A case study of the Science-Policy-Business Forum (SPBF)**, based on document review and interviews. The case study was designed to explore intermediate change processes such as agenda-setting, cross-sectoral dialogue, partnership formation, knowledge brokering and institutional embedding rather than direct policy attribution. The SPBF case study involved:
  - Review of SPBF concept notes, agendas and background documentation;
  - Analysis of how assessment outputs were integrated into SPBF sessions;
  - Examination of synthesis documents and publicly available outputs and its contribution to the A3 project;
  - Interviews with UNEP staff and selected stakeholders involved in SPBF sessions.

79. Given the global scope and normative nature of the project, no field missions were undertaken. Data collection was conducted remotely using virtual platforms.

Table 5: Evaluation respondents and field visits

Stakeholders - Individuals			**A. Total number involved (M/F)**	**B. Number contacted (M/F)**	**Sample size (% B/A)[20]**	**C. Total number responded Total (M/F)**	**Response rate (% C/B)[21]**
Project Team	**Project Team** (with management responsibilities e.g. Project Management Unit)	Implementing agency	~30 (15M / 15F)	24 (11M/13F)	76%	18 (6M/12F)	74%
Beneficiaries	**Direct Beneficiaries:** (e.g. duty bearers, gatekeepers, training participants, etc.) **Indirect Beneficiaries:** (e.g. household members, civil society representatives, group members, etc.)		N/A (global, unknown)	11 115 (survey)	N/A	5 21 (survey)	45% 18% (survey)
Stakeholders - Entities			**A. Total number involved**	**B. Number contacted**	**Sample size (% B/A)[22]**	**C. Total number responded**	**Response rate (% C/B)[23]**
Partner	**Project implementing/ executing partners** (receiving project funds)		~30 entities	1	N/A	1	100%
	Project collaborating/ contributing partners[24] (not receiving project fund)		~15–20 entities	13	N/A	5	38%

2.2.2 Strategies for inclusivity

[20] Percentage of people involved in the project who were contacted.
[21] Percentage of people contacted who responded.
[22] Percentage of entities involved in the project who were contacted.
[23] Percentage of entities contacted who responded.
[24] Contributing partners may be providing resources as either cash or in-kind inputs (e.g. staff time, office space etc.).

80. The evaluation sought to ensure inclusive participation by:

- Consulting stakeholders across all UNEP regions;
- Ensuring gender-balanced outreach in interviews and survey dissemination;
- Including both producers and users of assessment products;
- Actively inviting divergent or critical perspectives.

81. Given the knowledge-based nature of the project, engagement with marginalised or under-represented groups occurred primarily through institutional and network representatives rather than through direct beneficiary interviews.

2.2.3 Secondary data sources

82. The evaluation reviewed extensive **documentation**, including:

- The original Project Document (ProDoc) and approved revision;
- Annual progress and financial reports (2019-2025);
- The Mid-Term Review (2024);
- Annual work plans and budgets;
- Governance documentation for relevant components;
- UNEP Medium-Term Strategies (2018-2021; 2022-2025) and Programmes of Work;
- Project outputs;
- Selected policy documents referencing project outputs;
- Related UNEP evaluation reports such as WWQA TE report.

83. SPBF-related documentation (concept notes, session documentation and synthesis outputs) was also reviewed as part of the case study.

84. In addition, the evaluation consulted **web-based publication performance data**, drawing on consolidated datasets provided (i) by the project team[25]; (ii) UNEP's online Knowledge Repository and statistics[26]; (iii) and Overton[27]. These data included:

- Number of downloads per publication (cumulatively);
- Page views and online access statistics;
- Geographic distribution of visitors (where available);
- Number of references in policy relevant documents (source: Overton);
- Comparative performance across publication series.

85. Web analytics were used as proxy indicators of reach, visibility and potential uptake. Where feasible, usage data were triangulated with survey findings, interview evidence and documented references to assessment products in policy processes.

[25] Including *UNEP Outlooks Publications_260209.xlsx*

[26] The evaluation identified 38 Knowledge Products (plus the SPBF) developed under Project A3. These publications were individually and statistically analysed using their metadata set and statistical elements provided by UNEP Knowledge Repository.

[27] Overton is a specialised database and analytical tool that tracks and analyses citations of research and reports in policy documents, helping to assess their uptake and influence in policy-making processes. The evaluation used the number of Overton references to knowledge products delivered by Project A3 rather than formal citation counts. This approach was adopted because policy documents often refer to sources in non-standardised ways, making references a more adequate proxy for policy uptake than formal academic-style citations.

2.3 Data Analysis

86. Data analysis combined qualitative and limited quantitative approaches.

87. Interview transcripts and documentary materials were analysed using AI-enabled structured thematic coding aligned with the reconstructed Theory of Change, the nine UNEP evaluation criteria, and the strategic questions set out in the Terms of Reference. A contribution analysis approach was applied to assess the extent to which project outputs plausibly contributed to observed outcomes, taking into account assumptions, drivers and contextual factors. Contribution analysis was considered more appropriate than attribution analysis given the nature of the project, which operated through complex science–policy influence pathways involving multiple actors, external processes and contextual factors beyond UNEP's direct control. In this context, the evaluation focused on assessing the plausibility and significance of the project's contribution to observed changes rather than attempting to isolate direct causal attribution.

88. Available web-based information (e.g. publication visibility and references in policy documents) was reviewed descriptively to triangulate evidence of outreach and uptake. Due to incomplete datasets, no statistical trend analysis of downloads or comparative performance across components was undertaken. Financial expenditure data reviewed by the evaluation were derived from Umoja, the UN Secretariat's IPSAS-compliant Enterprise Resource Planning system, which is the authoritative source for UNEP-managed financial data. Partner co-financing and in-kind contributions were treated separately, as they are not recorded as UNEP expenditure where UNEP does not control the underlying resources.

89. AI-assisted tools (such as Chat GPT and Claude) were used in a supportive capacity to help organise qualitative data, identify recurring themes and cross-reference documentary evidence. All evaluative judgements, ratings and conclusions were made solely by the evaluator and were based on triangulated evidence.

2.4 Limitations and Mitigation Strategies

90. The evaluation faced several limitations related to data availability, coverage and the nature of the intervention. First, stakeholder consultation was uneven across components. While a substantial number of interviews were conducted, a number of targeted informants did not respond, and some components -such as the Desert Atlas- were less well represented in the interview sample. In addition, the survey response rate was relatively low and uneven across stakeholder groups, limiting the representativeness of quantitative feedback and reducing its analytical weight.

91. Second, the evaluation was constrained by gaps and inconsistencies in documentation. While key project documents, progress reports and financial data were available, documentation on specific components, particularly regarding implementation details, stakeholder engagement and evidence of uptake, was uneven. Monitoring data were also affected by limitations in the results framework, including evolving indicator definitions and limited tracking of outcome-level change, particularly in relation to policy influence and behavioural change.

92. Third, the nature of the intervention posed inherent methodological challenges. As a knowledge-based and normative project, Project A3 primarily aims to influence policy processes indirectly through agenda-setting, scientific framing and institutional uptake. Attribution of results (particularly at outcome and impact levels) is therefore inherently complex. Evidence of influence is often diffuse, non-linear and mediated by external

factors, making it difficult to establish direct causal links between project outputs and downstream changes.

93. To address these limitations, the evaluation adopted a triangulation-based approach, combining multiple sources of evidence including document review, interviews, survey results, and secondary data such as citation analysis and web analytics. Particular attention was given to converging evidence across sources and to identifying consistent patterns of performance rather than relying on single data points. Qualitative evidence from interviews was used to complement and interpret quantitative indicators, especially where monitoring data were incomplete or not fully reliable.

94. The evaluation also applied a differentiated analytical approach across components, recognising variations in data availability and levels of maturity. Findings are therefore presented with appropriate caution, particularly where evidence is limited or uneven. In such cases, the evaluation avoids overgeneralisation and clearly indicates where conclusions are based on partial evidence.

95. Finally, the evaluation explicitly adopts a contribution-oriented perspective, consistent with UNEP evaluation guidance for normative interventions. Rather than seeking to attribute results directly to the project, the analysis focuses on the project's plausible contribution to observed changes, taking into account contextual factors, alternative explanations and the broader ecosystem of actors and processes influencing environmental governance.

2.5 Ethical Considerations

96. Throughout the evaluation process, ethical standards and human rights principles were respected. Participation in interviews and surveys was voluntary. Respondents were informed of the purpose of the evaluation and assured that responses would remain confidential and anonymised in reporting.

97. Data were stored securely and used exclusively for evaluation purposes. Care was taken to ensure balanced representation of perspectives and to avoid attribution of sensitive statements to identifiable individuals. The evaluation adhered to the UN Standards of Conduct and UNEP Evaluation Office guidance.

3 THEORY OF CHANGE AT EVALUATION

3.1 Theory of Change in the Original Project Design

98. The original Project Document (2019) presented a multi-tier Theory of Change structured across five results levels:

- 2030 Impact
- Development Outcome
- Immediate Outcome
- Project Outcome
- Project Outputs (A-E)

99. The highest-level impact was formulated as: *Policy making fully integrates environmental information across sectors resulting in sustainable development with shared prosperity for all within the ecological limits of the planet.*

100. The intermediate tiers described a progression from knowledge production to increased use of environmental assessment information and, ultimately, improved environmental protection and decision-making through a strengthened science-policy interface. The Project Outcome focused on increased use of open-access environmental assessment information by governments and other stakeholders. Outputs covered environmental assessments, standards and data systems, early-warning products, capacity-building and participatory communities of practice.

101. The TOC diagram identified a limited set of drivers and assumptions.

102. While conceptually comprehensive, the monitoring framework was primarily operationalised at output and project outcome level. Higher-level results were not accompanied by explicit indicators or systematic monitoring mechanisms. The 2023 project revision maintained the overall structure. The Mid-Term Review clarified elements of higher-order change, but these clarifications were not formally integrated into the approved results framework.

3.2 Purpose and Scope of the Reconstruction

103. In accordance with UNEP Evaluation Office guidance, a Theory of Change at Evaluation (RToC) was reconstructed to support assessment of effectiveness, sustainability and likelihood of impact. The reconstruction was informed by the original Project Document, the 2023 revision, the Mid-Term Review, progress reports, financial documentation, inception consultations, analytical insights from the SPBF case study, and comments provided by the project team on the first draft presented in the inception report.

104. For evaluative clarity, the reconstructed Theory of Change (Figure 2) adopts a streamlined four-level results hierarchy:

- **Outputs** refer to the production and dissemination of assessments and related services.
- **Outcome** refers to structured institutional uptake and use.
- **Intermediate States** capture systemic embedding and agenda-setting influence.

- **Impact** reflects strengthened evidence-informed environmental governance processes to which the project plausibly contributes.

105. This structure enhances causal clarity and aligns fully with UNEP glossary of result definitions (2023). The reconstruction does not introduce new ambitions. It consolidates the original multi-tier structure into analytically distinct levels of change and clarifies the causal sequencing between them. The reconstruction makes explicit two mechanisms of influence that were implicit in the original design:

- **Agenda-setting and framing influence** - assessments shape how environmental issues are defined, prioritised and debated in governance fora.
- **Institutional anchoring** - assessments and expert mechanisms become embedded within recurring governance processes, platforms and alliances.

106. These mechanisms are essential precursors to longer-term impact in a normative, knowledge-based intervention.

3.3 Results Hierarchy of the Reconstructed Theory of Change

Impact

The original 2030 impact statement is retained as the project's long-term ambition. For evaluation purposes, impact is interpreted as: *Governments and other stakeholders increasingly support environmental sustainability with policies, strategies and practices that are informed by and aligned with scientific environmental assessments and evidence*.

107. This interpretation reflects UNEP's definition of impact as long-term change to which the project plausibly contributes, rather than change directly attributable to the project.

Intermediate States

The reconstruction consolidates the former "Development Outcome" and "Immediate Outcome" into a single systemic level formulating two intermediate states: (i) *UNEP-supported environmental assessments are increasingly referenced, cited and discussed in multilateral negotiations, regional forums and national policy processes; and (ii) UNEP-supported environmental assessments and early-warning knowledge become institutionally anchored and regularly integrated in recurring governance cycles, reporting mechanisms, expert platforms and science-policy processes.*

108. This level captures the project's normative influence, the recurrent institutional uptake of its assessments, and the structuring of science-policy interaction within governance processes.

Outcome

The Project Outcome is retained and clarified as: *Governments and other stakeholders use high-quality, open-access environmental data, and analyses within institutional and decision-support processes.*

109. For analytical purposes, "use" refers to application of assessment findings within institutional deliberation and decision-support processes.

110. Outcome indicators remain unchanged but are interpreted as reflecting institutional uptake rather than direct policy attribution.

Outputs

111. Outputs A-E are retained as originally approved. For analytical clarity, the reconstruction distinguishes more explicitly between the production and dissemination of assessments; the strengthening of standards and data systems; the generation of early-warning and foresight knowledge; capacity-building activities; and participatory and expert engagement mechanisms. No substantive reformulation of the outputs was required.

Table 6: Justification for reformulation of results statements

Formulation in original project document(s)	Formulation for Reconstructed ToC at Evaluation (RTOC)	Justification for Reformulation
(LONG LASTING) IMPACT		
Policy making fully integrates environmental information across sectors resulting in sustainable development with shared prosperity for all within the ecological limits of the planet.	Governments and other stakeholders increasingly support environmental sustainability with policies, strategies and practices that are informed by and aligned with scientific environmental assessments and evidence.	Clarifies plausible contribution rather than direct achievement of sustainable development. Aligns with UNEP impact definition.
DEVELOPMENT OUTCOME	INTERMEDIATE STATES	
Policy making and stakeholder action is guided by environmental data and information including assessments, resulting in the protection of the environment and increased human well-being	UNEP-supported environmental assessments are increasingly referenced, cited and discussed in multilateral negotiations, regional forums and national policy processes.	Consolidates overlapping tiers into a coherent systemic intermediate level. Clarifies causal sequencing.
IMMEDIATE OUTCOME		
Timely, accurate and relevant knowledge informs policy making and stakeholder action to deliver on the environmental dimension of sustainable development	UNEP-supported environmental assessments and early-warning knowledge become institutionally anchored and regularly integrated in recurring governance cycles, reporting mechanisms, expert platforms and science-policy processes.	
PROJECT OUTCOME		
Global/regional forums, Governments open-access assessment information and knowledge on environmental issues for decision-making to inform development and implementation of policies, practices, solutions and actions to tackle environmental issues, and identify emerging issues	Governments and other stakeholders use high-quality, open-access environmental data, and analyses within institutional and decision-support processes.	Retains substance but clarifies that "use" occurs within institutional processes. Avoids referring to systemic-level influence as this is embedded in the higher levels results statements.
OUTPUTS		
Outputs A-E: Environmental assessments; standards and data systems; early-warning knowledge; capacity-building; communities of practice.	Outputs retained as approved, with clarified functional distinctions between production, dissemination, standards strengthening, early warning, capacity-building and participatory engagement.	No substantive change. Clarification enhances analytical precision and alignment with UNEP output definitions.
OUTCOME AND OUTPUT INDICATORS		
Outcome and Output Indicators: Focused on number of countries reporting and number of forums using UNEP data.	Indicators retained; interpretation clarified to reflect institutional uptake and influence rather than direct attribution of policy change.	Ensures coherence between monitoring framework and reconstructed causal logic. No indicator was reformulated.

Drivers and Assumptions

112. The evaluation explicitly distinguishes between external drivers that condition the project's results pathways and internal assumptions that underpin the project's causal logic. This distinction is used analytically to assess contribution, explain performance variations across components, and interpret results in line with UNEP evaluation standards. The original TOC included a limited set of drivers and assumptions. The evaluation systematises and expands them as follows.

Table 7: Justification for reformulation / expansion of drivers and assumptions

Formulation in original project document - 05-09-2018	Formulation for reconstructed ToC at evaluation inception (RTOC)	Justification for Reformulation
DRIVERS		
1. Ability to harness environmental issues in policy relevant socio-economic contexts		
2. Data management capacity		
3. Strong outreach and stakeholder engagement		
	4. Sustained political attention to global and regional environmental issues through multilateral processes (e.g. United Nations Environment Assembly (UNEA), Conference of Parties (COPs), UN Regular Process)	Uptake of assessment outputs depends on alignment with policy windows and multilateral agendas. This driver explains variation in influence across components and time periods. (Level: intermediate->impact)
	5. Legitimacy and influence of UNEP-supported scientific assessments in contested policy and scientific environments	This driver captures how the perceived legitimacy and credibility of UNEP-supported assessments affect their influence in contested policy and scientific environments, helping to explain variation in uptake across contexts. (Level: outcome->intermediate->impact)
	6. Availability and predictability of financial resources and institutional continuity within UNEP and partner organisations.	Funding volatility is a structural constraint repeatedly highlighted in progress reports and the MTR, affecting delivery and uptake. (Level: output->intermediate-sustainability)
ASSUMPTIONS		
1. Governance arrangements are in place to ensure that partners are empowered to provide data		
	2. The project works toward the UN principles on human rights and gender equality	This assumption is mandatory under the UNEP template where HR/GE are not explicitly included in the results framework. (Level: cross-cutting)
	3. Robust and credible environmental assessments can contribute to policy dialogue and decision-making when they are perceived as legitimate, timely and relevant, even in contexts where scientific evidence is contested.	The original TOC implicitly assumed automatic uptake of science-originated data. The additional assumption reflects the reality that scientific knowledge operates in contested policy spaces. (Level: outcome->intermediate)
	4. Assessment outputs primarily influence agenda-setting, framing and policy dialogue rather than immediate policy change.	Necessary to interpret outcome-level evidence realistically and avoid attribution errors. (Level: outcome->intermediate->impact)

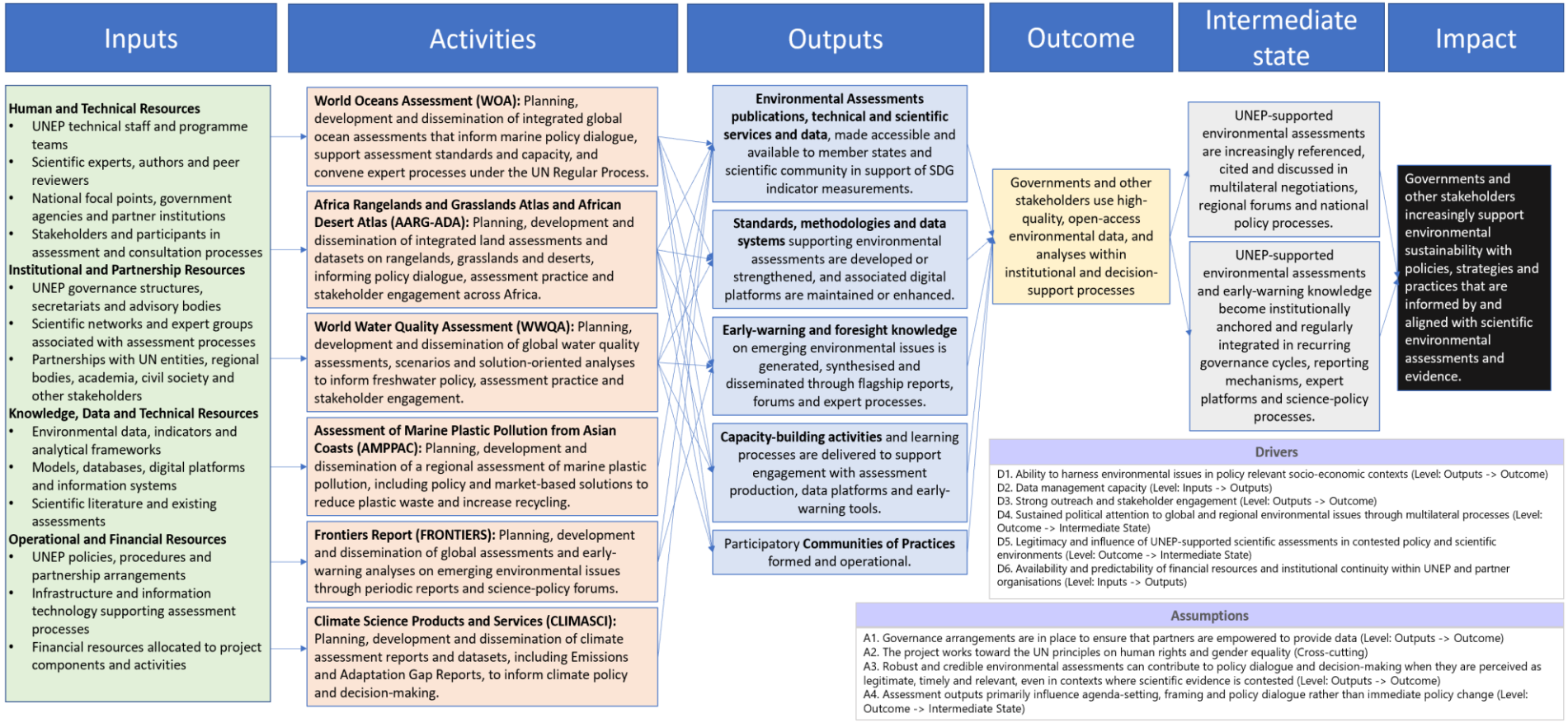
3.4 Narrative Articulation of the Reconstructed Theory of Change

113. Human, institutional, technical and financial inputs enable the production and dissemination of environmental assessments, data systems, early-warning knowledge, capacity-building and participatory engagement mechanisms. When these outputs are credible, accessible and effectively disseminated, they are used within institutional decision-support processes. Such use shapes agenda-setting, issue framing and prioritisation within governance systems. Over time, repeated uptake and institutional embedding strengthen alignment between environmental governance processes and scientific evidence. This contributes to improved integration of environmental considerations into decision-making. Given the normative and global character of the intervention, impact is assessed in terms of plausible contribution and likelihood rather than direct attribution.

3.5 Theory of Change at Evaluation

114. The reconstructed Theory of Change is presented in Figure 2. It consolidates the original multi-tier ToC into four analytically distinct levels for evaluative purposes, while retaining the original ambition and causal logic.

Figure 2: Theory of Change at Evaluation



3.6 Analysis and Limitations of the RToC

115. The reconstruction highlights that the project's primary pathway of influence is normative and indirect. Change occurs through the generation, dissemination and uptake of authoritative scientific assessments, which shape agenda-setting, policy discourse and institutional processes, rather than through direct implementation or attributable policy change. Key actors implicitly contributing to these change processes include UNEP technical divisions, scientific authors and expert networks, governments and negotiators, multilateral environmental processes (particularly UNEA and UNFCCC), regional organisations, partner institutions and, in some components, civil society and private-sector actors engaged through science-policy platforms and outreach processes.

116. The analysis also confirms that, while the project was conceived as a portfolio of complementary outputs, synergies between components were only weakly articulated in the TOC and project design and not systematically operationalised during implementation. As a result, complementarities remained largely implicit.

117. Across components, UNEP's comparative advantage lies in its institutional legitimacy, convening authority and scientific credibility, which underpin its capacity to influence global environmental discourse and inform policy processes. These factors are critical enablers of uptake, particularly in multilateral and intergovernmental contexts.

118. Monitoring systems were strongest at output level and comparatively less developed at higher levels of the results chain, constraining the evaluation's ability to fully verify the causal pathways in the ToC, particularly regarding institutional use and downstream change. While the final stages of the project show improved tracking of uptake (particularly through expanded use of citation databases and policy references), systematic monitoring of institutional use, influence and downstream change remained limited and was not consistently applied across components.

119. Funding predictability and sustained political attention constitute critical drivers (level: inputs to outputs) for maintaining influence across assessment cycles. Variations in these factors help explain differences in performance and uptake across components, particularly between well-established institutional series and more ad hoc or under-resourced outputs.

120. Finally, both the original and reconstructed Theory of Change present limitations in capturing the full complexity of the project. In particular, they do not explicitly represent differentiated pathways of influence across stakeholder groups and key actors involved in uptake and policy influence processes, including governments, scientific networks, multilateral institutions, regional organisations, civil society actors and private-sector stakeholders. Nor do they fully account for relational and platform-based mechanisms such as the Science-Policy-Business Forum, including the possibility that such mechanisms may evolve from stand-alone convening platforms into more embedded forms of programme-linked engagement. These analytical gaps limit the explanatory power of both the original and reconstructed ToC and are further examined in Section 4.2.

4 EVALUATION FINDINGS

4.1 Strategic Relevance

4.1.1 Alignment to UNEP MTS, POW and Strategic Priorities

121. Project A3 is strongly aligned with UNEP's mandate to keep the global environment under review and to strengthen the science-policy interface. The project is anchored in UNEP's core normative functions, and this alignment has remained consistent across both Medium-Term Strategy cycles, including through the 2022 revision. In operational terms, under the MTS 2018–2021, the project contributed directly to Subprogramme 7: Environment under Review, particularly to the expected accomplishment related to the use of open-access environmental data and assessments for evidence-based decision-making. Evidence from stakeholder consultations further indicates that several A3-supported outputs -notably the Emissions Gap Report, Adaptation Gap Report and the Frontiers series- are widely perceived as core UNEP normative products rather than project-specific deliverables. This reinforces the view that the project supported functions closely aligned with UNEP's institutional role in identifying, assessing and framing environmental issues for policy audiences.

122. Against this backdrop, the 2023 project revision represents a formal adjustment point in the evolution of Project A3. It extended the project duration to December 2025, revised elements of the results framework, and aligned the intervention with UNEP's Medium-Term Strategy (2022–2025), particularly the Science-Policy Subprogramme. The project is therefore better understood not as a static intervention, but as an evolving platform responding to changing funding conditions, institutional restructuring and emerging programmatic opportunities. The reformulated outcome, focused on increased use of environmental assessments by governments and other stakeholders, closely mirrors the corresponding Programme of Work outcome and reinforces the project's formal alignment with UNEP corporate frameworks. The revision appears primarily to have consolidated this strategic alignment, while evidence of substantive changes in the project's strategic focus or implementation approach remained more limited.

123. Beyond its primary contribution to the Science-Policy Subprogramme, the project also contributes to several thematic priorities. The strongest and most visible contributions are observed in climate-related outputs (see also 4.4.1), while contributions in other thematic areas are more variable across components.

124. The project also contributes to elements of the Bali Strategic Plan, particularly through efforts to strengthen capacities to access and use environmental data and assessments. These contributions were most evident in components involving data systems, alliances and regional assessment processes. Capacity development and South-South cooperation dimensions were implemented less consistently across the portfolio, which limited their overall strategic contribution.

Table 8: Alignment to the UNEP Medium Term Strategy (MTS), Programme of Work (POW), and Strategic Priorities

UNEP strategic document	Alignment with UNEP's mandate and thematic priorities	Level of alignment
UNEP Medium-Term Strategy 2018-2021 - United Nations Environment Programme (2017). *Medium-Term Strategy 2018-2021*. https://wedocs.unep.org/handle/20.500.11822/7621	The project contributed directly to Subprogramme 7: Environment under Review, which aims to strengthen the science-policy interface through environmental assessments, early warning and open environmental data systems.	Full

UNEP strategic document	Alignment with UNEP's mandate and thematic priorities	Level of alignment
UNEP Programme of Work and Budget 2018-2019 - UNEP (2017). https://wedocs.unep.org/handle/20.500.11822/7707	Supported expected accomplishments related to improved access to and use of environmental assessments and data in policy processes.	Full
UNEP Programme of Work and Budget 2020-2021 - UNEP (2019). https://wedocs.unep.org/handle/20.500.11822/28411	Continued support to the Environment under Review subprogramme through institutional assessments and knowledge platforms.	Full
UNEP Medium-Term Strategy 2022-2025 - UNEP (2021). *People and Planet: UNEP Strategy for 2022-2025.* https://docs.un.org/en/UNEP/EA.5/3/Rev.1	The project contributes to UNEP's science-policy function supporting action on the triple planetary crisis: climate change, nature loss and pollution.	Full
UNEP Programme of Work and Budget 2022-2023 - UNEP (2021). https://wedocs.unep.org/handle/20.500.11822/38040	Project outputs contribute to outcome indicators related to uptake of environmental assessments, data and early-warning information by governments and international processes.	Full
UNEP Programme of Work and Budget 2024-2025 - UNEP (2023). https://docs.un.org/en/UNEP/EA.6/13	Reinforces UNEP's science-policy role through environmental intelligence, foresight and integrated assessments used in policy processes.	Full
Bali Strategic Plan for Technology Support and Capacity Building - UNEP Governing Council (2005). https://digitallibrary.un.org/record/541711?v=pdf	Project activities contributed to capacity building for environmental data use and science-based policymaking, particularly through initiatives such as WWQA/GEMS Water and regional outlooks.	Partial
South-South CooperationError! Bookmark not defined.Error! Bookmark not defined.	Regional outlooks and knowledge-sharing across Africa, Asia-Pacific and other regions	Partial

4.1.2 Alignment to Donor Strategic Priorities

125. Project A3 mobilized funding from a diverse set of sources, including the UNEP Environment Fund, bilateral donors, multilateral institutions, foundations and private-sector actors. This diversified funding base is consistent with the broad thematic scope of the project, spanning climate change, water governance, pollution, and science-policy interface functions. It also reflects the diversity of components, with individual components often aligned more closely with specific donor priorities than with a unified project-wide strategy.

126. At the thematic level, there is a strong convergence between project outputs and donor strategies. Examples of alignment include Switzerland's support to WWQA, consistent with its priorities on water governance, environmental data systems and capacity development; Nordic donor contributions aligned with climate ambition and multilateral environmental cooperation; and Dutch support reflecting priorities on climate policy and circular economy transitions. The strongest alignment between donor priorities and project outputs was observed in climate-related assessments, water governance initiatives and environmental data systems, all of which correspond to well-established international environmental agendas and donor policy frameworks.

127. Private-sector and foundation contributions similarly aligned with thematic areas such as climate mitigation, digital innovation, sustainability reporting and sectoral transition pathways. At the same time, the diversity of funding sources and thematic interests reinforced the project's fragmented funding architecture, as contributions were generally linked to specific outputs or thematic priorities rather than to a unified portfolio-wide strategy. Overall, the project was effective in mobilising resources in areas where UNEP assessment products addressed recognised policy priorities and internationally visible environmental issues.

Table 9: Alignment to Donor Strategic Priorities

Donor or partner strategic document	Alignment with donor or partner strategic priorities	Level of alignment
UNEP Environment Fund - *UNEP Medium-Term Strategy 2022-2025: "People and Planet"* (UNEP, 2021) https://www.unep.org/resources/key-documents/people-and-planet-unep-strategy-2022-2025	Core UNEP mandate to keep the global environment under review and strengthen the science-policy interface through environmental assessments and knowledge platforms.	Full
Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation (SDC) - *Switzerland's International Cooperation Strategy 2021-2024* (Swiss Confederation, 2020) https://www.eda.admin.ch/dam/deza/en/documents/publikationen/Diverses/Broschuere_Strategie_IZA_Web_EN.pdf	Emphasis on climate change, water governance, sustainable resource management and international cooperation. Directly aligned with WWQA/GEMS Water and science-policy outputs.	Full
Norway (Norad / Government of Norway) - *Norwegian Development Policy: Climate, Environment and Energy* https://www.norad.no/en/front/thematic-areas/climate-food-environment-and-energy	Focus on climate mitigation, biodiversity protection and environmental governance through multilateral cooperation.	Full
Sida (Sweden) - *Sida Climate and Environment Policy* https://www.sida.se/en/about-sida/publications/climate-and-environment-policy	Supports climate action, environmental governance and sustainable development across development cooperation portfolios.	Full
Government of Ireland (Irish Aid) - *A Better World: Ireland's Policy for International Development* (Government of Ireland, 2019) https://www.ireland.ie/en/irish-aid/news-and-publications/publications/publication-index/a-better-world-irelands-policy-for-international-development/	Emphasizes climate action, environmental sustainability and multilateral engagement.	Full
Ministry of Economic Affairs and Climate Policy (Netherlands) - Ministry mandate https://www.government.nl/ministries/ministry-of-economic-affairs-and-climate-policy	Responsible for national climate policy and mitigation strategies.	Full
Ministry of the Environment - Finland - *Finland's National Climate Policy* https://ym.fi/en/finland-s-national-climate-change-policy	Supports climate neutrality, environmental protection and sustainability transitions.	Full
Ministry of Environment - Denmark / Danish Environmental Protection Agency - International cooperation mandate https://eng.mst.dk	Supports environmental protection, climate action and international environmental cooperation.	Full
Government of Belgium - *Environment and Green Diplomacy* https://diplomatie.belgium.be/en/policy/policy-areas/striving-global-solidarity/environment-and-green-diplomacy	Supports environmental multilateralism and international climate governance.	Full
ClimateWorks Foundation - *ClimateWorks Strategy and Approach* https://www.climateworks.org/approach	Focus on science-based climate mitigation strategies and global climate policy ambition.	Full
International Business Machines (IBM) - *IBM Environmental Sustainability Policy* https://www.ibm.com/responsibility/environment	Focus on environmental data systems, digital innovation and sustainability reporting.	Full
International Copper Association Ltd. - *Sustainable Copper Programme* https://internationalcopper.org/sustainable-copper	Supports responsible resource management and sustainability within the copper sector.	Substantial [28]
Group of Sponsors (International Fertilizer Association Ltd, Thomson Reuters Corporation, ADEC Innovations Corporation, Signify, Beijing Entrepreneurs Environmental Protection Foundation, Tongji University, Shouhang Hi-Tech Energy Technology Co. Ltd, Applia)	Private-sector alignment reflects thematic convergence with sustainability objectives, although corporate strategic priorities may extend beyond environmental policy goals	Substantial

[28] "Substantial" indicates a strong degree of thematic and operational alignment with the project's environmental and sustainability objectives, while recognising that the broader institutional, commercial or sectoral mandates of contributing organisations extend beyond UNEP's overall environmental mandate and strategic priorities.

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

Global Priorities

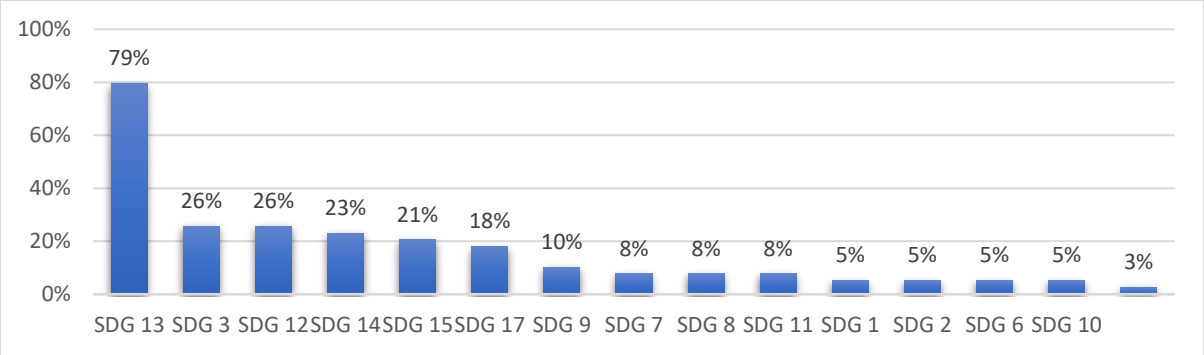
128. Project A3 is strongly aligned with major multilateral environmental commitments and global policy frameworks. As set out in the Project Document, the intervention was explicitly designed to strengthen the science-policy interface in support of the 2030 Agenda and relevant Multilateral Environmental Agreements. In particular, the EGR and AGR are closely aligned with the Paris Agreement, both in substance and timing, with production cycles strategically linked to UNFCCC negotiation processes. This positioning reflects a clear understanding of policy entry points and enhances the relevance of these outputs in global climate governance.

129. The Adaptation Gap Report, in particular, provides a strong example of this alignment. It has filled a recognised gap in the global climate knowledge architecture by providing a regular and consolidated evidence base on adaptation needs and finance, an area previously lacking a comparable global reference. Informants underscored the relevance of the report which is now widely regarded as a key input to international climate discussions, shaping negotiation narratives as well as debates on adaptation finance (see also 4.4.2).

130. The WOA component has also remained strategically relevant to UNEP's ocean mandate and broader intergovernmental priorities. Evidence indicates that UNEP's support to the Regular Process contributed to capacity building, regional science-policy dialogue and the development of WOA III, while maintaining the independence of the assessment process. This confirms the component's substantive relevance, despite limited resourcing and partial integration within A3.

131. The project also demonstrates broad alignment with the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), as reflected in the Project Document and further evidenced by UNEP's Knowledge Repository. The review in UNEP's Knowledge Repository of the 38 publications produced with project support indicates ample SDG coverage and a prevalence of products related to climate action, as 79% of the knowledge products have been tagged to SDG 13 (Figure 3). In addition, 26% of the reports and publications of the project have been tagged to SDGs 3 and 12, and 23% to SDGs 14. While this indicates strong thematic relevance, it also reflects a concentration of effort in climate-related areas, with more limited visibility of contributions in other domains.

Figure 3: Percentage of Project A3 assessment reports and publications tagged as contributing to each SDG



(Source: UNEP Knowledge Repository)

Regional and sub-regional priorities

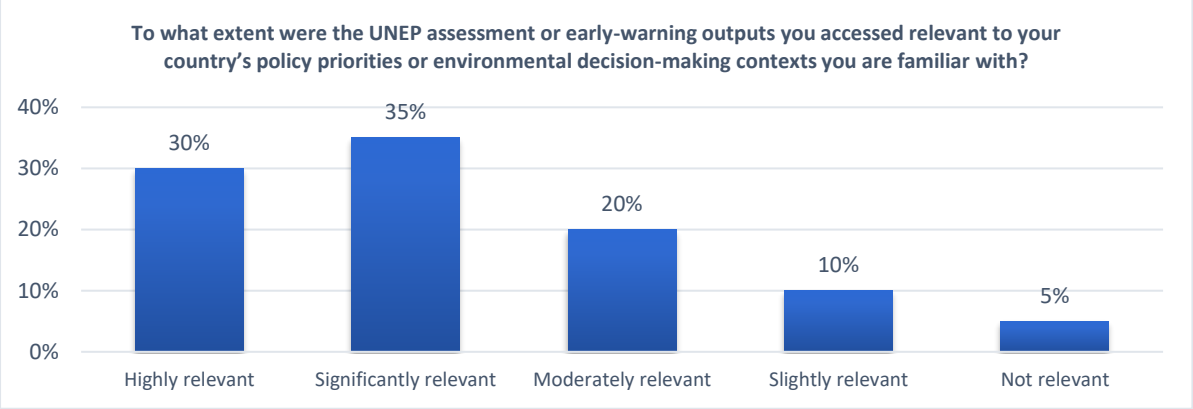
132. Regional and sub-regional assessments were generally aligned with relevant regional policy processes and institutional frameworks, including regional seas conventions and regional ministerial platforms. These processes were supported by consultations with governments and scientific partners during drafting and review stages, contributing to contextual relevance. For example, the regional assessment on marine litter in Asia was connected to ongoing regional policy discussions and cooperation processes on marine litter, including those linked to G20 and regional platforms.

National priorities

133. At the national level, relevance is primarily embedded in the intended use of outputs rather than demonstrated through systematic evidence of application. Climate-related assessments are explicitly intended to inform nationally determined contributions (NDCs) and adaptation planning processes, while water-related outputs align with SDG 6 reporting frameworks. The broad geographic reach of downloads (confer also 4.4.1) also suggests ample resonance, though engagement appears uneven across countries, with varying degrees of connections to national policy processes and planning cycles across components.

134. Perception of relevance is further supported by survey results, with approximately two thirds of respondents indicating that the project's assessment and early warning outputs were highly or significantly relevant to their country's policy priorities or environmental decision-making contexts (figure 4).

Figure 4: Perceived relevance of the project's assessment and early-warning outputs.



(Source: Evaluation survey)

135. Across components, the mechanisms through which relevance is established vary significantly. The climate assessment series (EGR and AGR) are supported by well-developed governance structures, including steering committees, author networks and iterative engagement with Parties and scientific institutions, enabling continuous alignment with evolving policy priorities. In addition, the Adaptation Gap Report incorporates targeted consultations and, in some cases, surveys of governments and experts to inform its thematic focus and analysis. Similarly, the WWQA is anchored in an explicit intergovernmental mandate (UNEA Resolution 3/10) and operationalised through a large, network-based model. These features reflect a demand-driven design and clear institutional anchoring.

136. By contrast, the Frontiers series establishes relevance primarily through its early warning and agenda-setting function, identifying emerging environmental issues through expert consultation and horizon-scanning approaches, and positioning these within global policy discussions, including UNEA processes. Interview evidence also illustrates how this agenda-setting role can operate in practice. In the case of the 2018/2019 *Frontiers* chapter on nitrogen pollution, the report was launched immediately before UNEA-4 and helped frame the issue for policymakers by presenting it not only as a pollution challenge but also through a circular economy lens. This framing complemented the parallel negotiation of the UNEA resolution on sustainable nitrogen management and helped provide an accessible scientific narrative to support subsequent policy discussions.

137. Other components -e.g. the Belt and Road Environmental Outlook (BREO)- appear to have been driven more by institutional positioning and leadership priorities than by clearly articulated intergovernmental demand or structured scoping processes. Compared to the climate and water components, there is limited evidence of a formalised demand-driven design, indicating significant variation in the extent to which components were demand-driven.

Table 10: Relevance to Global, Regional, Sub-regional and National Environmental Priorities

Strategic document or agreement	Alignment with global, regional, sub-regional, national environmental priorities	Level of Alignment
Paris Agreement / UNFCCC processes	EGR and AGR provide structured, negotiation-timed scientific inputs to mitigation ambition, adaptation planning and transparency processes; cited in COP decisions.	Full
Sustainable Development Goals (2030 Agenda)	Direct contribution to SDGs 6, 12, 13, 14, 15, 17 through thematic assessments, data systems and science-policy products; alignment embedded in project design.	Full
UNEA Resolutions (e.g., marine litter, water quality)	Direct response to formal mandates (e.g., UNEA 3/10 on water quality) through WWQA and marine plastic assessments; strong intergovernmental anchoring.	Full
Regional environmental priorities and regional conventions	Regionally tailored assessments (e.g., marine litter Asia-Pacific, African atlases, Third Pole) aligned with contextual challenges; engagement depth and follow-up vary across components.	Full
National environmental priorities	Climate assessments explicitly support NDCs and national adaptation planning; water assessments align with SDG 6 reporting and national water governance frameworks; portfolio positioned to inform national decision-making across sectors.	Full
Emerging geopolitical/environmental initiatives (e.g., Belt and Road Initiative)	Strategic positioning of UNEP's science-policy role; thematic relevance clear but less evidence of formal intergovernmental scoping or documented needs assessment.	Partial

4.1.4 Complementarity with Existing Interventions / Coherence

138. The project demonstrates strong complementarity both within UNEP and with external environmental processes. Internally, A3 complements UNEP's flagship functions, most notably the Global Environment Outlook (GEO), by providing more frequent and thematic assessments between GEO cycles, by linking to existing platforms such as GEMS/Water, or by progressively aiming to contribute to the World Environment Situation Room (WESR). Externally, several outputs, particularly climate-related assessments, are closely aligned with international policy processes, including UNFCCC negotiations, while other components connect to Regional Seas conventions and UNEA processes. Overall, the project reinforces and operationalises existing mandates rather than duplicating them.

139. Complementarity was strongest at the level of individual outputs and thematic processes, whereas coherence across the overall portfolio remained more limited in

operational terms. Project A3 functioned primarily as an aggregation of individually managed assessment components under a flexible umbrella framework. Interview evidence indicates that UNEP's assessment work continues to operate as a collection of individually strong products, with limited integration across divisions or clear positioning within a unified science-policy framework. This structure supported flexibility and alignment with diverse thematic and funding priorities, while limiting the extent to which synergies, shared positioning and cross-component integration could be systematically developed at portfolio level.

140. The Science-Policy-Business Forum illustrates these challenges. While it had recognised convening value and visibility as a platform for cross-sector dialogue, including engagement with policymakers, scientific actors, business representatives and financial institutions, its positioning within UNEP's broader assessment architecture remained unclear. Its contribution to A3 was therefore more evident at the level of agenda-setting, visibility and network-building than as a structured mechanism for dissemination, uptake or follow-up of assessment outputs..

141. The 2023 revision did not address these operational and structural coherence issues or resolve underlying shortcomings related to coherence, integration and strategic positioning across components. Recent institutional developments may help address these limitations, i.e. informants referred in particular to the establishment of the UNEP Publications Board, intended to strengthen quality assurance and editorial oversight across UNEP knowledge products, and to the emerging coordinating role of the Science Office in improving strategic alignment, coordination and oversight of assessment processes across divisions. While these functions are still evolving and their effects were not yet fully observable during the evaluation period, they reflect an institutional effort to move from a largely decentralised portfolio of assessment processes toward a more coherent and strategically aligned science-policy system.

Table 11: Complementarity with Existing Interventions/Coherence

Other initiatives by UNEP or other organisations	**Complementarity** *(including collaboration, coordination and overlap or duplication)*	**Level of Alignment**
Global Environment Outlook (GEO)	Thematic complementarity; A3 provides focused assessments between GEO cycles.	Full
GEMS/Water	WWQA strengthens, expands and operationalizes GEMS/Water monitoring, data systems and capacity development; some coordination challenges noted.	Full
UNFCCC processes	Climate reports directly inform COP negotiations and transparency processes.	Full
Regional Seas and marine processes	Synergies in marine litter and ocean assessments.	Full

Findings Statements on Strategic Relevance and Complementarity

142. **Finding 1.** The project is strongly aligned with UNEP's MTS and PoW frameworks across two strategy cycles and serves as a principal delivery mechanism for the Science-Policy Subprogramme. However, this alignment is largely structural and does not consistently translate into a clearly differentiated or operationally articulated intervention at portfolio level.

143. **Finding 2.** The project demonstrates strong complementarity with UNEP initiatives and global environmental processes. However, internal coherence across components remained limited in practice, and complementarities were only partially leveraged to

position UNEP as an integrated and strategically coherent provider of environmental assessments.

Rating for Strategic Relevance: Highly Satisfactory

Rating for Alignment to UNEP MTS, PoW and Strategic Priorities: Highly Satisfactory

Rating for Alignment to Donor Strategic Priorities: Satisfactory

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

Rating for Complementarity with Existing Interventions/Coherence: Satisfactory

4.2 Quality of Project Design

Table 12: Summary of quality of project design assessment ratings

	SECTION	RATING (1-6)	Summary Assessment
A	Project Preparation	4	Sound problem analysis and strong alignment with UNEP's mandate; however, the design relied on additional resource mobilization beyond secured funding.
B	Risk identification and Safeguards	4	Key risks, particularly funding and complexity, were identified but mitigation measures were not fully elaborated or operationalized; safeguards were partially integrated.
C	Governance and Supervision Arrangements	4	Governance arrangements were defined in the project design, including a project-level steering function and component-specific mechanisms. Some components (e.g. EGR, WWQA) had formal steering bodies. *(In practice, the project-level mechanism was not operationalised, and coordination relied largely on decentralised arrangements.)* This implied relatively high coordination demands given the project's breadth.
D	Partnerships	5	Strong and well-structured partnerships leveraging UNEP's convening role, including innovative alliance models.
E	Strategic Relevance	5	Highly aligned with UNEP MTS/PoW and global environmental priorities, directly supporting the science-policy mandate.
F	Logical Framework and Causality	3	Coherent structure but limited articulation of causal pathways, including synergies, assumptions and outcome-level indicators.
G	Financial Planning	4	Clear budgeting framework; however, not all components were fully funded at approval stage.
H	Efficiency	4	Design sought efficiency through partnerships and leveraging existing processes, though the number of components increased complexity.
I	Monitoring	3	Monitoring focused mainly on outputs; outcome-level uptake indicators were limited.
J	Sustainability / Replication and Catalytic Effects	4	Sustainability supported through institutional series and alliances, but dependent on continued funding.
K	Learning, Communication and Outreach	4	Strong product-level communication, though project-wide learning strategy was less explicit.
	Total (Weighted) Score:	*3.91*	*(Full analysis in the Inception Report, available from the Evaluation Office.)*

144. The quality of the project design is assessed as **Moderately Satisfactory**. The assessment draws on the approved Project Document (2019), the 2023 revision and findings from the Mid-Term Review, and follows the UNEP Evaluation Office framework for Project Design Quality. Overall, the design demonstrates solid alignment with UNEP's mandate, Medium-Term Strategy and science-policy functions, as well as with Member State demand for environmental assessments and global environmental priorities. At the same time, important structural limitations affected the coherence, integration and evaluability of the overall project design.

145. The project design demonstrated several important strengths. It was strongly aligned with UNEP's mandate to strengthen the science-policy interface and responded to sustained Member State demand for authoritative environmental assessments and knowledge products. The selection of outputs built on UNEP's recognised comparative advantages in environmental assessment, early warning, open-access environmental data and convening scientific expertise. The design also benefitted from strong partnerships with governments, scientific institutions, UN entities and specialised networks, which provided credibility, technical capacity and access to policy processes. In several components, governance arrangements and advisory mechanisms were clearly defined and supported established assessment cycles and stakeholder engagement processes. The project further placed strong emphasis on communication, visibility and dissemination, particularly for flagship assessment products with established global audiences and policy relevance.

146. The principal design limitation related to portfolio coherence and cross-component integration. The project was designed as a broad umbrella portfolio of largely autonomous assessment initiatives rather than as a strategically integrated intervention with a clearly articulated portfolio logic. While components were individually relevant and collectively aligned under UNEP's science-policy mandate, the design did not clearly define how components were expected to interact, generate synergies or collectively strengthen UNEP's assessment function as a coherent system. The Theory of Change reflected this structure by presenting multiple parallel output streams with limited articulation of cross-component pathways, shared mechanisms of influence or integrative functions. As a result, complementarities between components remained only partially leveraged during implementation. This largely reflected broader institutional patterns within UNEP, where assessment processes have historically evolved as individually strong but loosely connected products.

147. A second limitation concerned the quality and evaluability of the results framework. Several output- and outcome-level indicators were insufficiently specified in terms of what they intended to measure and how achievement would be operationalised. In particular, key outcome indicators combined broad and multidimensional concepts such as "use", "reporting", "shared environmental information systems" and "strengthening the science-policy interface" without defining observable or measurable parameters. This limited evaluability from the outset and contributed during implementation to a reliance on proxy measures such as citation tracking, references and participation data. While these measures provided useful information on visibility and engagement, they were less suited to assessing institutional uptake, behavioural change or broader outcome-level influence.

148. A third limitation related to the realism and operational complexity of the design. The project scope was ambitious relative to secured funding and staffing, resulting in a large and complex portfolio with limited prioritisation across components. Financial and institutional risks were identified but not always fully elaborated or operationalised through mitigation strategies, while sustainability and exit pathways remained broadly defined. The breadth and ambition of the intervention were therefore not always matched

by secured financial and human resources at design stage, contributing to risks of uneven implementation and variable performance across components. Taken together, these limitations reduced the design's capacity to support fully coherent implementation, portfolio-wide coordination and robust performance assessment.

Rating for Project Design: Moderately Satisfactory

4.3 Nature of the External Context

149. The project was implemented in a dynamic and constrained global context, characterised by major disruptions, evolving geopolitical priorities and uncertainty affecting international environmental cooperation and funding environments. Several external factors influenced implementation performance, though they did not fundamentally alter the project's strategic direction.

150. **COVID-19 pandemic (2020-2022).** The global pandemic significantly affected implementation modalities across components. Travel restrictions delayed in-person meetings, regional consultations and stakeholder engagement. Some assessment processes (e.g., marine litter assessments and alliance activities under WWQA and WASP) experienced slower coordination and data acquisition. The project adapted rapidly through virtual meetings, webinars and online launches, and in several cases digital delivery broadened participation and outreach, particularly for climate-related products. Overall, while COVID-19 created operational disruptions and delays, the normative and assessment-based nature of the project reduced its vulnerability compared to field-based interventions.

151. **Global economic uncertainty and donor funding conditions.** Broader economic uncertainty during and after the COVID-19 period affected international development financing environments and contributed to delays and uncertainty in donor funding commitments across parts of the portfolio. Given the project's reliance on extra-budgetary and earmarked funding, fluctuations in donor contributions and delays in resource mobilisation affected staffing continuity and the pacing of selected outputs, particularly for smaller or less institutionalised components such as Frontiers and some regional assessments. These external pressures interacted with pre-existing structural characteristics of the project's funding model, including dependence on multiple parallel funding streams and partial funding at design stage (see Sections 4.2, 4.5 and 4.6).

152. **Geopolitical and policy shifts.** Geopolitical and policy dynamics further shaped the operating environment. Shifts in international priorities and leadership affected the level of traction and strategic emphasis of certain components, as illustrated by the reduced momentum of the Belt and Road Environmental Outlook. More broadly, environmental assessments are produced and used in increasingly complex and, at times, contested science-policy environments, where uptake depends on political priorities, timing and institutional pathways. In this context, the influence of assessments is not linear or automatic. The uptake and influence of scientific assessments depend not only on their quality but also on their strategic positioning, communication and alignment with policy priorities.

153. Despite these contextual constraints, the project's normative and assessment-based nature, relying primarily on expert networks, institutional series and partnerships, enhanced resilience. Institutional reports such as the Emissions Gap Report and Adaptation Gap Report were produced consistently and continued to inform multilateral processes, including COP negotiations.

Rating for Nature of the External Context: Moderately Unfavourable

4.4 Effectiveness

4.4.1 Availability of Outputs

154. The project delivered a large and diverse set of outputs. Delivery was strongest for well-established product lines, particularly global assessments and early warning reports, which consistently achieved high levels of completion, visibility and dissemination. In contrast, more complex or enabling functions (i.e. data systems, capacity development and communities of practice) showed more uneven results, with gaps between planned delivery and sustained use. This pattern reflects both design features of the project and their implications for implementation, rather than differences in technical quality across outputs. Table 13 provides a simplified bird-eye view over the status of the project delivery.

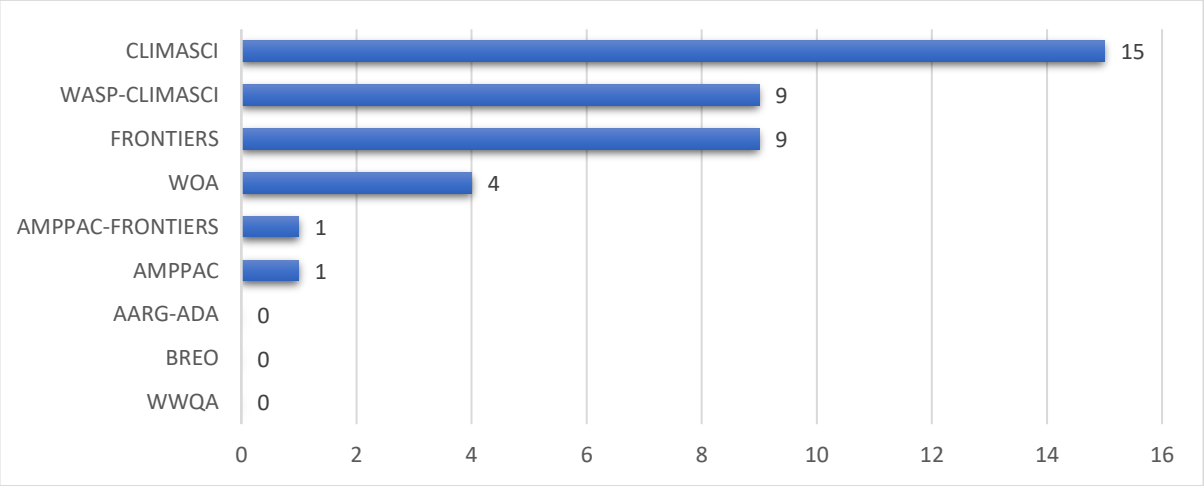
Table 133: Overview of the project delivery

	WOA[29]	BREO[30]	AARG-ADA[31]	WWQA[32]	AMPPAC[33]	FRONTIERS[34]	CLIMASCI[35]
Output A	🟢	🔴	🔴	🟠	🟢	-	🟢
Output B	🟢	🔴	🟠	🟢	-	-	-
Output C	🟠	-	🔴	🟠	-	🟢	-
Output D	🟢	🔴	🟠	🟠	-	-	-
Output E	🟢	🔴	🔴	🔵	-	-	-

🟢 Planned and delivered
🟠 Planned and partially delivered
🔴 Planned and not delivered
🔵 Not planned but delivered

155. As discussed in Section 4.2, the results framework presents structural shortcomings, including inconsistent baselines, evolving indicator definitions and limited comparability across components. While indicator reporting in progress reports suggests that many targets were met or exceeded, these results require cautious interpretation. The reported indicator values provide useful aggregate evidence of delivery, reach, access or reference across the portfolio, but they mask significant variation in performance across products and should not be read as evidence that all planned outputs were fully delivered or used to a comparable extent. Furthermore, the data presented in the output results summary table below has been provided by the project team with limited means for the evaluation to triangulate and corroborate some of the results, outside of progress reports and interviews.

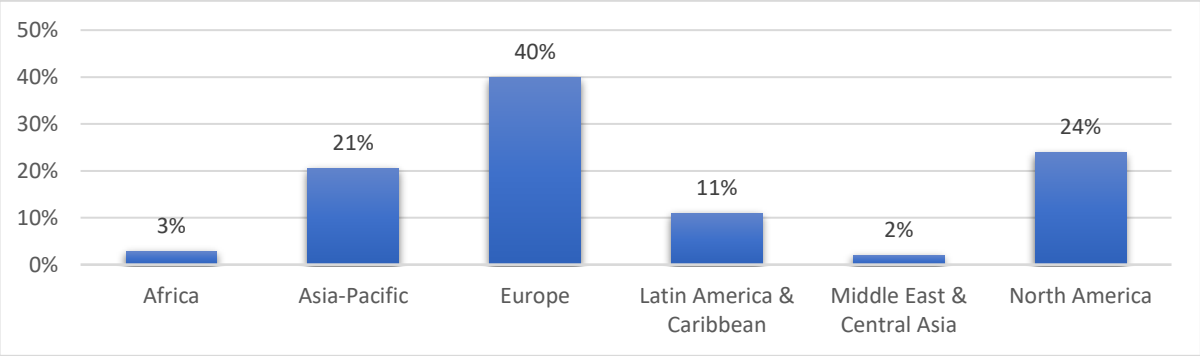
[29] **WOA:** The World Oceans Assessment
[30] **BREO:** The Belt and Road Environment Outlook
[31] **AARG-ADA:** Atlas on African Rangelands and Grasslands and Africa Deserts Atlas
[32] **WWQA:** The World Water Quality Assessment
[33] **AMPPAC:** Assessment of marine plastic pollution from Asian coasts
[34] **FRONTIERS:** The Frontiers Report – Emerging Issues of Environmental Concern
[35] **CLIMASCI:** The Climate Science Products and Services

	Narrative Assessment	Sources of Information/Evidence
Output A: Environmental Assessments publications, technical and scientific services, and data, made accessible and available to member states and scientific community in support of SDG indicator measurements. **Performance against Indicator(s) and Target(s)** A-I02 Number of regional and national forums and institutions using world oceans assessment & SDG related data on environmental trends. Baseline: 2 Target: 2 Achieved: 11 A-I03 Number of countries using technical science products from assessments (BREO; AARG-ADA; CLIMASCI) conducted reported on the on-line platform(s) that house the relevant	**CLIMASCI** represents the most consistently delivered and institutionally embedded component under Output A. Throughout the project period, UNEP produced a continuous series of Emissions Gap Reports and Adaptation Gap Reports, complemented by Science for Adaptation Policy Briefs and related synthesis products. The publication inventory confirms regular annual production from 2019 to 2025 (Figure 5). These outputs demonstrate a mature production model, predictable funding, and sustained demand, and constitute the core of Output A's achievements. Institutional reports, especially the Emissions Gap Report, reached exceptionally high dissemination levels, with some editions exceeding 100,000 downloads[36]. **Figure 5: Number of knowledge products delivered by Project A3 components**  **(Source: Evaluation's inventory)** The project contributed to the delivery of the **World Oceans Assessment II** (2021). Evidence reviewed by the evaluation indicates that UNEP's contribution extended beyond desk-based technical support and included broader science-policy interface and convening functions in support of the Regular	-Project reports/PIRs -Project assessments/outlooks -Interviews with project team -Web data/UNEP Knowledge Repository Statistics -Interviews with beneficiaries

[36] Source: internal file provided by UNEP "*Reports stats EGR and AGR 2020-2023.xls*"

	Narrative Assessment	**Sources of Information/Evidence**
thematic environmental assessments. Baseline: 0 Target: 5 Achieved: 135 A-I04 Countries using AMPPAC assessment report for influencing policies, guidelines and/or instruments that strengthen the science-policy interface and contribute to reduction of marine plastic litter. Baseline: 0 Target: 5 Achieved: 8	Process, including for the forthcoming third World Ocean Assessment (WOA III). This involved participation in and support to assessment-related discussions, workshops and expert processes, contributing inputs to the WOA III drafting process. These activities confirm that the WOA component remained operationally relevant during the latter part of the project and contributed to strengthening regional engagement in the Regular Process. At the same time, UNEP's role remained largely catalytic and facilitative, and the component was constrained by limited dedicated resources and its dependence on intergovernmental coordination mechanisms beyond UNEP's control. The evidence further suggests that the results of the WOA component are better understood as process and institutional contributions rather than stand-alone UNEP deliverables. UNEP's October 2025 statement to the Ad Hoc Working Group of the Whole confirms its continued engagement in the third cycle of the Regular Process through workshops, participation in WOA-related events, and contributions to discussions on the future assessment cycle. This sustained engagement reflects institutional traction within a broader intergovernmental process but also explains why the component's value is not fully captured through a narrow product-delivery lens. The evaluation therefore finds that, although under-resourced within A3, the WOA component contributed meaningfully to the functioning of a global assessment architecture and to strengthening the ocean science-policy interface. **AMPPAC** delivered a set of regional assessment outputs, including the *Review of Current Knowledge and Data on Marine Litter in Asia* (2022), and contributed to strengthening the evidence base on marine pollution in the Asia-Pacific region. While more limited in scale compared to global assessments, this component can be considered as **delivered broadly as intended**, with demonstrated uptake at regional level. In contrast, several components under Output A did not deliver the full assessment products originally envisaged. **BREO** was effectively discontinued/cancelled and therefore did not proceed to a full assessment product. **AARG-ADA** advanced some preparatory and related atlas/data work, but no final assessment output corresponding to the ProDoc design was completed. **WWQA** did not deliver the comprehensive global World Water Quality Assessment foreseen under Output A; the work evolved instead into the World Water Quality Alliance, a platform/community-of-practice model that generated workstreams, pilot activities, policy products and partnerships, but not the originally planned global assessment. Evidence from interviews and project documentation indicates that these delivery gaps reflected a combination of overambitious initial design assumptions, uneven funding and implementation capacity, institutional and staffing changes, and the evolution of some components away from their originally envisaged assessment models.	

	Narrative Assessment	**Sources of Information/Evidence**
	When considering the 38 Knowledge Products of the project, download data from the UNEP Knowledge Repository further illustrates both the scale and the limits of Output A achievements. While overall volumes confirm strong global visibility (particularly for flagship climate assessments), downloads are concentrated across a narrower sample of products and countries. This indicates that Output A has been effective in generating strong demand for global public goods, while highlighting variations in reach and engagement across regions and user groups. Regional aggregation (Figure 6) illustrates these variations. Europe accounts for the largest share of downloads (44,705 or 40%), followed by North America (26,775 or 24%) and Asia-Pacific (23,075 or 21%). Latin America and the Caribbean shows moderate engagement (12,303 or 11%), while Africa (3,124 or 3%) and the Middle East and Central Asia (2,300 or 2%) account for smaller shares. Higher download volumes are observed in countries with large research communities and active participation in global policy processes, including the United States, countries in Europe, China, India and Brazil, as well as several large middle-income countries. At the same time, uptake in other contexts remains more variable. In Africa, for example, engagement is unevenly present across the continent with more pronounced access in a number of countries (e.g. South Africa, Kenya, Nigeria), and comparatively lower volumes elsewhere. Similar patterns are observed in LDCs and SIDS. These differences appear to reflect varying levels of internet access, capacity (e.g. English-speaking contexts), and integration into global knowledge and policy networks. They also point to constraints in the development and dissemination processes of the knowledge products, including the predominance of English-language outputs and the limited use of structured national-level dissemination mechanisms.	

	Narrative Assessment	Sources of Information/Evidence
	Figure 6: Percentage of total downloads by region for Project A3's 38 knowledge products  **(Source: UNEP Knowledge Repository Statistics)** All three Output A indicators exceeded their targets, particularly substantially for A-I03 and, to a lesser extent, A-I02. However, indicator values are influenced by low baselines, aggregation across heterogeneous components, the use of proxy measures for uptake, and the dominance of CLIMASCI-related outputs in reported figures. The indicators measured use, reach or uptake of selected products and services rather than completion of each assessment component. In particular, the very high number of countries reported under indicator A-I03 reflects the reach of climate-related products rather than balanced delivery across all Output A components; A-I03 did not include WWQA, while A-I04 related specifically to AMPPAC. As a result, targets could be met or exceeded even though BREO, AARG-ADA and WWQA did not all deliver the assessment products originally envisaged. Taken together, download volumes, policy citations and selected examples of use in international and national processes therefore confirm strong scale and visibility for some outputs, but not comparable performance across all components. Performance in practice remained uneven: highly effective and institutionalised assessment processes (particularly CLIMASCI and Frontiers, and to a lesser extent WOA and AMPPAC) contrasted with components that were underdeveloped, not completed, or reoriented away from their original assessment objectives. Level of delivery: Partially delivered	

	Narrative Assessment	Sources of Information/Evidence
Output B: Standards and principles for environmental information systems and data for assessments (WOA, BREO, AARG-ADA, WWQA) provided and their related web-based knowledge platforms being used. **Performance against Indicators and Targets** B-I01 The number of technical and scientific services provided to the Regular Process Secretariat - and sets of projections established and policy pathways created. Baseline: 0 Target: 2 Achieved: 2 B-I02 The number of African countries, institutions, with both complex and non-complex datasets, acknowledging use of open data information for the management of African rangelands, grasslands and deserts.	**Output B** shows mixed and uneven performance across components. While several planned technical services, data systems and knowledge platforms were delivered, particularly under WOA and WWQA, other components were only partially implemented or did not materialise as originally envisaged. According to the MTR, the project contributed to a significant increase in the accessibility and use of UNEP environmental data, with overall usage increasing by approximately 184 per cent over the period 2019-2022, indicating growing demand for UNEP's data platforms despite limitations in their integration and sustained use. Indicator targets related to provision and participation were formally met; however, these results require cautious interpretation. Under **WOA**, UNEP provided technical and scientific services to the Regular Process Secretariat, including contributions to global assessment processes and related analytical work. These services reflect a well-established institutional function and contributed to the achievement of planned outputs (indicator B-I01) under this component. Under **WWQA**, progress is evidenced by the increase in the number of countries submitting water quality data to GEMS/Water, reaching the target (indicator B-I03) of ten additional countries. This confirms the continued relevance and operational functionality of the platform as a global data repository. While some progress reports refer to the World Environment Situation Room (WESR) as a potential interface for data dissemination and integration, this platform was not part of the original project design or results framework. Available evidence suggests that references to WESR reflected broader UNEP developments rather than a systematically operationalised component of Project A3, and its use in relation to project outputs remained limited and largely indicative. Evidence for **AARG-ADA** achievements under Output B is limited. While the indicator reports realisation in terms of countries acknowledging the use of open data for rangeland and grassland management, the underlying assessment (African Rangeland and Grassland Atlas) was not completed, and there is unclear evidence of a fully operational or widely used data platform corresponding to the original design. The **BREO** component did not deliver identifiable outputs under Output B. More fundamentally, Output B indicators primarily measure the provision of services and participation in data systems, rather than their effective use, integration into assessment processes, or influence on decision-making. Qualitative evidence from interviews suggests that these systems were not consistently aligned with user needs, particularly in terms of accessibility, practical usability for policymakers and practitioners, interoperability with other UNEP knowledge platforms, and systematic integration into UNEP's wider assessment and science-policy processes. As a result,	-Project reports/PIRs -Interviews with project team -Web data/UNEP Knowledge Repository -Interviews with beneficiaries

	Narrative Assessment	Sources of Information/Evidence
Baseline: 2 Target: 15 Achieved: 15 B-I03 Number of new countries submitting water quality data with the GEMS/Water Baseline: 2 Target: 10 Achieved: 10	linkages between data generation, assessment production and downstream policy application remained uneven. Taken together, while Output B achieved its formal targets, the evidence points to partial achievement in substantive terms, with functioning elements in specific components (notably WOA and WWQA), but limited coherence, uneven implementation, and constrained contribution to the broader science-policy interface. Level of delivery: Partially delivered	
Output C: Technical early warning information is provided to countries and institutions on emerging issues through reports and forums (including the - Science-Policy-Business Forum (SPBF)). **- Technical report on Risk and Mitigation of Emerging Zoonoses in Asia Pacific (RMEZAP) in English and Chinese.** **Performance against Indicators and Targets** C-I01 Number of yearly published frontiers report. Baseline: 0 Target: 4	**Output C** focused on the provision of **technical early warning information on environmental risks and emerging issues**, including through Frontiers reports and selected thematic assessments. In the Project Document, this output explicitly included Frontiers as a core component, alongside contributions from WOA, WWQA and AARG-ADA. The 2023 project revision added to the initial formulation of output C (i.e. *Technical early warning information provided to countries and institutions on emerging issues through reports and forums*) the following dimensions: "*(including the - Science-Policy-Business Forum (SPBF)). Technical report on Risk and Mitigation of Emerging Zoonoses in Asia Pacific (RMEZAP) in English and Chinese*". However, this did not bring to formulate specific output indicators to monitor these complements. The evaluation finds that Output C was **largely achieved**, driven primarily by the strong and consistent delivery of the **Frontiers report series**. The inventory of A3 Knowledge Products compiled by the evaluation confirms regular production of Frontiers reports and special issues over the project period (2019-2025), covering emerging environmental risks such as zoonotic diseases, climate-biodiversity interactions, novel food systems, and systemic environmental threats. Frontiers has become a **distinctive and influential UNEP product**, characterised by a clear focus on emerging issues and forward-looking analysis, strong visibility and communication reach, flexibility in thematic coverage, and responsiveness to global policy debates (e.g. pandemics, One Health, climate-nature linkages). Evidence from interviews further indicates that Frontiers contributed to shaping global narratives, including its role in informing discussions around One Health and environmental risk framing (confer also 4.4.3). In addition to the Frontiers series, Output C also included **related early warning-type publications and thematic assessments**, such as: • *Impacts of Sand and Dust Storms on Oceans* (2020),	-Project reports/PIRs -Interviews with project team -Web data/UNEP Knowledge Repository -Interviews with beneficiaries -SPBF case study

	Narrative Assessment	Sources of Information/Evidence
Achieved: 6 C-I02 The number of institutions that are accessing the frontiers report Baseline: 0 Target: 10 Achieved: 101 C-I03 Number of relevant global, regional and national forums and institutions referring to or using the analyses of emerging issues as presented in the Frontiers publication Baseline: 15 Target: 25 Achieved: 31 C-I04 The number of technical and scientific services provided to the Regular Process Secretariat (WOA). Baseline: 0 Target: 2 Achieved: 4 C-I05 Information repository (AARG-ADA). Baseline: 0 Target: 1 Achieved: 1 C-I06 Published Scenario Analyses (WWQA).	• *A Scientific Assessment of the Third Pole Environment* (2022), • and cross-cutting reports such as *COVID-19: A Warning* (2022), which bridged AMPPAC and Frontiers. These outputs reinforce the role of Output C as a **flexible mechanism for rapid, policy-relevant environmental intelligence**. However, contributions from other components originally associated with Output C (notably AARG-ADA and WWQA) were **limited or indirect**, consistent with broader implementation challenges also referred under Output A. As a result, the achievement of Output C relies predominantly on the Frontiers series and associated thematic outputs, rather than on a fully integrated multi-component delivery as originally envisaged. Therefore, Output C demonstrates **strong performance in terms of relevance, visibility and timeliness**, particularly through Frontiers, which has become a key instrument for UNEP's early warning and science-policy interface functions. At the same time, the output's achievement is **structurally unbalanced**, with Frontiers accounting for the majority of results. Level of delivery: Partially delivered	

	Narrative Assessment	Sources of Information/Evidence
Baseline: 0 Target: 1 Achieved: 1 C-I07 Workshop reports and publication Baseline: 0 Target: 2 Achieved: 1		
Output D: Built capacity in countries and institutions to further produce and improve scientific assessment and early warning information and to use online platforms and data. **Performance against Indicators and Targets** D-I01 Number of regional institutional actors reached through capacity building expert services provided to the Regular Process Secretariat (WOA). Baseline: 0 Target: 20 Achieved: 20 D-I02 Number of countries using the online platform(s) that	**Output D** shows partial and uneven achievement, with a clear gap between activity delivery and sustained outcomes. As defined in the Project Document, capacity building under this output was expected to be delivered through the assessment processes themselves (namely WOA, BREO, AARG-ADA and WWQA) rather than as a standalone intervention. As a result, performance under Output D closely reflects the uneven implementation of these components. Under **WOA**, capacity-building activities delivered through support to the Regular Process Secretariat reached the targeted number of regional institutional actors. These efforts included participation in and co-organisation of workshops and expert processes, notably the regional workshop in Seychelles (July–August 2023), which brought together a wide range of governmental, intergovernmental and scientific stakeholders and contributed inputs to the WOA III drafting process. Capacity building under this component was therefore embedded within the assessment process itself, strengthening participation and engagement in global ocean assessment processes. However, these contributions were largely process-oriented and facilitative, with limited evidence of sustained institutional capacity development beyond participation in the Regular Process. Under **BREO**, no assessment was delivered under the project, and consequently the associated capacity-building functions did not materialise. The very low level of reported platform use (one country against a target of five) reflects the absence of deliverables rather than limited uptake of an existing system. Similarly, under **AARG-ADA**, the indicator reports achievement in terms of countries using rangeland and desert atlas platforms. However, this result should be interpreted with caution. The underlying assessment of the African Rangeland and Grassland Atlas itself was not completed, and there is limited evidence of a fully operational or widely used platform corresponding to the original project design. Consequently, evidence of meaningful capacity building under this component remains unclear.	-Project reports/PIRs -Interviews with project team -Web data/UNEP Knowledge Repository -Interviews with beneficiaries

	Narrative Assessment	Sources of Information/Evidence
house the relevant thematic environmental assessments (BREO), data, information, summaries, synthesis, and outlooks. Baseline: 0 Target: 5 Achieved: 1 D-I03 Number of countries using the online platform(s) on the Rangeland and Desert Atlases emanating from environmental assessments, and shared data, information, summaries, and their synthesis. Baseline: 0 Target: 25 Achieved: 25	Capacity-building contributions under **WWQA** are partially reflected in increased participation in data systems (e.g. GEMS/Water). The WWQA terminal evaluation found that, while some capacity-building and monitoring initiatives contributed to local data-generation efforts and pilot applications, evidence of sustained institutional uptake and long-term capacity development remained limited. The ProDoc and 2023 revision of Project A3 featured an output D indicator for this component (i.e. *Number of countries participating in capacity building (WWQA)*) which was not monitored in the progress reports. Level of delivery: Partially delivered	
Output E: Participatory Communities of Practices formed and operational for the following assessments: WOA, BREO, AARGADA. **Performance against Indicators and Targets** E-I01 The number of meetings of the Group of Experts on Scientific	**Output E** shows limited to moderate achievement, with results concentrated in a small number of components. As defined in the Project Document, this output aimed to establish and operationalise participatory communities of practice around selected assessments, notably WOA, BREO and AARG-ADA. In practice, the extent to which such communities were formed and sustained varied significantly across components. Under **WOA**, the Group of Experts on the Scientific Aspects of Marine Environmental Protection (GESAMP) provides an established and functioning expert community. The target number of meetings was achieved, and this mechanism reflects a relatively well-institutionalised and continuous community of practice, embedded within the broader Regular Process framework. In contrast, **BREO** did not deliver its planned assessment, and consequently no corresponding community of practice was established.	-Project reports/PIRs -Interviews with project team -Web data/UNEP Knowledge Repository -Interviews with beneficiaries

	Narrative Assessment	**Sources of Information/Evidence**
Aspects of Marine Environment Protection (WOA) Baseline sponsored by GESAMP with results of the working group of 40 study harmonizing assessments and monitoring. Baseline: 0 Target: 3 Achieved: 3 E-I02 Number of consultative meetings held, and environmental assessments (BREO) prepared, both in hard copy and on-line platform of thematic assessments, data and information. Baseline: 0 Target: 3 Achieved: 1	Similarly, under **AARG-ADA**, the absence of a completed assessment limited the emergence of a structured and sustained community of practice. While some engagement activities may have taken place, there is no clear evidence of an operational network corresponding to the original project design. While the original ProDoc featured an output E indicator for this component (i.e. *Number of Evidence-based decision and policy-making reports prepared on grasslands and rangelands (AARG-ADA) derived from participation by communities of practice*), this indicator was not retained in the 2023's project revision. Related platforms and initiatives (e.g. the SPBF, the WWQA) provided additional spaces for stakeholder engagement. The MTR highlighted the scale of stakeholder engagement achieved through the SPBF (despite not being featured as an output E component), which brought together approximately 5,000 participants and 126 speakers across sectors. However, these functioned as parallel or complementary networks rather than as structured communities of practice and did not evolve into sustained or institutionally anchored mechanisms. On **WWQA**, while acknowledging non-delivery of the full assessment, several interviewees strongly defended the alliance/network/community-of-practice value, even if this was not part of the original project design. Across components, challenges included limited institutional anchoring, limited dedicated resources, and the absence of a clear strategy for sustaining engagement beyond individual activities. This constrained the ability of communities to support continuous knowledge exchange, co-production of assessments, or long-term capacity development. Output E is therefore assessed as partially achieved. While a functioning and institutionalised community of practice exists under WOA, other components did not succeed in establishing sustained and operational communities as originally envisaged Level of delivery: Partially delivered	

156. The evaluation found that several project outputs and processes incorporated inclusion-related considerations, although unevenly and mostly at the level of participation, accessibility and thematic content rather than demonstrated effects. Progress reporting indicates efforts to improve gender and geographical balance among authors, reviewers, panellists and expert groups; gender review of assessment reports; accessible formats for selected reports; youth participation in SPBF and expert processes; and some attention to disability inclusion in SPBF event arrangements. Selected outputs also addressed issues relevant to vulnerable groups, including gender equality and social inclusion in adaptation finance, healthy ageing, environmental risks affecting older persons, and climate vulnerability. However, the core project output indicators did not systematically track differentiated benefits, harms or uptake among groups affected by gender, vulnerability, marginalisation or disability. The evaluation therefore did not identify clear evidence of positive or negative effects on disadvantaged groups, beyond these limited examples of inclusive participation, accessibility measures and visibility of relevant issues in selected outputs.

157. Overall, the project delivered a large and visible portfolio of outputs, particularly through well-established assessment and early warning products such as CLIMASCI and Frontiers. However, output delivery remained uneven across components. While several targets were formally achieved or exceeded, some planned assessments, platforms and community-of-practice functions were only partially delivered or not completed, notably under BREO, AARG-ADA and parts of WWQA. The project was therefore stronger in producing globally visible knowledge products than in consistently delivering the full range of enabling and institutional functions originally envisaged.

4.4.2 Achievement of Project Outcomes

Outcome 1: Global/regional forums, Governments and other stakeholders increasingly use open-access assessment information and knowledge on environmental issues for decision-making to inform development and implementation of policies, practices, solutions, and actions to tackle environmental issues, and identify emerging issues.

158. Project A3 contributed to outcome-level uptake across a wide range of stakeholders, including intergovernmental forums, national governments, multilateral organisations and scientific communities. The strength and nature of this uptake differed considerably across outputs, depending on institutional anchoring, alignment with policy processes, sustained resourcing and active engagement with users. Where these conditions were present, use was strong and sustained; where they were weaker, visibility and uptake remained more limited. The timing of outputs in relation to policy and decision-making cycles also influenced results. Climate-related assessments such as the Emissions Gap Report and Adaptation Gap Report were systematically released ahead of UNFCCC COP meetings and explicitly designed to inform negotiations. Interview evidence confirms that this alignment contributed to their use in policy discussions and national preparation processes, especially when combined with briefings, side events and targeted dissemination. Comparable alignment was less consistent across other components.

159. Available metrics confirm this differentiated pattern: institutional series assessments show very high levels of downloads as well as policy references retrieved by Overton, while other outputs demonstrate more moderate and, in some cases, limited traceable uptake.

160. Different forms of uptake are observable. Conceptual and strategic uptake -such as shaping policy discourse and informing negotiation positions- is most evident, particularly in global processes. Direct instrumental use in policy design or implementation is more limited and concentrated in specific cases. Monitoring systems only partially capture

these dynamics, as indicators rely heavily on proxy measures and do not systematically distinguish between access, participation and sustained or institutionalised use.

161. This interpretation is reinforced by evaluation interviews, which indicate that UNEP assessments are most influential in shaping perceptions, comparative positioning and negotiation narratives, rather than directly determining policy decisions or implementation choices at national level. For example, WASP policy briefs were used to inform specific dialogues and negotiations, including UNFCCC research dialogues and COP events. While such contributions may not translate into high citation counts or widespread visibility, they represent a distinct form of policy influence that is not adequately captured by existing monitoring systems.

162. The final outcome-indicator verification exercise provides useful evidence of policy reference and institutional visibility, but it should be interpreted as a partial product-level evidence base rather than a comprehensive measure of project-wide outcome achievement. The project team compiled a summary table which reports 96 countries or entities for outcome indicator 1, 156 forums and institutions for outcome indicator 2, and 96 for outcome indicator 3, based on evidence from EGR 2024, EGR 2023, AGR 2024, AGR 2023 and Frontiers. The same source notes that other project outputs and earlier editions were not searched due to resource constraints. The figures may therefore understate some forms of uptake, while still only partially aligning with the formal indicators. They are strongest as evidence of policy citation, institutional reference and selected use of specific flagship products, and weaker as evidence of systematic country reporting, institutionalisation or implementation of mechanisms and policies across the full A3 portfolio.

163. More specifically, outcome indicator 1 (see below) appears to overstate systemic reporting effects by relying on documentary references rather than direct evidence of reporting through UNEP-linked information systems; outcome indicator 2 is the most credible of the three, but still largely measures reference and apparent use rather than depth or significance of uptake; and outcome indicator 3 relies on evidence that is insufficient to demonstrate development or implementation of policies or mechanisms at the scale reported. While there is strong evidence of contribution to global and multilateral policy processes, as well as selected examples of national and institutional use, the strongest and most systematically documented outcome-level evidence relates to global policy dialogue, multilateral negotiations and international institutions. Evidence of national-level use, including in developing countries, is available but remains more selective, uneven and less systematically documented.

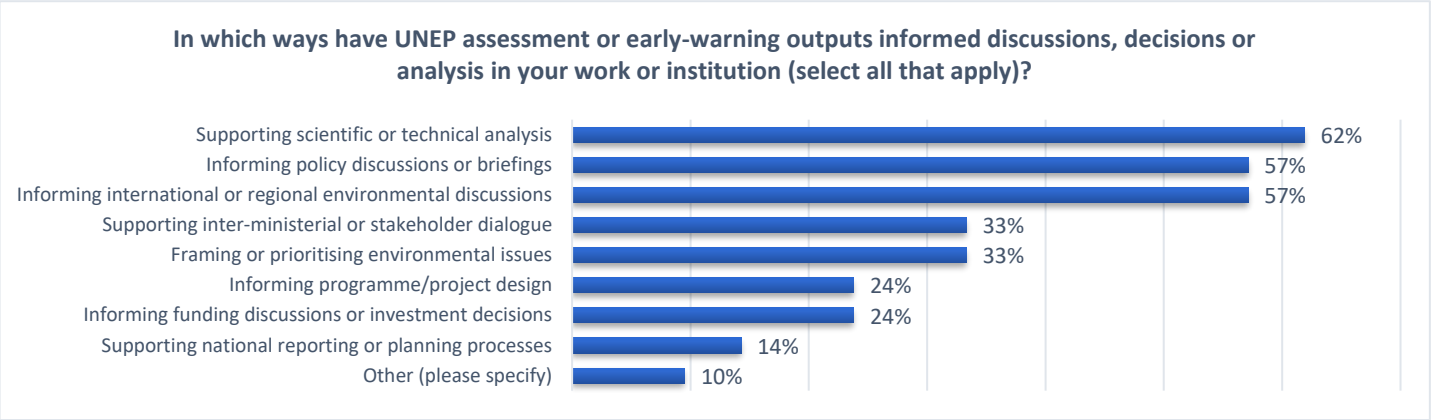
164. Moreover, the formal outcome indicators and monitoring arrangements do not adequately distinguish between policy reference, institutional use, country reporting, and the development or implementation of national mechanisms, policies or guidelines. Broader and sustained outcome-level change therefore cannot be comprehensively demonstrated. The disconnect between the very high reported figures and the more nuanced evidence on actual uptake, policy influence and institutionalisation further confirms limitations in the coherence and operationalisation of the results framework, particularly in capturing the transition from visibility and uptake to institutional or behavioural change. The contrast with WWQA illustrates this differentiation: while WWQA generated technically credible outputs and workstream-level products, its terminal evaluation found limited outcome-level uptake, weak policy anchoring and limited evidence that the Alliance catalysed broader institutional, policy or investment changes.

Table 14: Achievement of project outcomes

Outcome 1	**Global/regional forums, Governments and other stakeholders increasingly use open-access assessment information and knowledge on environmental issues for decision- making to inform development and implementation of policies, practices, solutions, and actions to tackle environmental issues, and identify emerging issues.**
Performance against Indicator(s) and Target(s):	1. **Increase in the number of countries reporting on the environmental dimension of sustainable development through shared environmental information systems with country-level data made discoverable through UN Environment Programme** Baseline: 0, Target: 10, Achieved: 96 2. **Number of relevant global, regional and national forums and institutions using data on environmental trends identified through UNEP for environmental assessment, early warning on emerging issues and/or facilitation of policy action** Baseline: 0, Target: 5, Achieved: 156 3. **Increase in number of countries reporting on the development and/or implementation of mechanisms, policies, guidelines and/or instruments that strengthen the science-policy interface and contribute to sustainable development and well-being (including marine, freshwater and terrestrial ecosystems health and productivity and transboundary collaboration)** Baseline: 0, Target: 5, Achieved: 96
Sources of Information /Evidence:	Project reports/PIRs, Interviews with project team, Web data/UNEP Knowledge Repository statistics, Interviews with beneficiaries, SPBF case study, Survey, Overton
Narrative Assessment:	**Indicator 1** Evidence indicates that the project contributed to strengthening environmental data systems and enabling conditions for country-level reporting, particularly through WWQA, GEMS/Water and related platforms. These efforts supported data generation, harmonisation and accessibility, including contributions to SDG 6.3.2 monitoring, and facilitated broader country participation in environmental data systems. They also enabled multi-country engagement in assessments and the piloting of data use cases. One documented example from the WWQA TE is Sierra Leone, where WWQA activities contributed to strengthening water quality monitoring and SDG reporting. At the same time, the depth of engagement appears to have varied considerably, ranging from data submission and participation in pilot initiatives to more substantive institutional use. Quantitative reporting indicates that outcome indicator 1 significantly exceeded its target (96 countries against a target of 10). However, the evidence base used to derive this figure is only partially aligned with what the indicator is intended to measure. The indicator refers to countries reporting on the environmental dimension of sustainable development through shared environmental information systems with country-level data made discoverable through UNEP. By contrast, the supporting documentation mainly compiles policy documents and institutional publications in which UNEP reports are cited or referenced, and aggregates these across selected outputs. This provides useful evidence of reach and recognition, but it

	does not in itself provide sufficient evidence to demonstrate that countries are reporting through shared environmental information systems, nor does it clearly distinguish between formal reporting, data submission, platform access and broader policy reference. The evidence therefore supports a finding of expanded visibility and some strengthening of enabling conditions for reporting, particularly through WWQA and GEMS/Water, but does not substantiate the reported figure as a robust measure of systemic reporting behaviour. **Indicator 2** Quantitative reporting for outcome indicator 2 indicates that 156 forums and institutions were found using UNEP data on environmental trends for assessment, early warning and/or policy action. This indicator is more closely aligned than the other indicators with the type of evidence collected, since documentary references and policy citations do provide plausible evidence of institutional use. However, the methodology still equates citation or reference with use, without systematically distinguishing between different levels of uptake, such as awareness, analytical use, incorporation into internal deliberations, or direct influence on policy action. In addition, the figure is aggregated across multiple reports and institutional sources, with no clear indication of deduplication or weighting by significance of use. The result is therefore best interpreted as evidence of substantial institutional reach and policy referencing, especially for the climate-related flagship outputs, rather than as a precise or standardised measure of the depth or significance of use. Survey responses provide some indicative evidence on patterns of use (Figure 8). Respondents reported using A3 products primarily to support scientific or technical analysis (62%), inform policy discussions inform policy discussions or briefings (57%) and international or regional environmental discussions (57%). Furthermore, more than 70% of respondents indicated that UNEP assessment outputs are routinely or occasionally referenced or embedded in institutional processes (Annex V). While the sample was somewhat limited and skewed toward contributors to key outputs, the findings are consistent with broader evidence from policy citations and interview data, suggesting that, among engaged stakeholders, A3 outputs are actively used, although not yet systematically embedded across all contexts. This is consistent with broader evidence pointing to significant but uneven uptake across the portfolio. Interview evidence also provides further insight into how UNEP climate assessments are used within government processes, particularly in international negotiation contexts. **Government representatives** indicated that the Emissions Gap Report was used in the preparation of national positions in fora such as the G20 and UNFCCC. The MTR also reported strong evidence of policy uptake of key assessment products, notably the Emissions Gap Report, which was used by approximately 77 per cent of COP26 delegates and by 72 per cent of respondents for the preparation of Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs), and was also referenced in COP outcomes. Interviewees emphasised that a key added value of these reports lies in their ability to provide regularly updated, policy-relevant information between major global assessment cycles, enabling governments to access timely evidence in rapidly evolving negotiation contexts. In this context, the reports provide accessible information on global emissions trends and their distribution across country groupings, supporting negotiation positions, burden-sharing narratives and ambition-setting.

Figure 7: Perceived areas of influence of the project's assessment and early-warning outputs



(source: Evaluation survey)

Beyond UNFCCC processes, A3 outputs are embedded across the **multilateral system**. The Adaptation Gap Report has been cited in international policy discussions, including statements by the United Nations Secretary-General and national leaders during global climate dialogues. Document analysis also shows frequent citation in publications by UN entities (e.g. UNDP, UNDESA, UNECE, UNESCO, FAO, WMO) and in official documentation of EU institutions, including European Commission services, the Publications Office of the European Union, and European Parliament Committees and Plenary documents. For example, the Frontiers report on *Making Peace with Nature* has been referenced in at least 196 policy documents across 69 institutional sources and 26 countries, predominantly in the public and intergovernmental sectors. This indicates that selected non-climate assessments also achieved meaningful geographic reach and institutional uptake, even if such influence remains more selective and less systematic across the broader portfolio.

Another uptake is also noted in international **financial institutions** and central banks. Institutional outputs are referenced in documents from the World Bank, regional development banks (Asian Development Bank, Inter-American Development Bank), the International Monetary Fund (IMF), the European Central Bank (ECB), the European Investment Bank (EIB), and national central banks in both middle-income and least developed countries. Interview evidence further confirms this pattern. One notable illustration is provided by the Adaptation Gap Report (Box 1).

Box 1. Adaptation Gap Report as an institutionalised pathway of uptake

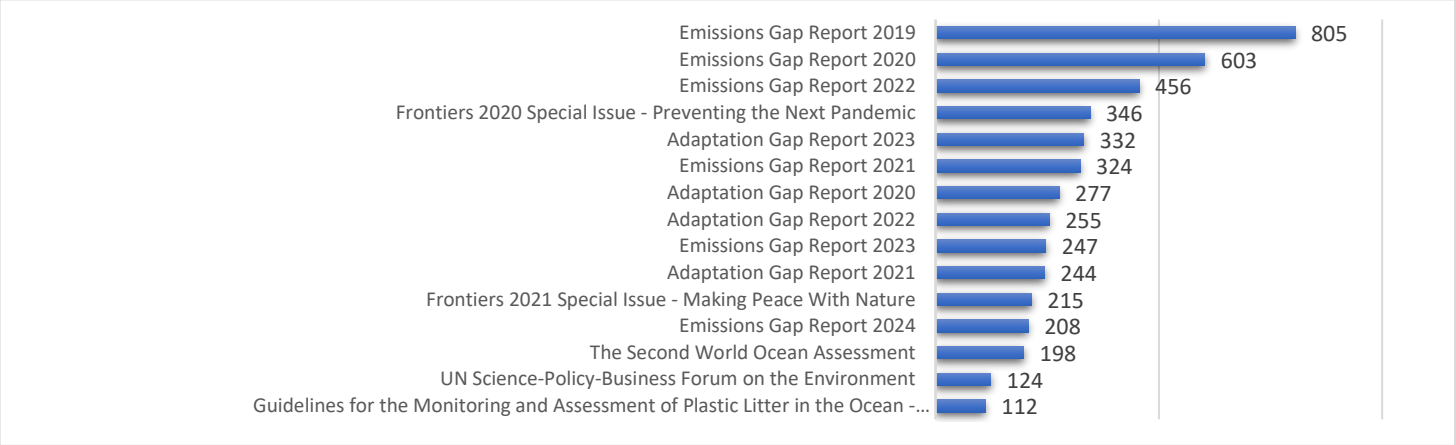
The Adaptation Gap Report illustrates one of the clearest examples of sustained institutional uptake under Project A3. The report is produced through a structured process combining scientific authorship, peer review and steering committee oversight,

	with contributions from a wide network of experts and institutional partners. While still consolidating around 2019, the AGR matured over the project period into a well-established annual product with stable governance arrangements, recurring production cycles and strong links to policy processes. As a recurring, policy-oriented assessment aligned with UNFCCC processes, it has become an established reference point in international climate discussions and adaptation finance debates. Evidence from interviews and user surveys indicates that the AGR is used in international negotiations, national adaptation planning and multilateral finance discussions, particularly in relation to adaptation finance gaps. Interview evidence also indicates that institutions such as the African Development Bank use the AGR as a reference source for adaptation finance data to support analytical work, programming decisions and investment justification. The Global Environment Facility (GEF) further reported direct use of the AGR in shaping institutional strategies for the Least Developed Countries Fund (LDCF) and Special Climate Change Fund (SCCF), including sector prioritisation and adaptation finance approaches. Survey evidence further points to use in COP-related processes and, in some cases, in the preparation or updating of NDCs. Policy citation data confirms uptake across governments, international organisations and financial institutions, including in COP statements and analytical work by institutions such as the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD), World Bank and IMF. Available evidence suggests that the AGR has achieved a relatively complete pathway from assessment production to institutional uptake and policy influence.
	At the same time, the strongest and most systematic uptake in this area remains associated with a limited number of institutional outputs, while broader engagement with the financial sector remains relatively indirect and underdeveloped. According to informants, this limitation is compounded by insufficient engagement of finance actors in the production and targeting of assessment outputs. Given the growing role of private finance and corporate action in areas such as climate adaptation, this was referred as representing a missed opportunity to enhance the relevance and use of assessments beyond public sector and multilateral stakeholders. On a related line, several informants expressed interest in seeing stronger coverage of finance-related dimensions in assessment outputs. This includes more systematic analysis of private sector engagement, financial flows and investment dynamics, as well as the role of finance as a key enabler of implementation. Such enhancements were seen as important to increase the practical relevance of assessments for financial institutions and to better reflect emerging priorities around climate finance, resilience investments and broader "means of implementation" in policy processes. Traceable uptake by **private sector** actors remains comparatively limited, reflecting both data constraints and the absence of structured engagement mechanisms. This is consistent with the case study on the Science-Policy-Business Forum which found that the SPBF has created visibility and dialogue opportunities between science, policy and business actors and contributed to broader cross-sector discussions on environmental issues. However, available evidence indicates that SPBF was not systematically used as a dissemination or uptake mechanism for A3 outputs, and its contribution remained largely indirect and discursive. There is no clear evidence that this visibility translated into systematic or traceable use of assessment findings in private sector decision-making, investment strategies or financial frameworks. Interviewees highlighted limited structured linkages of A3 products with private sector actors, as well as unclear systems for tracking their uptake of UNEP data and assessments. Several informants pointed to scope for strengthening the participation of the

corporate sector in the governance and dissemination of selected assessments, and for better leveraging existing platforms -such as the UNEP Finance Initiative- to engage more systematically with financial institutions, insurers and investors and the private sector. This also reflects the partial realisation of the potential of platforms such as SPBF to act as a bridge between scientific assessments and private sector decision-making. At the same time, interview evidence suggests that where assessment findings are framed in terms of economic relevance and efficiency gains, they are more likely to resonate with private sector actors. In the case of nitrogen in Frontiers, framing the issue through a circular economy lens -highlighting inefficiencies in global fertiliser use and the associated potential economic savings- was seen as instrumental in signalling relevance for corporate stakeholders, particularly in agriculture and agri-food system.

Policy mention patterns confirm this concentration of influence. Overton data for the 38 publications (and the SPBF) produced under Project A3 show that a small number of institutional series reports (i.e. AGR and EGR) account for the highest concentration of references in policy-oriented documents. At the same time, several other assessments, particularly within the Frontiers series and selected thematic outputs, also show consistent and policy-relevant citation patterns. Influence is therefore not evenly distributed, but follows a tiered pattern shaped by topic salience, timing, institutional anchoring and sustained investment.

Figure 8: Number of policy-oriented mentions of the 15 most referenced project publications



(Source: Overton database)

Within UNEP, there is evidence of internal uptake of A3 outputs, although this is not yet fully systematic. Findings from key reports, particularly the Emissions Gap Report and Adaptation Gap Report, have informed GEF programming discussions, CPR deliberations and internal policy dialogues, and have been presented in UNEP forums including subcommittee meetings and townhall events. Project outputs have also contributed to broader UNEP processes and platforms such as the WESR,

	UNEA-related processes and international events including Stockholm+50 and the World Water Forum. The MTS 2022-2025 further identifies several A3 outputs (EGR, AGR, Frontiers, WWQA) as "signature, policy-relevant scientific assessments", reflecting their intended role within UNEP's science-policy architecture. According to evaluation informants, some outputs (e.g. the WASP policy briefs) have informed follow-up initiatives (e.g. project concept development on loss and damage), and have been used internally within UNEP to support the development of new concepts, proposals and analytical workstreams, including as background evidence for programme design and strategic reflections. Interviews also suggest further scope to strengthen the systematic uptake of assessment findings within UNEP. Existing links to policy discussions and programming processes remain uneven and not yet systematic and could benefit from more formalised mechanisms to ensure that insights from assessments are translated more consistently into programme design, strategic planning and cross-divisional decision-making. **Indicator 3** Project reporting states that outcome indicator 3 exceeded its target (96 countries reported against a target of 5). However, this figure requires cautious interpretation. It mainly shows that UNEP reports were cited by policy-oriented publications originating from or associated with these countries, but these references do not necessarily demonstrate a "reporting on the development and/or implementation of mechanisms, policies, guidelines and/or instruments that strengthen the science-policy interface and contribute to sustainable development and well-being". A shortcoming stems from the fact that the indicator was insufficiently SMART when originally designed and did not specify, inter alia, in which systems of platforms or through which processes or modalities countries reporting was expected to be realised and monitored. Nonetheless, the evaluation identified a limited number of clearly documented or interview-confirmed examples of country-level, governmental or policy-related uptake. In Brazil, for example, the Adaptation Gap Report informed the preparation of the national adaptation strategy and national adaptation plan, particularly through its analysis of adaptation finance needs. More broadly, survey evidence indicates that AGR findings are used by national delegates and policymakers in the preparation and updating of Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs) and in COP-related processes, suggesting a role in shaping national adaptation priorities and international negotiation positions. The Emissions Gap Report is similarly used by national institutions and agencies, though more prominently in mitigation policy analysis, benchmarking and communication. National agencies, such as the Swedish Environmental Protection Agency, have used the EGR to support policy analysis and communication on emissions trends and ambition gaps. Survey results further indicate that the EGR series is used by government representatives in the preparation and updating of NDCs, as well as in international climate negotiations, where it serves as a reference point for assessing global ambition and informing national positioning. Evidence of influence is also found in the Frontiers Report. In the United States, the Frontiers chapter on ecological connectivity was used as supporting material in congressional statements related to the Wildlife Corridor Conservation Act

	and was later used in Executive Office guidance on wildlife corridors. Additional examples include use of the *Frontiers* report in the German Government's Environmental Report 2019 and use of the nitrogen chapter by India and Bangladesh in connection with the UNEA-4 nitrogen resolution. Interview evidence suggests that this chapter played a catalytic role by helping frame nitrogen pollution as both an environmental risk and a circular economy opportunity, thereby supporting the broader policy process that led to the resolution, the establishment of a subsequent working group[37], and later follow-on initiatives. A limited number of other examples point to concrete country- or subnational-level use of project outputs in policy-related processes. For instance, at subnational level, the State of São Paulo used UNEP's marine litter guidance as a framework to discuss and propose a plan for monitoring and assessment of marine litter.
Level of Achievement:	Partially achieved

[37] https://www.unep.org/nitrogen-management-WG

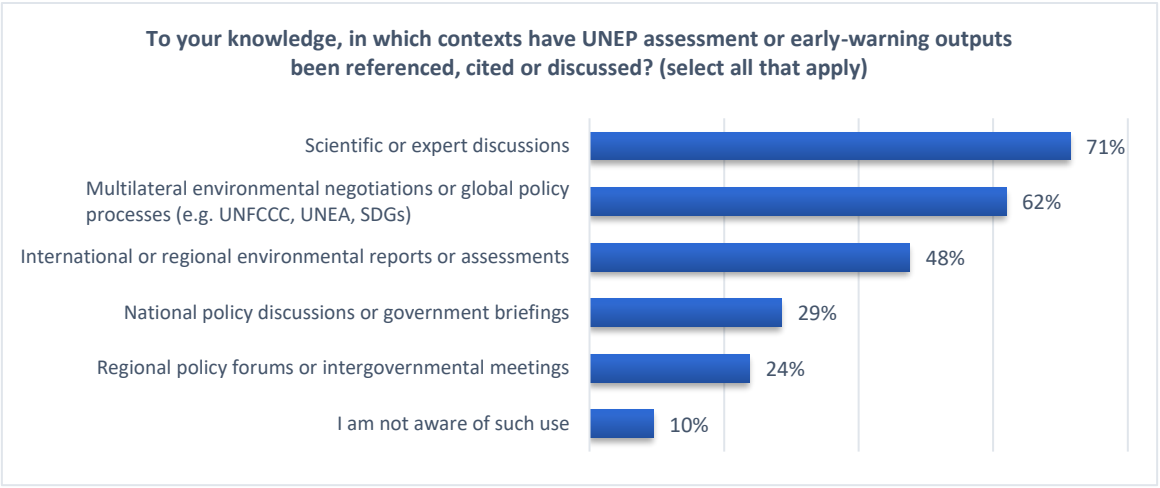
4.4.3 Likelihood of Impact

165. The likelihood that Project A3 will generate sustained impact beyond its completion is assessed as **moderately likely**. This reflects a combination of strong enabling conditions associated with UNEP's assessment function and persistent structural constraints that limit the breadth, depth and sustainability of impact across the portfolio.

166. The project has established several important drivers of longer-term impact. In particular, a subset of outputs (most notably institutional series such as the EGR and AGR) demonstrate characteristics associated with sustained influence at the science-policy interface. These include strong scientific credibility, institutionalised production cycles, established governance arrangements and close alignment with global policy processes, particularly under the UNFCCC. As evidenced in Section 4.4.2, these reports are consistently used in international negotiations, national policy processes and multilateral financing discussions, indicating a high likelihood of continued influence.

167. The evaluation survey provides a complementary indication of how project outputs have been influential (Figure 9). Respondents reported that assessments and early-warning products are primarily applied in scientific and expert discussions (71%), as well as in multilateral environmental negotiations and global policy processes (62%). This pattern reinforces the contribution of A3 outputs to shaping high-level policy dialogue and international processes. Responses suggest that uptake remains more concentrated in global and expert arenas than systematically embedded in broader national decision-making contexts. However, this finding must be interpreted with some caution, as the largest segment of survey respondents (i.e. 45%) were in research or academic institutions.

Figure 99: Perceived uptake of the project's assessment and early-warning outputs.



(Source: Evaluation survey)

168. Furthermore, some evidence suggests that influence extends beyond institutional climate outputs, although in a more limited and less consistent manner. Selected thematic and emerging-issue assessments (notably the Frontiers series) have contributed to shaping policy agendas, informing legislative processes and supporting analytical work across international organisations and national governments. For example, the 2020 Frontiers-related work on zoonotic diseases and pandemic prevention made a substantive contribution to shaping the emerging One Health agenda. According to interview evidence, the report helped frame and operationalise the concept of prevention, clarifying its distinction from preparedness, and was subsequently used to build narratives and inform the establishment and early development and discourse of the One Health approach,

including its later institutionalisation within the Quadripartite collaboration. This catalytic role is also evident in the Frontiers 2018/2019 report, notably in the chapter on nitrogen pollution, which provides a comprehensive example of how an assessment can contribute across the results chain, from scientific framing and agenda-setting to policy processes, partnerships and follow-on investments. The case presented in Box 2 illustrates this contribution pathway in more detail.

Box 2. Frontiers as a catalytic input to policy traction: the nitrogen chapter case

The 2018/2019 Frontiers chapter on nitrogen pollution provides an illustrative example of how UNEP's early warning products can contribute to policy processes in catalytic rather than linear ways. Developed rapidly ahead of UNEA-4, the chapter provided a clear scientific framing of nitrogen pollution and introduced the concept of a circular nitrogen economy. It was produced in parallel with ongoing efforts to advance a UNEA resolution on sustainable nitrogen management, with both processes reinforcing one another: the resolution established an institutional mandate, while the Frontiers chapter supplied the underlying narrative, evidence and conceptual framing.

Following its release, the chapter contributed to a sequence of policy and programmatic developments. It informed the establishment of an international working group involving approximately 90 countries, supported the launch of a global campaign on sustainable nitrogen management in 2019, and helped mobilise initial donor funding, including a contribution of approximately €1 million from Denmark. Over time, this process fed into subsequent milestones, including the Colombo Declaration, the 2022 UNEA resolution on nitrogen, and the integration of nutrient pollution targets into the Kunming–Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework (Target 7). Beyond its role in supporting the emergence of UNEA Resolution 4/14, the chapter has continued to provide an accessible reference for national focal points, members of the UNEP Working Group on Nitrogen and other stakeholders engaged in sustainable nitrogen management. Elements of this framing were also reflected in regional policy initiatives, including the European Union's Farm to Fork Strategy, which incorporates ambitions to reduce nutrient losses. It also contributed to the development of follow-on initiatives, including recently GEF-funded projects on nutrient management and circular solutions in countries such as the Maldives.

Consistent with wider findings of this evaluation, the influence of the Frontiers chapter is best understood as part of a broader, cumulative process in which multiple scientific, policy and funding actions reinforce one another over time. While direct attribution to specific outcomes is not possible, the evidence indicates that the chapter played a significant enabling role by shaping the narrative, supporting policy discussions, and contributing to the mobilisation of partnerships, resources and follow-on investments.

169. In addition, the project contributed to strengthening enabling conditions for impact through partnerships, platforms and knowledge networks. Initiatives such as the World Water Quality Assessment (WWQA), ocean-related processes (WOA/GESAMP) and other collaborative mechanisms supported multi-stakeholder engagement and technical exchange. While these contributions do not in themselves demonstrate sustained downstream impact, they provide a foundation for continued influence where linked to ongoing institutional processes. However, these pathways remain concentrated in selected outputs and are not supported by a consistently integrated project-wide system.

170. Policy citation data further confirms that some A3 outputs have achieved meaningful penetration into policy processes across multiple countries and institutional contexts. However, this influence is less systematic and generally less sustained than for institutional outputs. This evidence is further supported by the final progress report, which documents broader policy referencing and institutional uptake of selected outputs.

171. The pathways of influence identified by the evaluation were also shaped by the role of specific institutional actors and change agents. UNEP acted primarily as a convenor, knowledge broker and provider of scientifically credible assessments, while specialised

partners such as UNEP-CCC, scientific authors, steering committees and expert networks contributed technical legitimacy, continuity and policy relevance. In several cases, uptake was further enabled by policy champions and institutional processes external to the project, including UNFCCC negotiations, multilateral financing institutions, donor-supported initiatives and intergovernmental working groups. Partnerships and platforms such as WASP, WWQA, WOA/GESAMP and the Quadripartite One Health collaboration also played important intermediary roles by connecting assessment outputs to policy dialogues, expert communities and implementation-oriented initiatives. These actors collectively helped translate scientific outputs into broader agenda-setting, policy discussions and follow-on initiatives, although such pathways remained uneven across components.

172. At the same time, the evaluation found that pathways from knowledge production to policy or behavioural change were not sufficiently operationalised. This gap, highlighted in interviews, is reflected in the predominance of one-off dissemination approaches rather than sustained engagement strategies. Dissemination efforts were often limited to publication and launch events, with less emphasis on follow-up, targeted communication or iterative engagement with users. While some components (e.g. WASP policy briefs) adopted more process-oriented approaches, these remained limited in scale and were not embedded within a broader, systematic strategy. As a result, influence is most evident at the level of agenda-setting and policy discourse, while evidence of downstream change remains limited.

173. Interview evidence points to a set of interrelated structural and operational factors that help explain these limitations and constrain the translation of assessment outputs into sustained policy engagement and impact. A first constraint relates to UNEP's limited capacity for downstream engagement. Informants noted that dissemination efforts are often concentrated around single launch moments and suggested extending engagement over longer periods through sequenced outreach, targeted briefings and sustained interaction with key user groups.

174. The layered and multi-faceted design of the project, with its five outputs combining production of assessments and outlook reports, norms and standards, data systems, capacity development, and communities of practice was also little leveraged by most components -due in part to funding constraints- despite having the potential to anchor change at more systemic levels. In the case of emerging issues such as nitrogen management, while assessment outputs were effective in shaping global narratives and initiating policy momentum, informants highlighted that UNEP's capacity to sustain follow-up, support policy implementation and engage with ongoing intergovernmental processes remained limited relative to the scale of the issue. This limitation was conveyed to reflect a broader institutional challenge in UNEP, not a shortcoming of the Frontiers component or Project A3 itself, i.e. assessment products can successfully generate policy momentum, but sustained follow-up and implementation support often depend on mandates, staffing and resources located outside the assessment project, including in other divisions.

175. According to informants, a further structural constraint relates to the production cycles of major institutional reports. While these cycles support timeliness, visibility and alignment with policy processes, they were also found by some informants constraining the depth and ambition of analysis. Tight timelines prioritise incremental updates over more comprehensive or longer-term analytical work, limiting the extent to which assessments can explore complex or emerging issues in depth. This reduces the potential for more transformative or forward-looking insights. Informants therefore proposed to consider complementing annual reporting cycles with more strategic, multi-annual

analytical processes, including earlier identification and communication of key themes to enable deeper and more anticipatory analysis but also help to better prioritise proposals for participation.

176. In addition to these structural limitations, interview evidence indicates calls for a gradual evolution in the content and analytical focus of UNEP assessments. While stakeholders consistently value the scientific credibility and policy relevance of existing products, several informants highlighted the need to move beyond gap identification toward deeper analysis of implementation, including more systematic evidence on real-world outcomes, effectiveness, replication, scaling and progress over time. This need is relevant because, beyond the strongest flagship products, evidence of sustained institutional change is selective and uneven: it is visible in the continued anchoring of WOA/GESAMP processes, the partial continuation of WWQA-related networks through GEMS/Water, and the policy diffusion of selected Frontiers outputs, but less evident as systematic scaling across the A3 portfolio. In the case of climate-related reports, this includes stronger and more granular coverage of climate finance systems -particularly the role of private sector actors, financial instruments, and the quality and effectiveness of finance- as well as more integrated perspectives linking mitigation, adaptation and broader enabling conditions. More generally, some stakeholders pointed to the need to strengthen the "so what" dimension of assessments, including clearer implications for policy choices, implementation pathways and conditions for scaling. At the same time, other informants cautioned against increasing analytical complexity, noting that overly dense or technical outputs may reduce accessibility and usability for decision-makers, and instead advocated for more focused, targeted and user-oriented analysis and formats.

177. The evaluation did not identify evidence of significant unintended negative effects associated with project implementation, including on disadvantaged or marginalised groups. Given the nature of the intervention, which primarily focused on global assessments, knowledge products and science-policy processes rather than direct field implementation, potential adverse effects were considered limited. It should also be noted that the project's monitoring system did not include mechanisms specifically designed to track differential effects across social groups, including gender or disability dimensions.

Table 155: Likelihood of Impact

Factors influencing likelihood of impact	Assessment	Justification
Drivers to support transition from **Outputs to the Project Outcomes**	**Partially in place**	Strong drivers exist for institutional outputs (e.g. EGR, AGR), including scientific credibility, institutionalised production cycles, and alignment with global policy processes. For other outputs, drivers such as dissemination strategies, stakeholder targeting and sustained engagement are less systematically developed.
Assumptions for the change process from **Outputs to Project Outcomes**	**Partially hold**	The project assumed that availability of high-quality assessments would lead to uptake. This holds for well-established products and policy-relevant processes, but less so for newer or less institutionalised outputs, where uptake depends on additional factors such as timing, partnerships and communication strategies.
Proportion of **Project Outcomes** fully or partially achieved	**Partially achieved**	Evidence indicates meaningful uptake across multiple outputs and stakeholder groups, with the strongest and most sustained performance associated with key assessments and more variable uptake across other

Factors influencing likelihood of impact	Assessment	Justification
		components. Outcome achievement is therefore partial and differentiated across the portfolio.
Drivers to support transition from **Project Outcomes to Intermediate States**	**Partially in place**	Some enabling factors are present, including partnerships, communities of practice and linkages to international processes. However, pathways from uptake to policy or behavioural change are not systematically supported or resourced.
Assumptions for the change process from the **Project Outcomes to Intermediate States**	**Partially hold**	The project assumed that uptake of assessments would translate into policy influence and action. While this is observed in selected cases, it is not consistent across outputs and depends heavily on external actors and contextual factors.
Proportion of **Intermediate States** achieved	**Partially**	There is evidence of influence on policy discussions, agenda-setting and analytical processes, but limited evidence of widespread or sustained institutional or behavioural change across countries and sectors.
Drivers to support transition from **Intermediate States to Impact**	**Partially in place**	UNEP's credibility and continued production of assessments support longer-term influence. However, limited follow-up mechanisms, insufficient monitoring systems and fragmented project structure constrain sustained and systemic impact.
Assumptions for the change process from **Intermediate States to Impact**	**Partially hold**	The project assumed that strengthened science-policy interfaces would lead to improved environmental outcomes. While plausible, this remains largely unverified due to limited tracking of downstream effects and attribution challenges.

Findings Statements on Effectiveness:

178. **Finding 3**. The project delivered a substantial portfolio of generally high-quality and policy-relevant outputs but did not operate as a strategically integrated system. As a result, performance and impact were driven by a limited number of well-institutionalised products, while other components achieved more variable and, in some cases, limited results.

179. **Finding 4**. Uptake of project outputs was not primarily determined by technical quality, but by enabling conditions such as institutional anchoring, governance arrangements, sustained resourcing, alignment with policy processes and active engagement. In addition, outputs followed different implicit theories of influence: while some aimed at broad dissemination and visibility, others (e.g. WASP policy briefs) targeted specific policy processes and audiences. These differentiated pathways were not systematically embedded in the project design or monitoring framework, resulting in uneven and often insufficiently evidenced use across the portfolio.

180. **Finding 5**. The project generated meaningful product-level uptake evidence for a limited number of flagship outputs, particularly EGR, AGR and Frontiers, but the results framework and project-wide monitoring system were not fully adequate to capture outcome-level change across the portfolio. Formal indicators were broad, unevenly defined and did not consistently distinguish between access, reference, use, formal reporting, institutional uptake and policy influence. Product-level monitoring methods — including surveys, download and web metrics, media and social media analytics, citation tracking and policy-reference searches — provided useful evidence of reach, visibility and

selected instances of use. However, these methods were not consistently applied across components and did not provide a comparable or comprehensive basis for assessing sustained institutional or behavioural change.

181. **Finding 6**. Project A3 reinforced UNEP's role as a provider of high-quality environmental assessments but did not strengthen its positioning as an integrated and strategically coherent assessment system. This represents a missed opportunity to enhance UNEP's visibility, coherence and influence in an increasingly crowded global science-policy landscape.

Rating for Effectiveness: Moderately Satisfactory

Rating for Availability of Outputs: Moderately Satisfactory

Rating for Achievement of Project Outcomes: Moderately Satisfactory

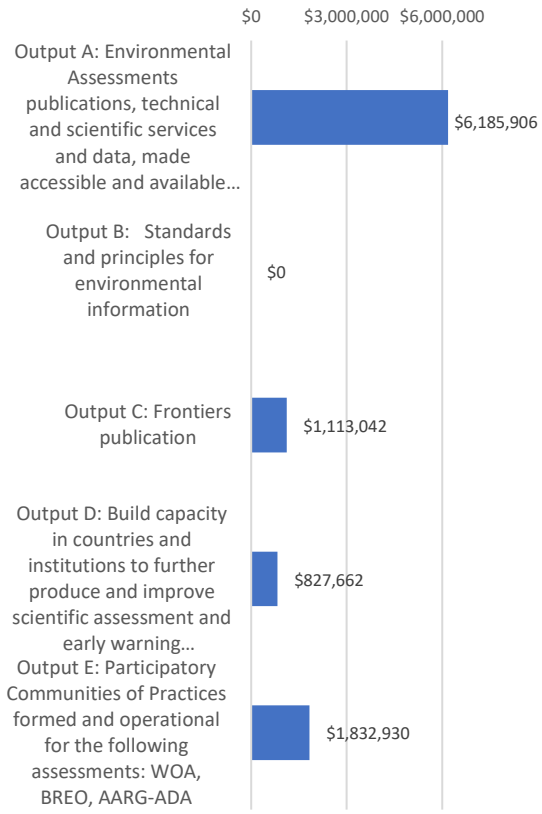
Rating for Achievement of Likelihood of Impact: Moderately Likely

4.5 Financial Management

182. Project A3 operated under UNEP's standard Programme of Work financial architecture, combining core resources, extra-budgetary contributions from multiple donors, and in-kind support. Following the 2023 project revision, the total planned budget envelope amounted to approximately USD 18.9 million, including both cash and in-kind contributions. Financial data need to be interpreted carefully because the expenditure data reviewed by the evaluation were primarily Umoja-based cash data, capturing resources received and spent by UNEP, while in-kind contributions and partner co-financing were not reflected as UNEP cash expenditures. As of September 2025, secured cash resources amounted to approximately USD 10.1 million, and reported cash expenditure was close to USD 10.0 million. This indicates strong absorption of available cash resources, with expenditure representing approximately 98 per cent of secured cash funding.

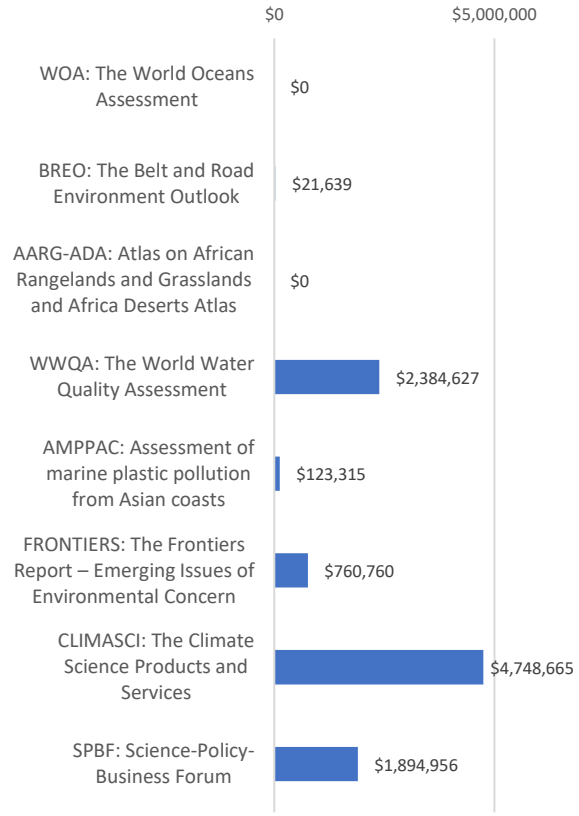
183. However, this should not be interpreted as full execution of the total revised budget envelope. The revised budget envelope also included in-kind contributions and partner co-financing. These resources formed part of the approved project financing assumptions and were important to delivery but were not recorded as UNEP expenditure where UNEP did not control the underlying resources, in line with IPSAS requirements. The evaluation therefore distinguishes between execution of UNEP-managed resources recorded in Umoja and delivery against the broader revised resource envelope, which also included partner-reported co-financing and in-kind contributions. Nor should the high absorption rate be interpreted, on its own, as evidence of strong portfolio-level financial management. While available UNEP-managed resources were largely spent, the evaluation found limitations in the availability of consolidated project-level financial analysis linking Umoja-recorded expenditure, partner-reported co-financing, in-kind contributions, components, outputs and outcomes. Figures 10 and 11 present the distribution of expenditures across project outputs and components. They highlight the concentration of financial resources in a small number of outputs and components, as well as the uneven allocation of funding across the portfolio.

Figure 100: Expenditure per project output



Source: UNEP Project A3 FMO.

Figure 111: Funding per project component.



Source: UNEP Project A3 FMO.

184. The project relied heavily on extra-budgetary funding, mobilised progressively over its lifetime. While this approach enabled flexibility and continuity of implementation, it also resulted in multiple parallel donor and partner arrangements. Umoja was the authoritative source for UNEP-managed expenditure, while UNON prepared financial reports for donor purposes based on Umoja data. For multi-donor umbrella projects, however, UNON does not normally issue a standalone formal project-level financial report unless required under specific donor arrangements. Project-level financial information is maintained internally within UNEP for management and operational purposes. In-kind contributions and partner co-financing are documented through programmatic and partner reporting channels but are not recorded as UNEP expenditure in Umoja where UNEP does not control the resources. As a result, the evaluation relied on Umoja data, donor and core budget records, partner expenditure reports, component-level mapping and clarifications from programme and finance staff to reconstruct the project's financial picture for evaluative purposes. This limited the ease of project-level financial analysis but should not be interpreted as a weakness in Umoja as the official financial system.

4.5.1 Adherence to UNEP's Financial Policies and Procedures

185. The available evidence indicates that Project A3 generally used UNEP's financial policies and procedures. Financial management was conducted through standard UNEP systems, including Umoja for tracking expenditures and formal agreement-based arrangements for implementing partners. Expenditure and progress reports were reviewed through project management and finance functions, and UNEP's overall financial oversight was covered through the UN Board of Auditors. The evaluation did not identify evidence of systemic non-compliance with UNEP or donor requirements. The evidence

reviewed was strongest at the level of donor agreements, transactions and Umoja-recorded expenditure. While all relevant legal agreements requested by the evaluation were provided**,** the evaluation could not fully verify all elements of UNEP's financial management checklist across the full project period, particularly where verification would have required complete closure documentation or project-level reconciliations not yet available at the time of the evaluation.

186. The MTR found that budget, income and expenditure data were available by year and donor, that expenditure appeared to remain within budget, and that no problems were reported with donor agreements or fund disbursement. The evaluation was also provided with numerous partner-level financial reports and expenditure statements, indicating that agreement-level financial administration was functioning. At the time of the evaluation, no major administrative or financial bottlenecks had been reported although financial closure was still ongoing. This process relates primarily to donor agreements and outstanding obligations, including financial reconciliations, compliance checks, possible final disbursements to partners or refunds of unutilised balances. The absence of final donor financial reports should therefore be interpreted in light of UNEP's normal closure timeline rather than as evidence that financial records were unavailable.

4.5.2 Completeness of Financial Information

187. Financial information for Project A3 was available through Umoja and supporting programme and partner records but required manual consolidation for evaluation purposes**.** The evaluation had access to multiple partner-level financial reports covering several components and years, including activity-level expenditure data, budget-to-actual comparisons, explanations of variances, and key financial data such as planned and actual budgets, expenditure by output and funding flows over time. These data confirm strong execution rates for UNEP-managed resources and provide a broad overview of resource allocation. However, no standalone formal project-level financial statement is normally produced for multi-donor umbrella projects of this type. Component-level mapping therefore required collaboration between finance and programme staff, with programme managers supporting interpretation of coding blocks and links to technical components. The limitation was not the absence of official financial data, but the need to reconstruct a consolidated project-level analytical picture from Umoja/IPMR and supporting records.

188. Despite the availability of detailed financial information at the level of donor agreements, Umoja records and partner reports, some limitations remained for evaluation purposes. Partner co-financing and in-kind contributions were reported through partner and programmatic channels but could not be verified by the UNEP Certifying Officer in the same way as Umoja-recorded expenditure because these resources were not under UNEP's direct financial control. Differences between cumulative amounts transferred and partner expenditure reported are normally addressed through financial closure, when outstanding obligations, possible final disbursements and refunds of unutilised balances are reviewed and finalised. UNEP is also subject to annual external audits covering the organisation as a whole, including its projects, rather than separate audits for each individual project unless specifically required. These arrangements are consistent with UNEP procedures, but they limited the evaluation's ability to independently verify a single consolidated financial baseline covering UNEP-managed expenditure, partner co-financing, in-kind contributions and component-level performance across the full portfolio.

189. The Science-Policy-Business Forum (SPBF) illustrates the financial traceability challenges associated with the project's umbrella funding architecture. As discussed in Annex VI, SPBF operated through fragmented and partly overlapping funding

arrangements, making it difficult to establish a single consolidated and fully attributable financial baseline. The evaluation reviewed several financial representations that showed differing totals, donor compositions and funding classifications. One set of project figures indicated SPBF funding of approximately USD 1.9 million, while separate grant-level records pointed to an extra-budgetary funding envelope of around USD 2.0 million from a broader range of partners. Additional records identified Environment Fund allocations and programme support resources, bringing the broader SPBF-related resource envelope to approximately USD 2.67 million. These figures could not be fully reconciled within the scope of the evaluation, partly because some grant structures supported multiple activities, some SPBF-related funding streams did not flow directly through the A3 financial pipeline, and funding categories appeared differently across reporting systems.

190. The SPBF case therefore mirrors broader project-level issues of fragmented funding, uneven resource allocation and limited portfolio-level financial visibility. It also points to specific financial planning and risk-management concerns: in one case, UNEP reportedly provided an internal advance of approximately USD 380,000 to enable delivery of a UNEA-related SPBF activity when available resources were insufficient; while part of this amount was later recovered, approximately USD 168,000 reportedly remained unpaid and was ultimately written off against corporate funding. This appears to have been exceptional rather than representative of all A3 financial management, but it highlights the risks created when large event commitments are made without fully secured and clearly attributable resources and illustrates how the umbrella structure contributed to weaknesses in financial traceability, risk management and portfolio-level oversight for a major project component.

Table 16: Financial management

Financial management components:	**Rating**	**Evidence/ Comments**
1. Adherence to UNEP's/Donor's policies and procedures:	**MS**	Standard UNEP systems and procedures applied, and no evidence of systemic non-compliance was identified. First disbursement was timely, expenditure appears to have remained within approved budget, and donor/agreement-level reporting was generally functional. However, the evaluation could not fully verify all elements of UNEP's financial management checklist across the full project period, including the regularity of expenditure analysis against budget and workplan, the timeliness of all periodic expenditure reports, and whether budget revisions were systematically made for all relevant expenditure variations. SPBF-related evidence also points to weaknesses in financial planning and risk management for event-related commitments.
Any evidence that indicates shortcomings in the project's adherence[38] to UNEP or donor policies, procedures or rules	Partial	No direct evidence of systemic non-compliance was identified. SPBF raised specific concerns regarding event-related financial planning and risk management. The evidence available did not allow the evaluation to confirm that all adherence checklist elements were consistently met across the full project period.
Was first disbursement carried out within 9 months of UNEP's project approval date.	Yes	First disbursement recorded in January 2019, shortly after project approval.
Were the procurement policies of UNEP and the donor(s) followed? *(where applicable)*	Yes	No procurement-related non-compliance was identified in the evidence reviewed. Procurement documentation was not systematically reviewed as part of the financial-management assessment.

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

Financial management components:		**Rating**	**Evidence/ Comments**
2. Completeness of project financial information[39]:		MS	Financial data were available through Umoja/IPMR, donor records, partner reports and programme-level mapping. However, no standalone formal project-level financial statement is normally produced for multi-donor umbrella projects, and partner co-financing and in-kind contributions are not recorded as UNEP expenditure where UNEP does not control the resources. The evaluation therefore required manual consolidation to link financial data to components, outputs and outcomes.
Provision of key documents to the evaluator (based on the responses to A-H below)		**MS**	Numerous partner-level expenditure reports, financial tables, legal agreements and Umoja-derived financial data were provided. The remaining limitation was not the absence of official financial data, but the lack of a single formal project-level financial statement covering all UNEP-managed expenditure, partner co-financing, in-kind contributions and component-level mappings. Final donor-level financial closure documentation was not yet available because financial closure follows operational completion.
A.	Co-financing and Project Cost's tables at design (by budget lines)	Yes	Available through ProDoc and revision document.
B.	Revisions to the budget	Yes	One formal revision (2023) documented.
C.	All relevant project legal agreements (e.g. SSFA, PCA, ICA)	Yes	Agreements provided to the evaluation.
D.	Proof of fund transfers	Partial	Evidence of UNEP disbursements was available through Umoja and supporting records. For partner-implemented activities, UNEP relies on partner financial reporting in accordance with agreement terms and does not verify each underlying partner transaction. Partner-reported expenditure and balances are finalised through the financial closure process.
E.	Proof of co-financing (cash and in-kind)	Partial	Co-financing and in-kind contributions were reported through partner and programmatic records and are captured for programmatic transparency. These amounts are not recorded as UNEP expenditure in Umoja where UNEP does not control the resources, in line with IPSAS requirements. The evaluation could therefore consider these contributions as part of the broader project resource envelope, but not as UNEP-managed expenditure.
F.	A summary report on the project's expenditures during the life of the project (by budget lines, project components and/or annual level)	Partial	Umoja/IPMR data and financial summaries were provided by donor, output and selected components. UNEP does not normally produce a standalone formal financial statement for multi-donor umbrella projects unless required by specific donor arrangements. Component-level and portfolio-level analysis therefore required manual consolidation by finance and programme staff.
G.	Copies of any completed audits and management responses *(where applicable)*	N/A / No	No separate project-specific audit was required or identified. UNEP is subject to annual external audits by the UN Board of Auditors, which cover the organisation as a whole, including its projects. Project-specific audits are not normally undertaken unless required by agreement terms or audit thresholds.
H.	Procurement documents[40], including the approved requisition document and Source Selection Plan *(where applicable)*	No	No procurement-related non-compliance was identified in the evidence reviewed. Procurement documentation was not systematically reviewed as part of the financial-management assessment.

[39] See also document 'Criterion Rating Description' for reference.
[40] Relevant for procurement action over USD 10,000 in value.

Financial management components:		**Rating**	**Evidence/ Comments**
I.	Any other financial information that was required for this project (list):	Partial	Additional financial tables, component mappings and clarifications were provided by finance and programme staff, including programme-level support to map Umoja coding blocks to technical components. These data supported evaluation analysis, although they were not presented in a single pre-existing consolidated project-level financial statement.
Overall rating		MS	Agreement-level financial administration was functional, Umoja/IPMR provided official financial data for UNEP-managed resources, absorption of secured resources recorded in Umoja was high, and no evidence of systemic non-compliance with UNEP or donor requirements was identified. The main limitation concerned the evaluation's ability to reconstruct a consolidated portfolio-level financial picture linking UNEP-managed expenditure, partner-reported co-financing, in-kind contributions, components, outputs and outcomes. This limitation reflected the project's multi-donor umbrella architecture and the distinction between official financial reporting, donor reporting and management/evaluation analysis, rather than a failure of Umoja or donor financial reporting.

Findings Statements on Financial Management

191. **Finding 7**. Financial management under Project A3 was functional and moderately satisfactory overall. At the level of basic transaction processing and agreement-level expenditure reporting, financial administration was generally adequate, and no evidence of systemic non-compliance with UNEP or donor procedures was identified. Financial data were provided on the basis of Umoja, with the Certifying Officer responsible for providing official financial information to the evaluation. Programme managers supported the interpretation of coding blocks and their mapping to technical components, given their familiarity with component-level implementation. The evaluation could not fully verify all elements of UNEP's financial management checklist across the full project period, particularly where this would have required complete closure documentation or project-level reconciliations not yet available at the time of the evaluation**.** The main limitation was therefore not the absence of official financial data, but the need for evaluation-specific consolidation and interpretation to link Umoja-recorded expenditure with components, outputs, funding sources and broader resource information.

192. **Finding 8**. While the project successfully mobilised and absorbed substantial resources over time, the uneven distribution of funding across components and the separation between UNEP-managed expenditure, partner co-financing and in-kind contributions limited the evaluation's ability to link financial inputs systematically to outputs, outcomes and component-level performance. These limitations were particularly evident for partner co-financing, in-kind contributions and SPBF-related financial information, where figures were relevant for understanding the broader resource envelope but were not recorded as UNEP expenditure in Umoja where UNEP did not control the resources. The organisation does not normally produce standalone financial statements for individual projects of this type; official expenditure information is available in Umoja and provided to external parties through the appropriate finance functions. The absence of final donor financial reports at the time of the evaluation partly reflected UNEP's normal financial closure timeline. Overall, the issue was one of consolidated project-level financial analysis and evaluability, rather than absence of official financial data or systemic non-compliance.

Rating for Financial Management: Moderately Satisfactory (MS)

Rating for Adherence to UNEP's Financial Policies and Procedures: Moderately Satisfactory (MS)

Rating for Completeness of Financial Information: Moderately Satisfactory (MS)

4.6 Efficiency

193. Efficiency varied significantly across the portfolio, combining strong performance in a limited number of institutional outputs with structural constraints at project level. While some components benefited from established production systems, partnerships and economies of scale, the project's umbrella design and uneven resourcing constrained overall efficiency. Coordination mechanisms were in place, including periodic exchanges between the core team and component leads, but these remained largely operational and reporting-oriented, without fully operationalised project-wide governance structures such as a steering committee or regular strategic review processes. As a result, opportunities to strengthen coherence, prioritisation and synergies across components were only partially realised, while reporting requirements represented a significant administrative workload for participating teams.

194. At output level, several components (most notably the Emissions Gap Report and Adaptation Gap Report) demonstrated good cost-efficiency. These outputs relied on well-established annual production cycles, shared service providers for editing, translation and layout, and long-standing partnerships with UNEP-CCC and external experts.

195. The use of external authors, often contributing on a pro bono or low-cost basis, further reduced production costs while maintaining high scientific quality. However, while this model contributes to cost-efficiency, it also raises sustainability considerations. Informants indicated that the reliance on voluntary expert contributions -particularly for recurring and resource-intensive outputs- may limit inclusiveness, create uneven participation, and pose risks to the long-term stability of production processes if not supported by more structured engagement mechanisms.

196. Administrative support was organised efficiently, with staff supporting multiple components simultaneously, allowing UNEP to deliver a large portfolio of outputs with relatively limited core resources. The standardisation of production processes and reuse of service providers also reduced preparation time and transaction costs, supporting timely delivery of recurring outputs.

197. The project also relied extensively on existing institutional platforms and partnerships, which contributed to cost-efficiency and resource mobilisation. Several components built on established mechanisms such as GEMS/Water, UNFCCC processes and regional conventions, while leveraging substantial in-kind contributions from partners. In the case of the World Water Quality Alliance, project reporting indicated that estimated partner in-kind support and additional cash contributions substantially exceeded the direct cash funding envelope for the WWQA component, illustrating the catalytic role of UNEP's convening function. This represents one of the clearer examples of catalytic efficiency under the project, as UNEP's convening role enabled the WWQA to mobilise partner resources and scientific contributions beyond the direct UNEP-managed funding envelope. At the same time, reliance on partnerships without adequate core funding in some components limited UNEP's ability to engage consistently, reducing the efficiency of these arrangements in terms of sustained influence and visibility.

198. While efficiencies were achieved within individual components, overall efficiency was constrained by structural features identified in Section 4.2, including uneven resourcing, parallel implementation arrangements and limited strategic coordination across components. Resource allocation was largely driven by donor priorities, resulting in strong performance in well-funded outputs alongside more limited efficiency in under-resourced components. It was sometimes perceived by informants that the breadth of outputs and limited prioritisation diluted strategic focus and reduced the depth and impact of individual components. These factors are interrelated: donor-driven and reactive funding patterns limited strategic prioritisation, which in turn reinforced fragmentation and constrained portfolio-level coherence and efficiency.

199. Efficiency was also constrained by the largely centralised and event-driven approach to dissemination. Evidence indicates limited systematic use of UNEP's regional offices and project networks as multipliers for country-level uptake. While some regional engagement took place, it remained ad hoc and component-specific rather than embedded in a structured dissemination approach. This represents a missed opportunity to extend the reach of assessment outputs through existing institutional channels. A relatively low-cost improvement would be the development of standardised dissemination packages (e.g. key messages, presentation materials and policy briefs) that could be adapted and deployed by regional offices and project teams, supporting more consistent and scalable dissemination while reducing transaction costs.

200. In terms of timeliness, implementation was affected by a combination of funding constraints, staffing gaps and external disruptions, including the COVID-19 pandemic. Several components experienced delays, in some cases linked to resource shortages and organisational changes. These factors contributed to the need for a two-year no-cost extension of the project from 2023 to 2025. While the extension allowed completion of key outputs and continuity of institutional report series, it also reflects initial underestimation of resource requirements and the challenges of managing a complex, multi-component portfolio under evolving institutional conditions. In addition, internal administrative processes (including procurement, contracting and publication clearance procedures) contributed in some cases to delays and reduced flexibility, particularly for time-sensitive outputs requiring rapid turnaround.

201. No systematic evidence was available to assess the extent to which project management arrangements explicitly considered or reduced UNEP's carbon footprint. However, the reliance on digital dissemination formats, virtual coordination and engagement modalities (particularly during the COVID-19 period) likely contributed to reduced travel-related emissions.

202. Overall, efficiency was higher at output level than at portfolio level.

Type of project extension (cost/no-cost)	Duration (# months)	Reason for no-cost extension
No-cost extension	24 months	Combination of funding constraints, staffing changes and external disruptions (including COVID-19), which delayed implementation of several components and required additional time to complete planned outputs and maintain continuity of institutional assessment reports.

Findings Statements on Efficiency

203. **Finding 9**: The project achieved good cost-efficiency in the delivery of selected institutional assessment outputs through standardised production processes, shared services and effective use of partnerships. The WWQA also illustrates catalytic efficiency, as UNEP's convening role helped leverage partner in-kind support and additional cash contributions that exceeded the direct UNEP-managed funding envelope for that component. However, these efficiencies were not realised consistently across the broader portfolio; efficiency was higher at the level of some components than at the portfolio level.

204. **Finding 10**: The umbrella project design and uneven resource allocation reduced overall efficiency, while coordination across components remained largely operational and not systematically supported by fully operationalised project-wide governance structures. This limited opportunities for strategic alignment, prioritisation and synergies across the portfolio. In addition, reporting requirements represented a significant administrative workload for participating teams. Delays and the need for a no-cost extension further reflect both external disruptions and limitations in the initial planning and structuring of the intervention.

Rating for Efficiency: Moderately Satisfactory

4.7 Monitoring and Reporting

205. Monitoring and reporting ensured compliance with UNEP corporate requirements and the ProDoc included a Project Monitoring Plan and Budget, as well as a completed workplan setting out planned activities, responsibilities and implementation timelines. Substantial information was generated on implementation progress and, for some flagship products, on reach and uptake. However, the project's complexity and umbrella structure reduced the ability of monitoring systems to provide integrated, decision-relevant information at portfolio level. Reporting processes were widely perceived as resource-intensive and primarily compliance-oriented, with limited evidence that reported information was systematically used for adaptive management, portfolio-level learning or strategic decision-making.

4.7.1 Monitoring of Project Implementation

206. Monitoring of project implementation was conducted through UNEP's standard systems, including monthly and semi-annual reporting by component managers, consolidated into dashboards for internal oversight. These systems enabled regular tracking of activities and outputs across components and ensured a high level of procedural compliance and visibility of delivery status. Evidence from project documentation confirms that monitoring inputs were regularly collected and aggregated across components, including through IPMR/PIMS reporting structures. The project therefore generated substantial implementation data, although baseline information was mainly limited to indicator starting points in the results framework rather than a substantive baseline dataset for assessing outcome-level change.

207. Interviews indicated that monitoring was primarily used for accountability and upward reporting rather than for strategic management. Monitoring processes were perceived as burdensome and of limited practical value, especially for components with long production cycles. Informants noted that reporting requirements were frequent and often not well aligned with the pace or nature of implementation of the component or product they focused, leading to situations where limited substantive progress had to be translated into regular reporting inputs. As a result, reporting was sometimes based on partial

information, narrative descriptions or proxy indicators, with variable levels of precision, validation and feedback.

208. Monitoring of outcomes, particularly uptake and influence of assessments was limited and uneven. This reflects not only implementation constraints but also limitations in the original results framework, with outcome indicators broadly defined and not operationalised into measurable parameters. This also echoes the inherent methodological challenges of capturing outcome-level change for global assessment processes, where influence pathways are indirect and non-linear.

209. At the level of individual products, several components undertook significant monitoring of reach and uptake. This was especially the case for the Emissions Gap Report, Adaptation Gap Report and Frontiers Report. EGR and AGR monitoring included UNFCCC focal point surveys, download and webpage metrics, media and social media analytics, policy references and policy-citation searches. Frontiers monitoring included internet searches, Google Scholar searches, screening of peer-reviewed citations and references by governments or institutional websites, with news/media references treated cautiously where they mainly reproduced UNEP press releases. These approaches provided substantial and useful evidence of dissemination, visibility, reference and selected forms of use.

210. Nevertheless, these product-level approaches were not applied consistently across the portfolio and did not fully align with the approved results framework. The evidence generated was also better suited to documenting reach, reference, visibility and selected uptake than to verifying sustained institutional use, behavioural change, formal country reporting or downstream policy implementation. In the case of WWQA, the terminal evaluation found that although substantial technical outputs and workstream-level products were generated, monitoring and reporting remained fragmented, weakly linked to the Theory of Change, and insufficiently used for learning or coordination.

211. The ProDoc included planned monitoring budget lines, but the evaluation did not find financial information showing actual expenditure mapped against the ProDoc monitoring budget lines. The evaluation therefore could not verify whether the planned monitoring budget was spent as intended or whether expenditure was adequate relative to project-wide monitoring needs.

212. The evaluation also noted the absence of clear evidence that the recommendations of the MTR had been systematically taken up and implemented. No formal implementation plan or tracking mechanism was established, and informants were generally unable to identify concrete actions taken in response to the recommendations. While some recommendations may have been partially considered, their uptake appears to have been ad hoc and limited, with several recommendations falling outside the direct control of the project team. Overall, implementation approaches continued largely unchanged following the MTR.

4.7.2 Project Reporting

213. Project reporting complied with UNEP requirements, including periodic progress reports, donor-specific financial reporting, and inputs to corporate systems (e.g. PIMS/IPMR). Reporting responsibilities were clearly defined, and most reporting obligations were fulfilled in a timely manner, particularly at the level of individual components and donor agreements.

214. Financial reporting was largely organized for donor-reporting purposes and was based on Umoja data, the authoritative source for UNEP-managed financial information. For multi-donor umbrella projects, UNEP/UNON does not normally produce a standalone formal project-level financial statement unless required under specific donor arrangements. While Umoja/IPMR enabled financial data to be tracked internally, integrated project-level financial analysis across donor funding, components, outputs, partner co-financing and in-kind contributions required manual consolidation and programme-level mapping. This limited the analytical value of financial reporting for portfolio-level monitoring and evaluation but did not indicate a lack of official financial data.

215. Integration of cross-cutting issues such as gender was addressed primarily through UNEP publication and reporting procedures rather than through a dedicated project-level monitoring framework. Gender considerations were included in outputs (e.g. through author balance and content review), but systematic tracking of gender-disaggregated results or impacts across the project remained limited.

216. Consideration of vulnerable or marginalized groups, including persons with disabilities, was not systematically reflected in reporting frameworks. While some outputs addressed differentiated impacts depending on thematic relevance, reporting did not consistently capture how project outputs reached or benefited specific population groups.

Findings Statements on Monitoring and Reporting

217. **Finding 11.** The project had a detailed monitoring plan, planned monitoring budget and workplan at design stage, and generated substantial implementation and product-level monitoring data, but monitoring remained uneven and only partly aligned with the formal results framework.

218. **Finding 12.** The project's complex umbrella structure and fragmented reporting arrangements limited the coherence, analytical value and strategic use of monitoring and reporting.

Rating for Monitoring and Reporting: Moderately Unsatisfactory

Rating for Monitoring of Project Implementation: Moderately Unsatisfactory

Rating for Project Reporting: Moderately Satisfactory

4.8 Sustainability

219. Sustainability is uneven across the portfolio and depends less on project-level mechanisms alone than on the institutionalisation, resourcing and governance arrangements of individual components. In applying the UNEP sustainability rating framework, the evaluation therefore assesses whether benefits are likely to continue beyond project closure by considering: (i) continued socio-political demand and ownership; (ii) availability or likelihood of financial resources; and (iii) institutional anchoring, continuation arrangements and capacity to sustain results after A3, noting that the project itself will not continue in the same form.

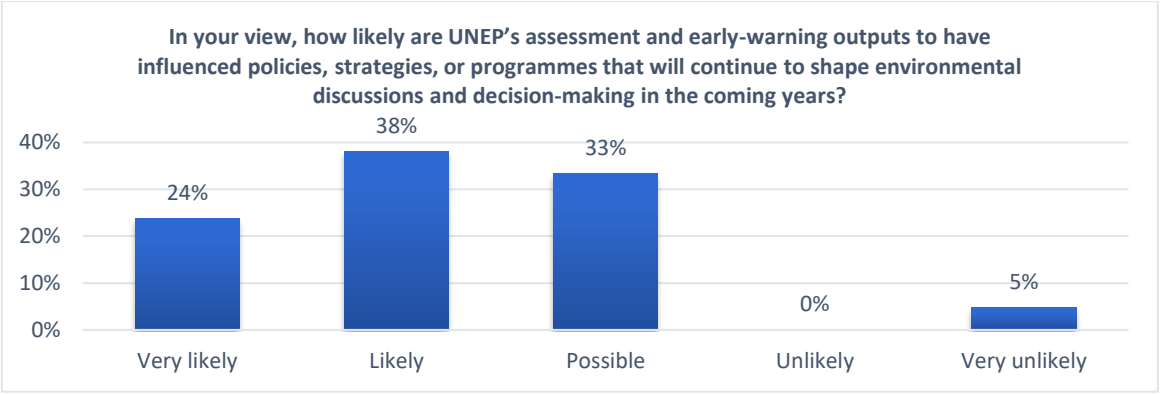
4.8.1 Socio-political Sustainability

220. Socio-political sustainability is assessed as relatively strong for a range of core outputs, particularly institutional series assessments. These products are anchored in

UNEP's normative mandate to "keep the environment under review" and respond to sustained demand from Member States, international processes and the scientific community. Climate reports -i.e. EGR and AGR- are well institutionalised, benefit from established governance arrangements and production cycles, and are closely aligned with recurring global policy processes such as UNFCCC negotiations. This positioning reinforces their continued relevance, legitimacy and likelihood of sustained use beyond the project period. The Frontiers series also demonstrates sustained relevance as an early warning mechanism, although its production model has been more vulnerable to resource and staffing constraints.

221. Survey results provide some further indication of perceived influence. Around sixty percent of respondents considered the lasting influence of assessments and early-warning products as likely or very likely (Figure 12). Given the small and potentially positively biased sample, this finding should be interpreted cautiously and is used here only as a complementary perspective. It is broadly consistent with other evidence pointing to uneven but tangible influence.

Figure 122: Perceived sustainability of the influence of the project's assessment and early-warning outputs



(Source: Evaluation survey)

222. Nevertheless, socio-political sustainability is more variable across the broader portfolio. For the climate gap reports, dependency on socio-political factors is relatively low to moderate, as demand is reinforced by recurring UNFCCC processes, established steering arrangements and regular use by governments, international organisations and climate finance actors. Ownership is therefore relatively strong, although the reports remain exposed to political sensitivity around specific findings. The main adaptation mechanisms are the annual production cycle, steering committee guidance, expert review, government review of relevant country-specific information and alignment with COP-related policy windows.

223. For WOA/GESAMP, socio-political sustainability is supported by the intergovernmental Regular Process and by UNEP's role as a recognised technical contributor; however, UNEP's own contribution is more dependent on internal prioritisation and available resources. For Frontiers, ownership is anchored mainly in UNEP's early-warning mandate and scientific networks rather than in a formal intergovernmental process, making sustainability more dependent on internal commitment, staff continuity and the perceived relevance of emerging topics. For WWQA and related communities of practice, ownership among technical partners appears meaningful, but sustained socio-political anchoring is weaker because the initiative evolved more as a platform/network than as a formally mandated assessment process. SPBF is the most vulnerable in socio-political terms: while its mandate to connect science, policy and business remains relevant, its repeated

transfer across divisions indicates weaker institutional ownership and the absence of a stable home. Overall, major outputs have adapted to changing policy contexts through annual or cyclical topic selection, steering arrangements, partner networks and alignment with global policy events, but these mechanisms are uneven across the portfolio.

224. Notably, the evaluation does not find evidence of significant socio-political resistance to UNEP's assessment outputs. While some sensitivity exists around specific findings, particularly in climate-related areas, such tensions have been managed without undermining the credibility or acceptance of outputs. This suggests that key assumptions underpinning the project's theory of change, notably continued stakeholder acceptance and the absence of major antagonistic forces, have broadly held. Accordingly, socio-political sustainability is strongest where outputs combine institutionalisation, policy relevance and sustained stakeholder demand, and limited where these conditions are not met. On balance, socio-political sustainability is rated Likely because the major assessment outputs continue to respond to clear policy demand and face no significant resistance, although this assessment is driven mainly by the strongest components and does not apply uniformly across all outputs.

4.8.2 Financial Sustainability

225. Financial sustainability is constrained by the project's reliance on extra-budgetary and largely earmarked funding. Resources were mobilised progressively over the project lifetime, with significant variation in funding levels across components. Financial data need to be interpreted carefully because the revised budget combined cash and in-kind contributions, while Umoja-based expenditure data primarily capture cash received and spent. At the 2023 revision, the revised planned cash budget was USD 14.18 million, of which USD 10.71 million was reported as secured, leaving an unsecured cash balance of about USD 3.48 million. The revision also recorded USD 4.71 million in secured in-kind contributions. This suggests that the project mobilised a substantial share of its revised resource envelope, but that full cash financing was not secured and that several components remained dependent on in-kind support, partner contributions or opportunistic funding. This financing pattern enabled flexibility and supported delivery of several major outputs, but it also contributed to uneven implementation conditions across components. Institutional assessments with high visibility and demonstrated policy relevance, particularly EGR and AGR, appear relatively better positioned to attract continued support. By contrast, components without strong institutional anchoring or clear strategic positioning face more uncertain financial prospects. Financial sustainability is therefore rated Moderately Likely: continued financing is plausible for some high-profile outputs, but less certain for the broader portfolio and for project-level coordination functions.

226. By contrast, other components, particularly those without strong institutional anchoring or clear strategic positioning, face more uncertain financial prospects. Several thematic assessments, regional outlooks and collaborative platforms relied on project-specific funding and did not secure stable, long-term financing arrangements before project closure. WWQA had developed resource mobilisation intentions and partnership-based continuation prospects, but the evaluation did not identify evidence of a confirmed new funding commitment sufficient to sustain the Alliance at its earlier level of ambition. Similarly, WOA/GESAMP-related work is likely to continue through broader intergovernmental and technical processes, but UNEP's own contribution remains vulnerable unless supported by dedicated resources. Donor feedback indicates increasing expectations for UNEP's assessment work to demonstrate clearer links to implementation, investment and policy action, reflecting a broader shift in the funding environment toward more tangible results. In the absence of a consolidated project-level

funding or exit strategy, resource allocation remained largely reactive and driven by individual donor interests rather than strategic prioritisation across the portfolio. Financial sustainability is therefore rated Moderately Likely: continued financing is plausible for high-profile institutional outputs, but uncertain for several other components and for portfolio-level functions.

4.8.3 Institutional Sustainability

227. Institutional sustainability varies significantly across outputs and reflects broader structural characteristics of UNEP's assessment function. Project A3 itself is not expected to continue in the same form after operational closure. Instead, selected components and assessment streams are expected to continue, or may continue, under different institutional arrangements following UNEP's restructuring. The Emissions Gap Report and Adaptation Gap Report are expected to continue as institutional climate science products, now positioned under climate-related structures and supported by established production arrangements with UNEP-CCC and expert steering mechanisms. The WOA/Regular Process will continue independently of A3 as an intergovernmental process, with UNEP's role depending on its ability to maintain technical and financial engagement. Frontiers remains institutionally linked to UNEP's early-warning and assessment mandate, although its continuation is more vulnerable to staffing and resource constraints. WWQA appears to have retained some institutional anchoring through GEMS/Water and its partner network, but the evaluation did not identify a confirmed continuation plan or financing arrangement that would sustain the Alliance at its previous level. SPBF remains relevant but institutionally less secure.

228. For the WOA component, institutional sustainability appears stronger than project-level financial sustainability. The Regular Process and the World Ocean Assessment continue as intergovernmental processes independent of Project A3, and UNEP has signalled its intention to support the next phase, including a vision in which Regional Seas assessments serve as building blocks for WOA IV and are complemented by GEMS Ocean and WESR-linked data systems. This suggests that the broader assessment architecture is likely to continue and may even become more structured. However, UNEP's own contribution remains vulnerable unless supported by predictable resources, as its role has relied heavily on facilitation, technical goodwill and opportunistic funding rather than a stable internal financing base.

229. At a systemic level, integration across UNEP's assessment functions within the A3 portfolio remains partial. The evaluation did not identify a consolidated A3 exit strategy, transition plan or successor framework designed to sustain the portfolio as an integrated assessment function after project closure. Rather, sustainability depends on the continuation of selected components within separate divisional, intergovernmental or partnership structures. While this may be appropriate for some outputs, it limits the extent to which A3 leaves behind a coherent institutional platform, shared governance mechanism or common learning system. This is compounded by limited efforts to systematically capture and transfer methodological knowledge across teams, as well as reliance in some components on a small number of key individuals. Together, these factors constrain institutional learning, continuity and the ability to scale approaches beyond individual outputs.

230. These institutional constraints also affect the sustainability of impact. Ongoing organisational changes within UNEP, combined with uneven funding and concentration of expertise in specific teams, raise concerns regarding the long-term stability of its assessment function. Sustained impact will depend on UNEP's ability to maintain scientific credibility, retain and consolidate expertise, and strengthen coordination across

its assessment portfolio. Interview evidence also points to a broader strategic risk related to the future positioning of UNEP's assessment function: continued dispersion across components, uneven resourcing and limited institutional consolidation may, over time, weaken UNEP's visibility and credibility as a leading provider of global environmental assessments. While this risk has not materialised within the project period, it underscores the importance of strengthening coherence, institutional anchoring and strategic positioning across the portfolio. Interview evidence also points to concern that the dispersion of assessment functions across different UNEP divisions -including their positioning within policy-facing structures- may weaken scientific independence and institutional coherence over time. Some informants considered that science-oriented units are better placed to coordinate neutral and credible assessment processes, whereas policy-facing units operate under different stakeholder pressures and incentives. This reinforces the importance of preserving strong institutional arrangements for science delivery even where assessments are intended to inform policy processes. Institutional sustainability is therefore rated Moderately Likely: several important outputs are institutionally embedded and likely to continue, but the project did not establish a coherent post-A3 institutional mechanism to sustain the portfolio, its synergies or its accumulated assessment capacity as a whole.

231. The following table provides a summary assessment of the sustainability of Project A3 components.

Table 166: Sustainability prospects by Project A3 component/output.

Component / output	Continuation after A3	Financial outlook	Institutional anchoring / exit arrangement	Sustainability implication
EGR / AGR	Expected to continue as institutional climate science products	Relatively favourable, but still dependent on donor/internal support	Established production cycles, expert steering, UNEP-CCC role, alignment with UNFCCC/COP processes	Strongest sustainability prospects
Frontiers	May continue, but vulnerable	Uncertain due to staffing/resource constraints	Anchored in UNEP early-warning mandate, but dependent on internal capacity	Moderately sustainable, with risks
WOA / GESAMP	WOA/Regular Process continues independently of A3	UNEP contribution financially vulnerable	Intergovernmental process continues; UNEP role depends on continued engagement	Institutionally strong, externally weaker for UNEP contribution
WWQA	Some continuation through network/GEMS/Water possible	No confirmed substantial new funding identified by the evaluation	Partner network, scientific workstreams and GEMS/Water links remain; the Alliance helped promote scientific networking and collaboration on ambient water quality, but no clear successor plan at previous ambition level was identified	Moderate to uncertain: stronger as a network/scientific collaboration legacy than as a completed global assessment product.
SPBF	Continuation possible in different divisional structure	Uncertain	Transferred across divisions; stable long-term home unclear.	Vulnerable
A3 portfolio as a whole	Not continuing in same form	No consolidated post-project financing strategy	No consolidated exit/successor framework identified	Portfolio-level sustainability only moderately likely

Findings Statements on Sustainability

232. **Finding 13:** Socio-political sustainability is rated Likely because major assessment outputs, particularly EGR, AGR, WOA and to a lesser extent Frontiers, continue to benefit from strong demand, policy relevance and stakeholder acceptance. However, ownership and demand are less consistent across the broader portfolio.

233. **Finding 14:** Financial sustainability is rated Moderately Likely. The project mobilised substantial cash and in-kind resources, but full cash financing was not secured against the revised budget, funding remained largely donor-driven and earmarked, and no consolidated post-project financing strategy was identified. High-profile institutional outputs are better positioned to attract continued support than less visible or weakly anchored components..

234. **Finding 15:** Institutional sustainability is rated Moderately Likely. Several components are expected to continue under different institutional arrangements after A3, but the project itself will not continue in the same form and did not establish a coherent successor framework, exit strategy or portfolio-level mechanism to sustain synergies, shared methods or institutional learning across UNEP's assessment function.

Rating for Likelihood of Sustainability (*use 'Likely' scale*): Moderately Likely

Rating for Socio-political Sustainability: Likely

Rating for Financial Sustainability: Moderately Likely

Rating for Institutional Sustainability: Moderately Likely

4.9 Factors Affecting Performance and Cross-Cutting Issues

4.9.1 Quality of Project Management and Supervision

235. Project management reflected the portfolio-based model under which A3 was conceived which, while providing operational flexibility, also limited the scope for strategic integration and portfolio-level oversight.

236. The diversity and number of components created a high coordination burden and made it more challenging to provide consistent strategic oversight at portfolio level. Coordination mechanisms supported basic implementation functions but did not provide an effective basis for strategic integration or portfolio-level management.

237. The absence of a functional project-level governance mechanism reinforced these constraints. The Project Steering Committee envisaged at design stage was not established, and strategic oversight remained largely decentralised. Interview evidence indicates that governance was handled mainly through informal and component-specific arrangements, while COVID-19 disrupted early opportunities to convene project-wide coordination. There is also little evidence that project components actively required or relied on a project-level steering committee, as most were implemented through separate workstreams with their own timelines, partners, funding arrangements and, in some cases, report-level governance structures. This arrangement did not prevent delivery of individual outputs, partly because A3 functioned in practice as a collection of largely separate workstreams. However, the absence of a project-level mechanism reduced opportunities to prioritise across components, align resources, support strategic oversight, foster cross-component coordination, and manage the portfolio as a more coherent programme.

238. Constraints also relate to the results and monitoring framework (see Sections 4.2 and 4.7), which was not well aligned with the diversity of components and limited the usefulness of reporting for management purposes.

4.9.1.1 UNEP/Implementing Agency:

239. From an implementing agency perspective, management arrangements were effective in supporting delivery of individual outputs, particularly those benefiting from established production systems and experienced teams. However, the project design and management model did not fully provide mechanisms for strategic coordination, learning and portfolio-level oversight. Management functions were primarily focused on aggregation of reporting and operational coordination, with a stronger emphasis on operational coordination and reporting than on steering the portfolio as a fully integrated programme.

240. External and institutional factors further affected performance. COVID-19 disrupted implementation and stakeholder engagement, while UNEP restructuring introduced discontinuity in staffing and institutional memory. In addition, communication gaps, particularly the absence of a consolidated and forward-looking overview of assessment outputs, limited stakeholder engagement and anticipatory use of results.

241. The limited alignment between the results framework, monitoring systems and management needs further reduced the effectiveness of supervision. Reporting processes were perceived as compliance-oriented and not sufficiently informative for decision-making, while limited feedback mechanisms constrained adaptive management during implementation.

4.9.1.2 Partners/Executing Agency:

242. UNEP's supervision and coordination of external partners was generally adequate at the level of contractual, financial and output delivery oversight, but its quality varied significantly across components and depended heavily on the maturity of the partnership model. The project relied on a wide range of external partners, including UN entities, scientific bodies, research institutions, NGOs, expert networks and, in some cases, implementing partners contracted through SSFAs. Their roles were central to scientific production, data generation, peer review, technical drafting, dissemination and workstream delivery. The ProDoc identified partner roles and generally aligned them with institutional or technical comparative advantages, although formal partner capacity assessments were limited. The MTR assessed project management and supervision positively, rating this dimension as Satisfactory and noting that management systems functioned, supervision was broadly adequate and component-level steering committees were generally effective. It also identified strong partnerships as an important factor supporting implementation.

243. In practice, however, supervision was largely component-specific rather than organised through a coherent project-wide partner management system. In mature flagship products, notably the Emissions Gap Report and Adaptation Gap Report, UNEP's coordination of external partners appears to have worked well. These reports were co-produced with UNEP-CCC and other partners through established annual production cycles, steering committees, regular technical coordination, peer review, government review and UNEP publication quality assurance processes. Interview evidence from UNEP-CCC confirms that roles and responsibilities between UNEP and UNEP-CCC were clear, coordination was frequent, and collaboration was smooth and operationally close. This represents a positive example of effective partner coordination under the project.

244. By contrast, the WWQA terminal evaluation shows the limitations of the supervision model in a more complex alliance-based component. The evaluation found that UNEP ensured financial compliance and delivery of contracted activities, and that external partners delivered technically robust outputs through SSFAs. However, it rated project management and supervision as Moderately Unsatisfactory, citing coordination gaps, limited strategic oversight, unclear accountability lines, weak feedback loops, staff turnover and limited institutional anchoring. It also found that WWQA's integration into the A3 umbrella project was largely administrative rather than programmatic, with no shared planning, joint delivery structures or coherent monitoring and reporting mechanisms. This suggests that UNEP's partner supervision was effective where established production and governance arrangements already existed, but less effective where partnerships required active strategic steering, cross-workstream integration, adaptive management and institutional anchoring.

4.9.2 Stakeholders Participation and Cooperation

245. Stakeholder participation was a central feature of the project and a key strength. A wide range of stakeholders, including governments, scientific institutions, international organisations, civil society and, to a more limited extent, private sector actors, were engaged through data provision, authorship, peer review, consultation processes and multi-stakeholder dialogue platforms.

246. The depth and modalities of engagement varied across components. Key assessments demonstrated structured and institutionalised participation mechanisms, contributing to credibility and policy relevance. Other components, including platform-based initiatives such as WWQA, successfully convened broad networks but showed more variable translation of participation into sustained outputs. In addition, SPBF provided a distinct engagement modality, enabling high-level convening of policymakers, scientists, private sector actors and financial institutions at global and regional levels. SPBF significantly expanded the diversity of stakeholders engaged, particularly from the private sector, and strengthened UNEP's role as a broker of cross-sector dialogue. However, its contribution remained primarily at the level of agenda-setting, visibility and network-building, with limited evidence of systematic linkages to assessment processes or sustained follow-up beyond individual events.

247. At project level, stakeholder engagement lacked a systematic and integrated approach. Engagement mechanisms were largely component-driven, resulting in uneven coverage, limited cross-component learning and underutilised stakeholder networks. This limitation is also reflected in the positioning of SPBF, which operated alongside the project rather than as an embedded component within its results framework, thereby limiting its function as a structured dissemination or uptake mechanism. Engagement with countries and implementation-level actors remained uneven and insufficiently structured across components. While private sector engagement was substantial in SPBF in terms of participation and dialogue, this did not translate into systematic analytical coverage or integration into assessment outputs. Interview evidence suggests that this gap is not due to a lack of relevance, but rather to insufficient engagement with intermediaries that have established connections to private sector actors. In this regard, informants mentioned that mechanisms such as UNEP Finance Initiative (UNEP-FI), which works closely with financial institutions, insurers, and investors, represent an underutilized entry point for strengthening the evidence base and analytical coverage. Leveraging such platforms, alongside more structured use of SPBF, could enable UNEP to better capture existing private-sector initiatives, identify innovative financing instruments and enhance the policy relevance of its assessments without compromising scientific independence.

248. Linkages to poverty alleviation and economic livelihoods were present in the project rationale but were not systematically operationalised through stakeholder engagement. The ProDoc associated the project with a broad range of SDGs, including poverty, hunger, health, water, sustainable economic growth, sustainable consumption and production, and ecosystem-related goals. Several components also addressed issues with plausible livelihood relevance, including climate risks, adaptation finance, water quality, oceans, rangelands, marine litter, sustainable production and private-sector engagement. For example, WWQA was grounded in concerns that declining water quality affects human health, ecosystems, water security and sustainable development, with particularly acute implications for low- and middle-income countries. SPBF also provided a space for dialogue on industry, innovation, infrastructure and responsible consumption and production, including through engagement with business and finance actors. However, the evaluation found limited evidence that poverty alleviation or economic livelihood effects were explicitly analysed, targeted or monitored across the project. Stakeholder engagement focused mainly on scientific, policy, institutional and private-sector dialogue, rather than on systematic participation of livelihood-dependent groups or economic actors affected by environmental degradation. As a result, while several outputs were relevant to poverty and livelihoods in thematic terms, the project did not generate a clear evidence base on how stakeholder participation contributed to poverty reduction, livelihood resilience or economic benefits for affected communities.

4.9.3 Responsiveness to Human Rights and Gender Equality

249. The project's responsiveness to human rights and gender equality was primarily embedded within UNEP's institutional publishing and quality assurance processes, rather than through a dedicated project-level strategy. Evidence from interviews, documentation and a review of key publications indicates that gender considerations were systematically addressed at the level of individual outputs, although this did not translate into a comprehensive or results-oriented approach at project level.

250. Evidence from interviews and documentation indicates that teams responsible for major institutional publications have made deliberate efforts to promote more balanced and inclusive authorship. This includes attention to gender balance among authors and reviewers, as well as increased representation from the Global South in both authorship and governance structures. These efforts have contributed to progressively more diverse expert groups and broader geographic perspectives across several assessment processes. However, progress remains uneven and not systematically institutionalised. Participation continues to depend significantly on existing professional networks, individual availability and institutional support. The reliance on external authors, often contributing on a pro bono or low-cost basis, further constrains the ability to ensure consistent and equitable participation, particularly where participation depends on individual availability, institutional support and existing networks. As a result, while inclusiveness has improved over time, it remains only partially embedded in the project's design and resourcing model.

251. All major publications were subject to UNEP's formal publishing clearance process, which includes a mandatory gender review step. This institutionalised mechanism ensured a minimum standard of gender sensitivity across outputs, including attention to gender balance in authorship, use of gender-sensitive language and incorporation of relevant references. This process is operationalised through a standardized publishing submission form, which requires authors to demonstrate compliance with UNEP gender guidelines and obtain clearance from a senior gender advisor prior to publication. For example, the submission form for the *Review of Current Knowledge and Data on Marine Litter in Asia* shows that the publication was reviewed by UNEP's Gender Focal Point and

formally cleared by the Gender and Safeguards Unit prior to publication, with confirmation that gender-related comments were addressed.

252. Nevertheless, the extent to which gender and human rights considerations were substantively integrated into analytical content varied across outputs and remains limited overall. A review of key institutional publications, including the Emissions Gap Reports, Adaptation Gap Reports and Frontiers series, indicates that such considerations are generally reflected in terms of vulnerability, inequality and differential impacts, rather than through explicit or systematic analytical treatment. More narrative-oriented products, such as the Frontiers reports, demonstrate relatively stronger attention to societal and distributional dimensions, while more technical assessments (particularly the Emissions Gap Reports) show minimal integration. Across the portfolio, these dimensions are not embedded through dedicated analytical frameworks, consistent methodologies or systematic disaggregation, limiting the depth and comparability of analysis.

253. At project level, there was no explicit strategy, theory of change or set of indicators addressing gender equality or human rights. As a result, these dimensions were not systematically monitored, reported or linked to intended outcomes. While elements of equity and vulnerability are present in several outputs, this does not constitute a coherent or results-oriented approach. Human rights considerations are neither explicitly framed nor operationalised through a human rights-based approach, and there is limited evidence of systematic efforts to ensure inclusion of marginalised or vulnerable groups in project design, stakeholder engagement or dissemination. This represents a structural gap in the project's approach to cross-cutting issues.

254. Interview evidence highlights a broader strategic tension regarding the integration of cross-cutting agendas within UNEP's assessment work. Some stakeholders questioned the extent to which outputs should systematically address issues such as gender equality and human rights, particularly in a context of limited resources and a strong focus on scientific and technical analysis. While this perspective reflects legitimate concerns about prioritisation and analytical depth, it needs to be considered in light of UNEP's role as a United Nations entity. In this context, the challenge for UNEP is not whether to integrate these dimensions, but how to do so in a manner that is proportionate, relevant to its environmental mandate, and analytically meaningful. The evidence suggests that this integration remains uneven and insufficiently structured across the project.

4.9.4 Environmental and Social Safeguards

255. The project had a low environmental and social risk profile, given its focus on assessments, knowledge products, scientific coordination, policy dialogue and communication rather than on infrastructure, field implementation or activities with a significant direct environmental footprint. No significant adverse environmental or social impacts were identified by the evaluation. However, the evaluation did not find evidence of a systematic safeguards management plan, regular safeguards monitoring, or reporting on measures to avoid, minimise or mitigate potential environmental and social risks at project level. The design included an ESE screening and identified the project as low risk, but implementation evidence is limited on how safeguards were subsequently monitored across components.

256. The WWQA terminal evaluation provides a relevant component-level example, finding that, despite a low-risk profile, no formal safeguards screening or documentation was applied and that project documents, SSFA agreements and progress reports did not refer to safeguards procedures, even where field-based research, citizen science or community-level engagement occurred. The evaluation also found no evidence that environmental and social impacts on key stakeholders, including vulnerable or marginalised groups, were

systematically assessed or monitored, although no negative impacts were reported. Similarly, while the project's largely virtual and knowledge-based modality likely limited its environmental footprint, the evaluation did not identify frequent, planned or substantive efforts by UNEP or its partners to minimise that footprint. Overall, environmental and social risks appear to have been low, and no adverse effects were identified, but safeguards were addressed only partially and largely implicitly rather than through a documented and actively monitored safeguards approach.

4.9.5 Country Ownership and Driven-ness

257. Given the global and knowledge-oriented nature of the project, country ownership and driven-ness are reflected primarily through participation in assessment processes, alignment with country needs, and the use of outputs in policy contexts, rather than through direct national implementation or governance structures. The project demonstrated a significant degree of country engagement in the production of its outputs. Governments, national institutions and experts contributed to data provision, peer review processes and expert consultations across several components. This participatory approach supported a form of technical ownership, particularly in key assessments such as the climate reports, ocean-related assessment work where national data, expert review and institutional inputs were important. However, this should be distinguished from programmatic country ownership: in platform-based components such as WWQA, national stakeholders contributed to selected workstreams and use cases, but the WWQA TE considered country ownership and driven-ness largely not applicable, given the component's global platform character and the absence of national implementation or ownership mechanisms.

258. Certain components were clearly demand-driven and closely aligned with international policy processes involving Member States. In particular, the Emissions Gap Report and Adaptation Gap Report are directly linked to UNFCCC processes and are widely used by governments in climate negotiations and policy discussions. These reports are supported by established governance structures, including steering committees and author networks comprising policymakers, scientific experts and representatives from different regions, which guide the scope, review key messages and ensure alignment with evolving policy needs. This strong connection to global policy frameworks reinforces the relevance of these outputs to country priorities and enhances their perceived ownership among users.

259. In addition, some components incorporated more explicit consultative and demand-driven processes to identify priorities. The Frontiers Report, for example, uses structured consultations and surveys of experts and stakeholders to identify emerging environmental issues to be covered in each edition. This approach allows a broad range of perspectives, including inputs linked to country-level concerns and scientific communities, to inform the selection of topics. While not limited to government stakeholders, this mechanism contributes to a form of bottom-up agenda setting and reinforces the responsiveness of the report to evolving environmental priorities.

260. Partnership-based mechanisms, such as WWQA, contributed to stakeholder participation and technical engagement by involving countries, international organizations and scientific institutions in collaborative platforms. These mechanisms provided opportunities for selected national stakeholders to contribute knowledge, participate in workstreams or use cases, and benefit from collective outputs. However, they should not be interpreted as evidence of strong country ownership in a programmatic sense, since decision-making authority remained largely with UNEP and core partners, and national ownership mechanisms were not established.

261. However, the project did not include formal structures to ensure country ownership in a programmatic sense. There were no national implementation arrangements, governance mechanisms, or systematic processes through which countries could influence overall project direction, resource allocation, or strategic priorities. As such, ownership remained largely at the level of participation and use rather than decision-making. Although some governments and public agencies provided funding, technical inputs or in-kind support to specific components, and some national stakeholders used project outputs in policy or monitoring processes, this did not amount to a consistent pattern of government-led complementary implementation or co-financed follow-up across the portfolio. Engagement with countries was also uneven across components. While institutional and recurring assessments demonstrated strong and sustained interaction with national stakeholders, other outputs (particularly one-off or region-specific assessments) showed more limited evidence of country involvement or demand-driven processes.

262. Evidence on the use of outputs at country level is available but remains partial and uneven across components. For climate reports, user surveys for the Emissions Gap Report and the Adaptation Gap Report indicate uptake by national stakeholders, including government representatives, particularly in preparation for international climate negotiations and, in some cases, for informing national policy processes such as NDC preparation and updates. Survey findings further suggest that these outputs are cited and used in policy-related materials, including in the context of COP negotiations, pointing to both direct and indirect contributions to national-level discussions.

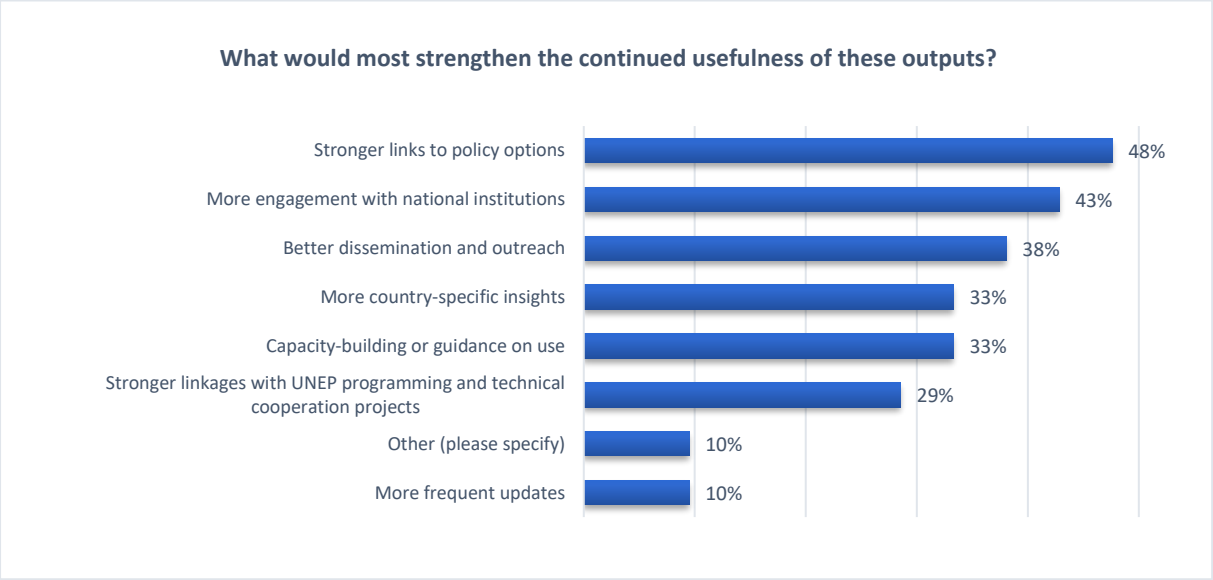
263. Additional evidence from selected case examples and stakeholder interviews confirms that outputs have informed policy analysis, reporting processes and technical discussions in specific country contexts. However, consistent with patterns observed in download data and broader engagement metrics (see Paras.140–141), such use is not evenly distributed across countries and appears more pronounced in contexts with stronger institutional capacity, active participation in international policy processes and closer integration into global knowledge networks. In other contexts, particularly in LDCs and SIDS, evidence of use remains more limited or less visible.

264. Evidence of government or public-sector leadership in complementary activities and co-financing is partial. Several governments and public agencies contributed funding or in-kind support to specific components, and the MTR noted that key actors provided in-kind contributions and cash co-financing. There is also evidence of government use of project outputs, particularly the EGR and AGR in climate negotiations and NDC-related processes, and selected examples of national application, such as WWQA-supported approaches in Sierra Leone's monitoring system. However, the evaluation found limited evidence that government ministries or public-sector agencies systematically initiated non-cost complementary activities, provided sustained co-financing, or assumed leadership roles to move outputs toward project outcomes or intermediate states. Country ownership was therefore reflected more clearly in participation, endorsement, use and selective financial or technical contributions than in government-led implementation or institutionalisation of results.

265. Responses to the evaluation survey provide additional insight into the conditions under which the continued usefulness of A3 outputs could be strengthened (Figure 13). Respondents most frequently pointed to room for stronger links to policy options (48%) and greater engagement with national institutions (43%), alongside calls for improved dissemination (38%). These findings reinforce earlier observations that the performance of A3 outputs depends less on the production of reports per se than on their continued embedding within policy processes, institutional partnerships, and user-oriented support

mechanisms. They also highlight the importance of strengthening connections between assessment outputs and UNEP programming, identified by almost 30% of respondents, as a pathway to enhance longer-term relevance and uptake. Qualitative feedback further suggests a demand for more operational guidance to users, including tools and decision-support systems to facilitate the application of assessment methodologies (e.g. data compilation, indicator standardisation and more actionable output formats), pointing to a shift from scientific knowledge products towards more practice-oriented and usable solutions.

Figure 133: Perceived modalities to strengthen the influence of the project's assessment and early-warning outputs



(Source: Evaluation survey)

266. Interviews also highlighted an emerging shift in UNEP's assessment approach toward increased use of digital platforms and more dynamic data-driven systems, including through the WESR. This shift (directly relevant to Output B) reflects broader trends in environmental intelligence, where web-based platforms, real-time data and interactive tools complement or partially replace traditional report-based formats. While still evolving and not originally reflected in Project A3 design or results framework, this transition raises important strategic considerations regarding the future balance between narrative assessments, data platforms and user-oriented decision-support tools, as well as implications for accessibility, timeliness and user engagement.

4.9.6 Communication and Public Awareness

267. Communication and public awareness represent a critical factor affecting the performance of Project A3, with evidence pointing to a clear contrast between the strong visibility of selected flagship outputs and the absence of a coherent, portfolio-level communication approach.

268. Climate assessments - particularly EGR and AGR - benefit from well-developed communication strategies, including global launches, media engagement (e.g. pre-release press briefings), digital dissemination and targeted briefings to policymakers and stakeholders. These efforts contribute to high levels of visibility, uptake and policy influence. Available analytics for 2020–2023 confirm consistently strong reach, with tens of thousands of downloads and page views, social media audiences in the millions, and extensive global media coverage in particular for the Emissions Gap Report (Box 3).

Box 3. The Emissions Gap Report as a communication benchmark within UNEP

The Emissions Gap Report illustrates the role of structured communication in driving visibility and uptake. Across recent editions, the report has consistently achieved very high global reach, supported by coordinated media engagement, pre-release briefings and targeted dissemination.

Available metrics indicate reach in the millions (e.g. 6.1 million in 2020; 8.9 million in 2023), high levels of digital engagement (over 340,000 engagement actions in 2020; over 70,000 in 2023), and strong online visibility, with tens of thousands of downloads (36,901 in 2020; over 90,000 within two months in 2023). Media coverage is extensive, with between approximately 2,000 and over 4,000 articles per edition, spanning up to 115 countries and nearly 30 languages. Earlier editions already showed similar patterns, with over 2,300 articles across 96 countries for the 2020 report.

This level of visibility reflects not only the report's policy relevance, but also a professionalised communication model combining global launches, multilingual outreach and sustained media engagement supported by executive summaries, key messages, press releases and other dissemination modalities, while launch events and Executive Director press statements were used for several editions. By contrast, many other A3 outputs rely on more limited or passive dissemination approaches.

The EGR therefore provides a clear benchmark within UNEP, demonstrating how structured communication strategies can significantly enhance the reach, accessibility and policy traction of environmental assessments, and helping explain the uneven visibility observed across the broader portfolio.

269. In contrast, communication across the broader portfolio is fragmented and uneven. Many outputs - particularly those outside institutional series - rely largely on passive dissemination through UNEP websites and networks, with limited dedicated resources for outreach or sustained engagement. As a result, several outputs remain less visible and downloaded despite their technical quality. Users often become aware of outputs only after publication. A couple of informants proposed for UNEP to present on a web page a consolidated or forward-looking overview of planned assessments to increase visibility and opportunities for early engagement and uptake.

270. Both survey responses as well as interviews point to the need for a more diversified, user-oriented communication approach. This includes greater use of social media, tailored messaging for different stakeholder groups, partnerships with local intermediaries, and more accessible formats such as visual summaries, short videos and local-language content. Respondents also emphasised the importance of more explicitly linking findings to decision-making contexts -including through tailored outputs for different user groups- and of strengthening data platforms and dissemination tools to improve accessibility and usability.

271. More fundamentally, communication efforts are not systematically linked to strategies for uptake, use and influence. While some products achieve high visibility, the absence of a coordinated, project-level communication and dissemination approach reduces the overall impact of the portfolio and limits the translation of knowledge into policy and practice.

Findings Statements on Factors Affecting Performance and Cross-Cutting Issues

272. **Finding 16**. The project's flexible and decentralised programme structure, combined with limited portfolio-level governance mechanisms, constrained strategic coordination, learning and overall coherence.

273. **Finding 17**. Stakeholder engagement was strong but uneven across the portfolio.

274. **Finding 18.** Communication and visibility constitute a major constraint affecting the project's performance. While institutional outputs achieved high visibility and uptake, the absence of a coordinated communication strategy, combined with limited diversification of formats and insufficient alignment with user needs, significantly constrained the accessibility, use and overall impact of many other outputs.

275. **Finding 19.** The project had a low environmental and social risk profile, and no adverse effects were identified. However, safeguards monitoring and broader cross-cutting considerations such as gender equality, human rights and private sector engagement were not systematically embedded at project level, limiting their strategic contribution across the portfolio.

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

Rating for Quality of Project Management and Supervision: Moderately Satisfactory

Rating for Stakeholders Participation and Cooperation: Satisfactory

Rating for Responsiveness to Human Rights and Gender Equality: Moderately Satisfactory

Rating for Environmental and Social Safeguards: Moderately Satisfactory

Rating for Country Ownership and Driven-ness: Moderately Satisfactory

Rating for Communication and Public Awareness: Moderately Satisfactory

5 CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

5.1 Conclusions

276. Project A3 performed at a moderately satisfactory level, combining strong achievements in a limited number of institutionalised outputs with structural shortcomings affecting coherence, efficiency, financial consolidation, predictability and sustainability across the broader portfolio.

277. The project delivered a substantial body of environmental assessments and science-policy outputs, several of which achieved global recognition and demonstrable influence. While it operated more as an aggregation of heterogeneous initiatives than as a strategically integrated intervention, it nonetheless reinforced UNEP's role as a provider of high-value global environmental assessments. However, its added value at portfolio level remained constrained.

278. The most significant results were concentrated in a subset of well-established assessment products, notably the Emissions Gap Report and the Adaptation Gap Report. These outputs are firmly embedded in global policy processes and widely used by governments, international organisations and financial institutions. Other outputs, including the Frontiers reports and selected thematic assessments, also contributed to agenda-setting and policy debates, although with more variable reach, uptake and sustainability.

279. A key strength emerging from the evaluation is UNEP's distinct positioning within the global science-policy landscape. Unlike intergovernmental assessment processes such as the IPCC, UNEP's flagship assessments provide timely, policy-relevant analysis aligned with policy cycles, particularly in the context of UNFCCC negotiations. This agility constitutes a clear comparative advantage, enabling UNEP to complement longer-term assessment processes (such as IPCC and GEO) and to inform decision-making with up-to-date evidence. Alignment with policy windows was a critical factor in explaining uptake and influence.

280. At the same time, the absence of a coherent portfolio approach limited UNEP's ability to leverage its full assessment capacity. While the project functioned as an adaptive platform -evolving in response to funding opportunities, shifting priorities and organisational changes- this flexibility came at the cost of coherence, strategic focus and results measurement. Overall, performance was shaped by four interrelated factors: (i) a design combining heterogeneous and partially autonomous components, (ii) donor-driven and uneven funding patterns, (iii) limited portfolio-level coordination and governance mechanisms, and (iv) monitoring systems not adapted to capturing outcome-level change. In particular, the lack of a clearly articulated portfolio logic and of robust systems to track uptake, use and policy influence constrained the ability to demonstrate and manage results at portfolio level.

281. Outcome-level effectiveness was therefore uneven. While selected outputs achieved significant uptake and influence, particularly in global policy processes, the majority of outputs showed more limited visibility or evidence of use. This reflects differences in institutional anchoring and maturity, but also the absence of a systematic approach to dissemination, stakeholder engagement and uptake across the portfolio. Linkages between assessment outputs and UNEP's own programming, as well as engagement with implementation actors—including the private sector—remained limited and largely ad hoc.

282. Efficiency gains were achieved within individual components, particularly through standardised production processes, shared services and effective use of partnerships. These demonstrate UNEP's capacity to deliver high-quality outputs in a cost-efficient manner. However, these efficiencies were not realised at portfolio level and were offset by structural inefficiencies linked to the umbrella design, including fragmented funding, uneven resource allocation and high coordination costs. Partnerships and in-kind contributions were important to delivery, but were not systematically planned, documented, consolidated or leveraged as part of a portfolio-wide resourcing and efficiency strategy.

283. Sustainability is similarly uneven. It is strongest for institutionalised outputs that benefit from sustained demand, stable governance arrangements and alignment with global policy processes. In contrast, other components remain dependent on project-based funding, individual leadership and limited institutional anchoring. Fragmentation across UNEP's assessment landscape, combined with organisational changes and limited mechanisms for knowledge retention and coordination, constrains long-term sustainability.

284. The project did not generate significant unintended negative effects. However, its structure and performance were strongly shaped by UNEP's funding model, which combined partial upfront funding, incremental resource mobilisation, earmarked donor contributions and significant reliance on in-kind support. This model enabled flexibility and supported the continuation of several important outputs, but also reinforced component-by-component implementation, uneven resourcing and limited strategic integration at portfolio level.

285. The project contributed meaningfully to partnerships, scientific networks and global knowledge exchange, reinforcing UNEP's convening role. The World Water Quality Alliance provides an additional example of a less product-centred but still relevant legacy: although the originally envisaged global assessment was not completed, WWQA helped promote scientific networks, workstreams and communities of practice around ambient water quality, and contributed to partner mobilisation beyond the direct UNEP-managed funding envelope. However, these contributions were unevenly structured across the portfolio and were not consistently embedded in a broader capacity development, stakeholder engagement or uptake strategy. Engagement with country-level actors and implementation-oriented stakeholders, including the private sector, remained uneven and largely ad hoc, constraining broader uptake and influence.

286. The integration of gender equality and human rights was addressed mainly through UNEP's institutional procedures rather than through a dedicated project-level strategy. These procedures included publication review and clearance processes that required attention to gender considerations, inclusive and non-discriminatory language, and the relevance of outputs for different stakeholder groups. Some assessment products also incorporated gender or equity considerations in their content, author selection, peer review, or stakeholder engagement processes. However, the project did not include a specific gender and human rights action plan, dedicated indicators, baseline analysis, or systematic monitoring of how different groups used or benefited from the knowledge products. As a result, integration provided a baseline level of compliance but remained uneven and insufficiently operationalised across the portfolio.

287. Overall, Project A3 confirms the continued relevance and value of UNEP's assessment function within the global environmental governance landscape, particularly through its ability to deliver high-quality, policy-relevant knowledge products with demonstrated influence. At the same time, it highlights the limitations of managing this function through

a loosely structured umbrella project. Future efforts would benefit from a more coherent, function-based and system-oriented approach that strengthens strategic alignment, integration, and the systematic translation of knowledge into policy, investment and implementation. In addition, ongoing shifts toward digital platforms and data-driven environmental intelligence suggest a need for UNEP to further adapt its assessment model to maintain relevance, accessibility and strategic positioning.

288. The SPBF case study reinforces the broader conclusions of the main evaluation. It illustrates both the strengths and limitations of Project A3's operating model: strong thematic relevance, visibility and convening capacity, but weaker operational integration, monitoring systems, institutional anchoring and evidence of downstream impact. The case study therefore contributes important insights into the challenges of translating dialogue-based platforms into sustained policy and behavioural outcomes within UNEP's broader science-policy architecture.

Responses to Key Strategic Questions

289. The evaluation Terms of Reference included a set of strategic questions of interest to UNEP.

- *To what extent have the project design (i.e. diverse components and different roles and responsibilities of UNEP by components) and implementation structure (i.e. multiple responsible offices within UNEP and a diverse range of partners) supported the achievements of the project results?*

  The project design and implementation structure only partially supported the achievement of results. While the umbrella structure enabled flexibility and resource mobilisation, it did not provide a coherent strategic or operational framework linking components. Coordination remained largely decentralised, and synergies across components were limited. As a result, the structure did not significantly enhance collective results beyond those achieved by individual components.

- *To what extent has the project been able to ensure adequate and predictable funding, including from its core resources, to deliver on strategically important knowledge products such as the Gap Reports?*

  The project successfully mobilised substantial resources over its lifetime but did not ensure adequate and predictable funding across the portfolio. The reliance on extra-budgetary, earmarked funding supported continuity of key outputs but resulted in uneven resourcing and limited strategic allocation. While effective for sustaining high-priority outputs, this model did not provide a balanced or reliable financial basis for the broader portfolio.

- *What are the long-lasting results of the project components (assessments, SPBF, etc.) that UNEP should consider continuing or scaling up to advance its institutional strategy on key thematic areas? To what extent has the project driven changes that contribute to specific areas of work in UNEP?*

  The most significant and lasting results are associated with institutionalised assessment products embedded in global policy processes, notably the Emissions Gap Report and Adaptation Gap Report. Other outputs contributed to agenda-setting and knowledge exchange, though with more variable long-term influence. While the project strengthened UNEP's capacity to produce assessments, these gains were not systematically consolidated to strengthen the assessment system as a whole.

- *What lessons have emerged from the project components that UNEP should adopt for improvement and or avoid repeating in future project?*

  Key lessons for future programming include: the need for a clearer portfolio logic when grouping diverse components; the importance of predictable and strategically allocated funding; the need for monitoring systems focused on uptake and influence rather than outputs; and the importance of strengthening coherence, prioritisation and learning across the assessment portfolio. Greater attention to communication, stakeholder engagement and links to implementation processes is also required to translate knowledge into sustained policy influence and practical use.

290. The table below provides a summary of the ratings and finding discussed in Section 4. Overall, the project demonstrates a rating of **Moderately Satisfactory**.

Table 177: Summary of project findings and ratings[41]

Criterion	Summary assessment	Rating
Strategic Relevance	The project was strongly aligned with UNEP's mandate, MTS and PoW across two strategy cycles and remained highly relevant to global environmental priorities. Its complementarity with UNEP and external processes was strong, although internal coherence across components was limited.	**HS**
1. Alignment to UNEP MTS, POW and Strategic Priorities	Strong formal alignment with UNEP's strategic frameworks and science-policy mandate across both MTS cycles, though not always translated into a differentiated strategic approach.	HS
2. Alignment to UNEP Donor/Partner strategic priorities	Strong thematic alignment with donor priorities across climate, water, pollution and science-policy areas, but largely driven by individual components attracting earmarked funding rather than a unified project strategy.	S
3. Relevance to global, regional, sub-regional and national environmental priorities	Strong relevance to global and regional priorities, especially through climate-related outputs and selected mandated assessments, with evidence of national use though uneven across components.	HS
4. Complementarity with existing interventions/ Coherence	Strong complementarity with UNEP initiatives and global processes, but coherence across the overall portfolio remained limited and was not systematically leveraged.	S
Quality of Project Design	The design was strategically relevant and technically credible, but constrained by limited coherence, ambitious scope, limited articulation of causal pathways, and uneven realism in relation to resources.	**MS**
Nature of External Context	The project operated in a dynamic and constrained context marked by COVID-19, funding volatility, internal procedural changes and shifting geopolitical priorities. These factors created constraints but did not fundamentally alter the project's direction.	**MU**
Effectiveness	The project delivered a strong portfolio of policy-relevant outputs, but performance and uptake were concentrated in a limited number of institutionalised products. Outcome-level achievement was significant but uneven across the portfolio.	**MS**

[41] Most criteria will be rated on a six-point scale as follows: Highly Satisfactory (HS); Satisfactory (S); Moderately Satisfactory (MS); Moderately Unsatisfactory (MU); Unsatisfactory (U); Highly Unsatisfactory (HU). Sustainability and Likelihood of Impact are rated, also on a six-point scale, from Highly Likely (HL) down to Highly Unlikely (HU) and Nature of External Context is rated from Highly Favourable (HF) to Highly Unfavourable (HU).

Criterion	Summary assessment	Rating
1. Availability of outputs	A substantial body of outputs was delivered, especially under climate science, Frontiers, WOA and AMPPAC, but several components were only partially delivered or not completed as originally planned.	MS
2. Achievement of project outcomes	The project contributed meaningfully to uptake in global policy processes and some national contexts, but results were uneven and the monitoring framework was too limited to demonstrate outcome-level change systematically.	MS
3. Likelihood of impact (use 'likely' scale)	Conditions for sustained impact are credible, especially for institutional outputs, but pathways to wider and deeper downstream change remain only partly in place.	ML
Financial Management	Financial management was functional at the level of donor reporting, agreement-level administration and transaction processing, with high absorption of UNEP-managed resources recorded in Umoja and no evidence of systemic non-compliance with UNEP or donor requirements. Financial information was adequate for donor and agreement-level accountability and internal project management. However, the multi-donor and partner-supported funding architecture limited the ease of consolidated project-level financial analysis across UNEP-managed expenditure, partner co-financing, in-kind contributions, components, outputs and outcomes. These limitations affected project-level evaluability and strategic financial analysis but did not indicate systemic financial non-compliance.	**MS**
1. Adherence to UNEP's financial policies and procedures	Standard UNEP systems and procedures were generally used, first disbursement was timely, expenditure appears to have remained within approved budget, and no evidence of systemic non-compliance was identified. The evaluation could not fully verify all adherence checklist elements across the full project period, particularly where this would have required complete closure documentation or project-level reconciliations not yet available at the time of the evaluation.	MS
2. Completeness of project financial information	Financial information was available through Umoja, donor and agreement-level records, partner reports and internal programme records. However, it was not available to the evaluation in a single consolidated project-level format linking UNEP-managed expenditure, partner co-financing, in-kind contributions, components, outputs and outcomes. Component-level mapping therefore required manual consolidation and interpretation. This limited project-level evaluability and strategic financial analysis, without indicating that official financial data were unavailable or that UNEP should have recorded partner co-financing as UNEP expenditure in Umoja.	MS
Efficiency	Individual key outputs were produced efficiently through standardised systems, shared services and partnerships, but overall efficiency was reduced by the umbrella design, uneven funding and high coordination burden.	**MS**
Monitoring and Reporting	Monitoring and reporting ensured accountability and regular reporting, but were not well adapted to adaptive management, strategic oversight or portfolio-level learning.	**MU**
1. Monitoring of project implementation	Monitoring systems supported compliance and activity tracking but had limited use for strategic management and did not adequately capture outcome-level change.	MU
2. Project reporting	Reporting obligations were largely fulfilled, but reporting remained fragmented and mainly compliance-oriented, with limited analytical value for strategic use.	MS
Sustainability (use 'likely' scale)	Sustainability is uneven across the portfolio and strongest for institutionalised outputs with recurring demand, while more vulnerable components remain dependent on project-based funding and limited institutional anchoring.	**ML**
1. Socio-political sustainability	Strongest for institutionalised outputs that are embedded in UNEP's normative mandate and aligned with recurring international policy processes.	L

Criterion	Summary assessment	Rating
2. Financial sustainability	Continued funding is likely for key flagship outputs, but broader portfolio sustainability remains uncertain due to donor-driven and uneven financing.	ML
3. Institutional sustainability	Institutional sustainability is uneven: some outputs are well embedded, but broader sustainability is constrained by fragmentation, restructuring and limited mechanisms for knowledge retention and coherence.	ML
Factors Affecting Performance	Performance was supported by strong partnerships and stakeholder engagement in selected components, but constrained by uneven portfolio-level governance, fragmented communication, and limited systematic treatment of cross-cutting issues.	**MS**
1. Quality of project management and supervision	Management supported delivery of individual outputs but did not provide strong strategic integration or effective portfolio-level oversight.	MS
2.1 UNEP/Implementing Agency:	UNEP supported implementation effectively at component level, but management systems were not well suited to steering the portfolio as a coherent programme.	MS
2.2 Partners/Executing Agency:	Partnerships were essential to delivery and generally well supervised at contractual, financial and output levels, especially where mature governance and production arrangements existed. However, supervision quality varied across components and was less effective for complex alliance-based partnerships requiring stronger strategic steering, integration and adaptive management.	MS
2. Stakeholders' participation and cooperation	Stakeholder engagement was a clear strength in many assessment processes but remained uneven and weakly structured at project level.	S
3. Responsiveness to human rights and gender equality	Compliance was ensured mainly through UNEP institutional procedures, but there was no proactive or results-oriented project-level approach.	MS
4. Environmental and social safeguards	The project had a low environmental and social risk profile, and no adverse effects were identified. The design included an ESE screening, but evidence of systematic safeguards monitoring and reporting during implementation was limited, and safeguards were addressed largely implicitly across components.	MS
5. Country ownership and driven-ness	Country engagement was evident through participation, data provision and policy use, but ownership remained mostly at the level of participation and use rather than programme governance.	MS
6. Communication and public awareness	Communication was strong for flagship outputs but fragmented and uneven across the wider portfolio, limiting accessibility and uptake of many products.	MS
Overall Project Performance Rating	**The project performed at a moderately satisfactory level, with strong achievements in a limited number of institutional outputs but structural shortcomings in coherence, efficiency, monitoring and sustainability across the broader portfolio.**	**MS**

5.2 Lessons Learned

Lesson Learned #1:	**Cross-cutting science–policy initiatives require explicit institutional mandates and dedicated resourcing to achieve systemic coherence and effective monitoring.**
Context/comment:	Science–policy initiatives operating across multiple thematic domains and institutional processes require clear mandates and dedicated resourcing to support coherence, coordination and alignment of monitoring approaches. In their absence, coordination tends to rely on informal collaboration and existing relationships, limiting the potential to achieve sustained and system-wide coherence. Project A3 delivered high-quality assessments and strengthened data systems, partnerships and knowledge platforms. However, despite its strategic positioning, it did not include a formalised mandate or dedicated resources to strengthen coherence across UNEP's assessment function or to develop integrated monitoring approaches at portfolio level. As a result, coordination remained fragmented and monitoring systems were not used strategically to support portfolio-level oversight or learning. Future science–policy programming would benefit from explicitly defining coordination roles and resourcing, and from positioning cross-cutting initiatives as catalytic platforms to strengthen coherence, monitoring and UNEP's convening and leadership role in the science–policy interface.
Cross-reference(s) to relevant paragraphs	Para.116–118, 139–141, 205–210, 239–241, 272, 280, 283

Lesson Learned #2:	**Umbrella project structures offer administrative flexibility but risk limiting strategic coherence and impact.**
Context/comment:	The A3 project demonstrates that umbrella project structures can provide certain operational advantages, notably by enabling the aggregation of diverse funding streams, reducing transaction costs associated with preparing multiple project documents, and offering flexibility to accommodate heterogeneous activities under a single framework. However, these benefits were accompanied by significant shortcomings. The umbrella design grouped multiple largely independent components without a strong unifying intervention logic, resulting in limited synergies, fragmented implementation, and limited portfolio-level coordination. This structure also complicated monitoring and reporting reduced the usefulness of the results framework, and constrained the development of coherent communication, uptake and sustainability strategies across outputs. As a result, overall project performance depended primarily on the strength of individual components rather than on the added value of the portfolio as a whole.
Cross-reference(s) to relevant paragraphs	Para.146–148, 193, 198, 204, 237–241, 272, 280, 282, 287–288

Lesson Learned #3:	**Institutional anchoring, governance arrangements and alignment with policy processes are the primary determinants of uptake of scientific assessments, not technical quality alone.**
Context/comment:	The evaluation shows that uptake and influence of A3 outputs were not primarily driven by their technical quality, which was generally high across the portfolio, but by a set of enabling conditions. Outputs that were institutionally anchored, supported by structured governance arrangements, aligned with policy cycles (e.g. UNFCCC), and backed by sustained resources demonstrated significantly higher and more consistent uptake. In contrast, outputs lacking these features, despite being technically sound, showed limited visibility and use. This indicates that science–policy interventions require deliberate design of uptake pathways, including governance structures, stakeholder engagement mechanisms, and alignment with decision-making processes. Without these conditions, dissemination alone is insufficient to ensure use. Future initiatives should therefore move beyond a production-focused model and systematically design for uptake, including early engagement with users, alignment with policy windows, and sustained interaction with target institutions.
Cross-reference(s) to relevant paragraphs	Para.135–136, 152, 158–166, 170–174, 179–181, 220–224, 258

Lesson Learned #4:	**Monitoring systems for knowledge-based interventions must go beyond proxy indicators and be explicitly designed to capture different types and levels of use and influence.**
Context/comment:	The A3 monitoring framework relied heavily on proxy indicators (e.g. number of countries, institutions, or forums) that do not distinguish between access, participation and actual use. This resulted in very high reported achievements that were not always consistent with the more nuanced evidence on uptake and influence. The evaluation demonstrates that knowledge-based interventions generate multiple forms of influence -conceptual, strategic and instrumental- which require differentiated monitoring approaches. Without this, results may be overstated, difficult to interpret, and of limited value for learning and decision-making. Future projects should develop monitoring systems that explicitly capture types of use (e.g. citation, policy influence, institutional integration), depth of uptake, and pathways of influence over time. This is essential both for credible reporting and for adaptive management.
Cross-reference(s) to relevant paragraphs	Para.85, 91–95, 147, 155, 160–164, 180, 205–218, 241, 280

Lesson Learned #5:	**Integrating gender equality and human rights in environmental assessments requires explicit analytical frameworks and cannot rely solely on institutional quality assurance processes.**
Context/comment:	While A3 outputs complied with UNEP's institutional requirements (e.g. gender review in publication processes), the integration of gender equality and human rights remained largely procedural and uneven across outputs. These dimensions were not embedded in the project's theory of change, monitoring framework or analytical methodologies. The evaluation highlights that relying on quality assurance mechanisms alone ensures minimum compliance but does not lead to systematic or meaningful integration. More substantive integration requires explicit analytical frameworks, guidance for authors, and inclusion of these dimensions in results frameworks and monitoring systems. Future initiatives should define clear approaches to integrating gender and human rights in environmental assessments, tailored to the nature of the analysis but sufficiently structured to ensure consistency, depth and comparability across outputs.
Cross-reference(s) to relevant paragraphs	Para.156, 177, 215–216, 253–256, 275, 286

5.3 Recommendations

291. The following recommendations are forward-looking and framed at institutional level, taking into account that no subsequent phase of the project is foreseen.

292. Together, the recommendations aim to strengthen UNEP's assessment function as a coherent, well-resourced and impact-oriented system, building on existing strengths while addressing structural limitations identified in the evaluation.

Recommendation #1:	**Strengthen coordination, strategic positioning and internal learning across UNEP's assessment function.**
Suggested actions (within 12 months)	• Convene at least two **coordination exchanges** across assessment teams within 12 months, under the leadership of the Office of the Chief Scientist/Science Division and with participation from the Communication Division. • Prepare an **internal mapping/typology** of major UNEP assessment products, distinguishing flagship, thematic, emerging-issues and data/platform-based products. • Clarify UNEP's comparative advantage in the science-policy interface through a short internal **positioning** note. • Support improved **prioritisation and sequencing** of assessment outputs to maximise impact and alignment with policy processes. • Prepare and share a short internal note documenting **good practices** from selected flagship assessments, including EGR, AGR and Frontiers. • Organise **internal knowledge-sharing sessions** to support replication of effective approaches.
Challenge/problem to be addressed by the recommendation:	UNEP's assessment portfolio operates as a set of largely independent products with limited structured interaction and limited systematic learning across components, resulting in fragmentation, missed synergies, and weaker institutional positioning.

Cross-reference(s) to relevant paragraphs	Para.116–118, 139–141, 205–210, 237–241, 272, 280, 283
Priority Level:	Critical
Type of Recommendation	Project
Responsibility:	Office of the Chief Scientist; Office of Science; Senior Management; Communication Division.
Proposed implementation time-frame:	Within 12 months

Recommendation #2:	**Develop a more structured and predictable approach to resourcing UNEP's assessment function.**
Suggested actions (within 12 months)	• Prepare a portfolio-level **review** of **funding gaps**, dependencies and minimum resource requirements for priority assessment products. • Identify a **prioritised** set of core assessment products requiring predictable support. • Prepare a targeted **resource mobilisation note** aligned with UNEP's science-policy mandate and priority assessment products. • Identify practical measures to **reduce vulnerability** to turnover and **loss of assessment expertise**, including documentation of core production processes and succession arrangements.
Challenge/problem to be addressed by the recommendation:	Uneven and uncertain funding across components leads to structural imbalances, reliance on ad hoc arrangements, and risks to sustainability and quality.
Cross-reference(s) to relevant paragraphs	Para.146–148, 179–181, 193–204, 220–229, 277, 280, 282
Priority Level:	Critical
Type of Recommendation	UNEP-wide
Responsibility:	Senior Management ; Resource Mobilisation Unit ; Office of Science
Proposed implementation time-frame:	Within 12 months

Recommendation #3:	**Strengthen the uptake and use of assessments in UNEP programming and policy processes.**
Suggested actions (within 12 months)	• Identify two to three priority user groups for selected assessment products and prepare **tailored dissemination** approaches for each group. • Pilot enhanced engagement with **national-level** stakeholders in a small number of selected contexts, building on products with demonstrated demand. • Review **complementarities** between report-based assessments and **digital/data-driven platforms** and identify practical options to improve accessibility, timeliness and user engagement. • Introduce a light-touch step in relevant programme/project design processes requiring teams to **consider applicable UNEP assessment findings**.
Challenge/problem to be addressed by the recommendation:	While UNEP assessments contribute significantly to global policy discussions, their systematic use in UNEP programming and national-level policy processes remains limited, with gaps in dissemination and translation into actionable formats.
Cross-reference(s) to relevant paragraphs	Para.158–166, 170–174, 205–210, 257–264, 273, 278, 283

Priority Level:	Important
Type of Recommendation	Project
Responsibility:	Office of Science; Programme Divisions; PPD; Office of the Chief Scientist
Proposed implementation time-frame:	Within 12 months

Recommendation #4:	**Strengthen structured stakeholder engagement and co-production models across the assessment lifecycle.**
Suggested actions (within 12 months)	• Prepare indicative **guidance** on stakeholder engagement across the assessment lifecycle, covering design, production, dissemination and follow-up. • Pilot **co-production** approaches in one or more selected assessment processes, involving relevant policymakers, scientific partners, private sector actors and/or implementation partners as appropriate. • Identify existing platforms and partnerships that can support sustained **dialogue** around assessment findings, including sectoral science-policy-business engagement modalities, WESR and thematic networks. • Clarify, in the **guidance note**, how platforms and partnerships can link assessments with policy, finance and implementation actors.
Challenge/problem to be addressed by the recommendation:	Stakeholder engagement models remain uneven across products, with limited systematic involvement of key user groups throughout the assessment lifecycle, reducing relevance, co-production, and translation into action.
Cross-reference(s) to relevant paragraphs	Para.85, 91–95, 147, 155, 160–164, 242–248, 258–264, 280, 283
Priority Level:	Critical
Type of Recommendation	Project
Responsibility:	Office of Science; Programme Divisions; Office of the Chief Scientist; Relevant partnerships units
Proposed implementation time-frame:	Within 12 months

Recommendation #5:	**Strengthen monitoring systems to better capture uptake, use and results of UNEP assessments.**
Suggested actions (within 12 months)	• Define a limited set of **uptake and use indicators** for assessment-based interventions, including policy references, institutional use, stakeholder engagement and selected examples of application in policy or programming. • Pilot a **tracking approach** for selected assessment products using a combination of surveys, Overton data, web analytics and documented use cases. • Align the proposed indicators with UNEP **corporate monitoring frameworks**, with technical input from the PPD performance monitoring and reporting team. • Document **lessons** from the pilot and integrate them into future project design and monitoring frameworks for assessment-based interventions.

Challenge/problem to be addressed by the recommendation:	Monitoring systems focus primarily on outputs and proxy indicators, limiting UNEP's ability to demonstrate results, assess effectiveness, and learn from experience.
Cross-reference(s) to relevant paragraphs	Para.137, 205–218, 239–241, 272–273, 280, 283
Priority Level:	Critical
Type of Recommendation	Project
Responsibility:	Office of Science; relevant programme management functions; Project Managers, with methodological support from the performance monitoring and reporting team where appropriate.
Proposed implementation time-frame:	Within 12 months

Recommendation #6:	**Operationalise gender equality, human rights and inclusion in UNEP environmental assessments.**
Suggested actions (within 12 months)	• Develop light-touch guidance for integrating gender equality, human rights, disability inclusion and vulnerability considerations into environmental assessments, proportionate to the type, scope and purpose of each product. • Require major assessments to include, at scoping stage, a brief assessment of whether and how gender, human rights, vulnerability, marginalisation or disability dimensions are relevant to the topic, intended users and likely policy implications. • Provide practical prompts for authors and reviewers to consider differentiated exposure, vulnerability, access to information, participation, and distributional implications where relevant. • Strengthen monitoring and reporting templates so they capture not only gender balance in authorship and events, but also whether cross-cutting dimensions were considered in assessment design, content, stakeholder engagement and dissemination. • Pilot the approach in two or three upcoming assessment products and use the results to refine UNEP-wide guidance for assessment teams.
Challenge/problem to be addressed by the recommendation:	Gender equality and human rights considerations were addressed mainly through institutional quality assurance and selected output-level practices, rather than through a systematic analytical framework, theory of change, monitoring approach or assessment methodology. This limited the consistency, depth and comparability of integration across the portfolio.
Cross-reference(s) to relevant paragraphs	Para.156, 177, 215–216, 253–256, 275, 286; Lesson 5
Priority Level:	Important
Type of Recommendation	Project
Responsibility:	Office of the Chief Scientist; Office of Science; Gender and Safeguards Unit; assessment teams; Evaluation Office/PPD where relevant for guidance alignment.
Proposed implementation time-frame:	Within 12 months

ANNEX I. RESPONSE TO STAKEHOLDER COMMENTS

Response to stakeholder comments received but not (fully) accepted by the evaluator(s), where appropriate

Page Ref	Stakeholder comment	Evaluator(s) Response	UNEP Evaluation Office Response
Executive Summary, Page 12-17	I have looked through the Executive Summary and find on the whole the presentation of success to be lower than I would have expected based on my own level of engagement. Although I cannot comment on the full dimension of the programme, it looks like there may be a degree to which the project is being evaluated on criteria what were not fully clear (or not the same) at the time of project design and inception. For example, if it is criticized now that more could have been done on having an overarching Steering Committee for the project, it may be answered that UNEP saw this rather as part of their internal delivery, so that that was not needed. Hence it seems to me that a specific comment would be appropriate that wider expectations should have been more exactly agreed at the start, rather than have a risk of "moving the goalposts" with delivery assessed according to later expectations at the end of the project. Perhaps the answer to this is that ALL expectations were indeed laid out clearly at the start (and that this is documented), and that there was NO change in expectation from beginning to end. In this case, there should be a message to senior UNEP management to pay more careful note of the expectations throughout projects in future, so that there are no 'surprises' at the end. Conversely, I feel that the actual project team doing the work should be commended, especially the editorial and design functions of the Frontiers Report, where I found their efforts well organized, efficient, helpful: In fact, "highly commendable" overall. I did not find such sentiments clearly expressed in the report. Overall, I find the Evaluation Report to be very well written but note that I have only looked at the parts related to my own engagement and the Executive Summary.	Partially accepted. The Executive Summary already reflects the project's important achievements, but a short clarification was added to better recognize the quality and professionalism of delivery in the Frontiers component. The evaluation criteria and governance expectations were not introduced retrospectively; they derive from the project design, UNEP evaluation requirements and the approved evaluation framework.	*EOU notes that the comments has been partially addressed in the revised version.*

Page Ref	Stakeholder comment	Evaluator(s) Response	UNEP Evaluation Office Response
Paragraph 66, Page 24	There is nothing inappropriate about a project receiving funding from multiple sources. On the contrary, this can be considered a strength, as it demonstrates strong interest and support from different partners. The project is managed under a single consolidated budget in Umoja. Through Umoja IPMR, all funding sources are linked to one Work Breakdown Structure Element (WBSE), which ensures that the financial data for the entire project is integrated, traceable, and consistently reported.	Revised. Multiple funding sources are not inherently problematic and can demonstrate broad partner support. The evaluative concern has been reframed as relating to earmarking, uneven component financing and the need for consolidated project-level analysis across the umbrella portfolio.	EOU notes that the comment has been addressed.
Paragraph 183, Page 73	Cofinancing figures are provided by implementing partners. As such, the UNEP Certifying Officer is not in a position to formally attest to the accuracy or completeness of these amounts, since verification can only be performed based on the partners' own financial records. However, this does not imply that the cofinancing does not exist. Programme Managers maintain direct engagement with implementing partners and are informed of these amounts through ongoing coordination and reporting processes. It is also important to emphasize that UNEP expenditure reporting should not include partner cofinancing, as these amounts are not recorded in UNEP's financial system and fall outside UNEP's control, in line with IPSAS requirements. Finally, the statement: "the evaluation found significant limitations in the consolidation, attribution and traceability of financial information across the umbrella project" should be revised, as the necessary financial data was in fact provided.	Revised. The wording has been revised to acknowledge that co-financing figures are partner-reported and not under UNEP's direct financial control. References to weak traceability have been replaced or qualified as limitations in consolidated project-level financial analysis and attribution across UNEP-managed expenditure, partner co-financing and in-kind contributions.	EOU notes that the comment has been addressed in the revised version.
Paragraph 185, Page 74	All agreements were provided. Kindly clarify the items that were not provided we shall provide them	Clarified. The report has been revised to state that relevant legal agreements requested by the evaluation were provided. Any remaining limitations now relate to consolidated project-level analysis and closure-stage documentation, not to the absence of legal agreements.	EOU notes that the comment has been addressed in the revised version.

Page Ref	Stakeholder comment	Evaluator(s) Response	UNEP Evaluation Office Response
Table 16 no 2 (Page 76-77)	Standard procedure is external financial reports are provided for donor. There are no external financial reports for project. In Umoja the IPMR structure ensures financial data is tracked by project. There is no challenge in capturing data for the project. The evaluator wanted an externally prepared financial report which is not available in UNEP.	Revised. Table 16 and related paragraphs have been revised to distinguish official Umoja/IPMR data, donor-level reporting, internal project-level information, partner-reported co-financing and in-kind contributions, and evaluation-specific mapping to components and outcomes. The report has been revised to avoid implying that UNEP should produce a standalone external financial statement for each umbrella project. The overall financial-management rating has been revised from Moderately Unsatisfactory to Moderately Satisfactory, while retaining the evaluative finding that consolidated project-level financial analysis across components, outputs and outcomes was limited.	EOU notes that the comment has been addressed by adjusting the overall rating of the financial management section, including rating adjustment of completeness of project financial information.
Page 130	Quote: 'Unfortunately, the two WWQA outputs I was involved with have had little impact.' Against how many outputs in total? How is output measured? What was the timeframe to measure impact? Statement can be misleading.	Noted. The quote comes from a survey respondent. It has not been quoted in the body of the report which relied on complementary sources of information to formulate an assessment.	EOU notes that this is a verbatim response to the evaluation survey question presented in the annex V. Evaluation Survey rather than a quotation used as evidentiary support in the report body.

ANNEX II. EVALUATION FRAMEWORK

EVALUATION QUESTIONS	METHODS	SOURCES OF INFORMATION
Strategic Questions		
(mainstreamed in following evaluation criteria)		
Strategic Relevance		
a) *To what extent were the project objectives and strategy relevant to the global challenges, global, regional and country needs, the international response and UN Environment's mandate and capacity?*	Desk review (mandates/strategies); mapping to MTS/PoW and strategic priorities; comparative/coherence scan of related initiatives; interviews; triangulation with evidence of demand/use	PRODOC + revision; UNEP MTS/PoW; relevant UNEA/GA mandates and component mandates; donor agreements/strategies (where accessible); progress reports; MTR; interviews with UNEP PM/team, Sub-programme Coordinator, donors, component leads, selected partners and (where feasible) government/NFP users
Quality of Project Design		
b) *(SQ) To what extent have the project design (i.e. diverse components and different roles and responsibilities of UNEP by components) and implementation structure (i.e. multiple responsible offices within UNEP and a diverse range of partners) supported the achievements of the project results?*	PDQ assessment using UNEP template/Tool 04; ToC/RToC analysis; review of results framework/indicators/baselines/assumptions/risks; interviews	PRODOC + revision; logframe/budget; PDQ template; MTR; progress/IPMR reports; interviews with UNEP PM/current & former staff, component leads, FMO, key partners, MTR consultant
Nature of External Context		
c) *To what extent has the project faced either an Unfavourable or Highly Unfavourable external operating context, and/or a negative external event has occurred during project implementation?*	External context rating at inception; timeline reconstruction; document review; interviews; analysis of how context influenced delivery/outcomes	Progress/IPMR reports; MTR; relevant corporate/context notes; interviews with UNEP PM/team, regional offices, partners
Effectiveness		
Availability of Outputs		
d) *To what extent were the project's programmed outputs delivered as planned, in terms of quantity, scope, quality and timeliness, taking into account approved revisions to the PRODOC?*	Systematic output inventory and mapping against the PRODOC and approved revisions; review of delivery milestones and planned versus actual timelines; structured quality review of outputs (peer review arrangements, QA processes, scientific credibility signals); desk review of progress reports and IPMRs to identify delivery constraints and adaptations; key	PRODOC and approved project revision(s); results framework and official output lists; assessment reports and technical outputs; progress reports and IPMRs; internal quality assurance and peer-review documentation (where available); interviews with UNEP project management, component leads, authors/editors and selected partners.

EVALUATION QUESTIONS	METHODS	SOURCES OF INFORMATION
	informant interviews focused on delivery processes, sequencing and quality assurance.	
e) *To what extent were the project's key outputs made accessible and available to intended beneficiaries, and how well-designed were the dissemination strategies?*	Review of dissemination strategies, communication plans and outreach activities at project and component levels; assessment of accessibility features (open access status, languages, platforms, formats); descriptive analysis of web metrics and access data (views, downloads) as signals of availability and reach; key informant interviews focused on dissemination design, targeting and resourcing; optional user survey, subject to availability of contact lists, limited to access, awareness and perceived accessibility.	Dissemination and communication products (launch materials, newsletters, websites and platforms); web analytics and access statistics (Google Analytics or equivalent, where available); progress reports and IPMRs (communication and outreach sections); interviews with UNEP communication staff, project management, component leads and dissemination partners; survey results (if implemented).
Achievement of Project Outcomes		
f) *To what extent, and in what ways, did the project contribute to the achievement of its intended outcomes as defined in project result framework and the reconstructed Theory of Change -particularly improved understanding, awareness and learning regarding environmental issues and emerging risks among intended stakeholders- and what evidence demonstrates UNEP's substantive contribution or credible association with these outcome-level changes?*	Outcome harvesting; contribution analysis; desk review; interviews; survey responses (if implemented); triangulation across documentary, interview and survey evidence, with explicit consideration of alternative explanations and limits of attribution.	RToC; progress/IPMR reports; component records (minutes, consultative processes, products); MTR; survey results (if implemented); policy and process references; interviews with UNEP PM/team, component leads, partners, governance actors, selected users; survey results (if implemented).
g) *(SQ-SPBF) What lessons have emerged from the SPBF that UNEP should adopt for improvement and or avoid repeating in future project?*	SPBF case study; document review; interviews; contribution pathway mapping.	SPBF documentation (concept notes, event outputs, follow-up actions); progress reports; MTR; interviews with SPBF team, UNEP management, donors, selected participants/partners
Likelihood of impact		
h) *To what extent is there evidence of emerging or early impact signals -such as use, uptake, referencing or incorporation of project outputs in academic literature, policy-related documents, institutional processes or professional practice- consistent with the intermediate states articulated in the reconstructed Theory of Change?*	Uptake analysis (e.g. policy citations, academic references); review of references to project outputs in institutional, policy and strategic documents; contribution analysis;	Overton and other policy citation databases; academic citation sources (e.g. Google Scholar); assessment reports and associated outputs; policy, strategy and institutional documents referencing project outputs; progress reports, IPMRs and Mid-

EVALUATION QUESTIONS	METHODS	SOURCES OF INFORMATION
i) *Based on the outcomes achieved and the observed early impact signals, how likely is it that the project will contribute to longer-lasting positive impacts, including agenda-setting, shared framing, informed policy dialogue, institutionalisation, scaling-up or replication?* j) *To what extent did the key assumptions and drivers identified in the reconstructed Theory of Change hold, and how do they affect the likelihood of impact, including the project's catalytic role and any unintended positive or negative effects, as well as its potential contribution to UNEP Programme of Work outcomes and the Sustainable Development Goals?*	structured analysis of assumptions and drivers identified in the RToC using the UNEP Likelihood of Impact Assessment Decision Tree; qualitative analysis of interviews to validate use, uptake, institutional anchoring, catalytic effects and unintended positive or negative effects; triangulation of quantitative and qualitative evidence to inform a forward-looking judgement on impact likelihood	Term Review findings; reconstructed Theory of Change and assumptions/drivers tables; interviews with UNEP management, component leads, partners, donors and selected users or National Focal Points; documentation on replication, scaling or follow-up initiatives where available; survey results (if implemented).
Financial Management		
k) *(SQ) To what extent has the project been able to ensure adequate and predictable funding, including from its core resources, to deliver on strategically important knowledge products such as the Gap Reports?* l) *To what extent has the project adhered to UNEP's financial policies and procedures, and completeness of the financial information?*	Budget vs secured vs expenditure analysis (by output/component where feasible); review of financial completeness and timeliness; interviews; assessment of how financial factors affected delivery/quality	PRODOC/revision budgets; financial reports; Umoja extracts (if available); donor agreements (as accessible); IPMR financials; interviews with FMO, UNEP PM, key component leads, donors
Efficiency		
m) *How efficiently were inputs converted into outputs (cost-effectiveness, timeliness, sequencing, synergies/complementarities during implementation, extensions)?*	Delivery timeline vs milestones; process/coordination analysis; review of synergies/duplication with related initiatives during implementation; interviews; comparison across components; analysis of reasons for extension(s)	Workplans, milestones; progress/IPMR reports; meeting minutes; contracting/procurement records where accessible; MTR; interviews with UNEP PM/team, component leads, regional offices, partners
Monitoring and Reporting		
Monitoring of project implementation		
n) *In what ways, and to what extent, were the recommendations from the Mid-Term Review and Audits actioned upon?*	Recommendation tracking (status and evidence); verification interviews; assessment of effectiveness of actions	MTR recommendations; audit reports (if any); management response/action plans and follow-up records; subsequent IPMR/progress reports; interviews with UNEP PM/team, Evaluation Office, component leads
Project reporting		
o) *Were UNEP and donor reporting commitments fulfilled (timeliness, completeness, quality), including consideration of disaggregated groups*	Desk review of IPMR and donor reporting compliance; consistency	IPMR reports; donor reports; progress/financial reports; interviews with UNEP PM, FMO, Evaluation

EVALUATION QUESTIONS	METHODS	SOURCES OF INFORMATION
where relevant?	check across reporting cycles; interviews	Office
Sustainability		
Socio-political sustainability		
p) *(SQ) What are the long-lasting results of the project components (assessments, SPBF, etc.) that UNEP should consider continuing or scaling up to advance its institutional strategy on key thematic areas? To what extent has the project driven changes that contribute to specific areas of work in UNEP?* q) *(SQ-SPBF) Which type of approach or format would best support the sustainability and scaling-up of these results and effects? (Examples of potential formats will be provided to guide the evaluator's assessment.)*	Sustainability assessment using ToC drivers/assumptions; review of follow-on initiatives; interviews Options/feasibility analysis; SPBF case study; interviews	Evidence of continued demand/use; follow-on plans/initiatives; progress reports; interviews with UNEP management, component leads, Sub-programme Coordinator, donors, partners, selected users SPBF documentation; resource mobilisation evidence; interviews with SPBF team, UNEP management, donors, selected partners/participants
Financial sustainability		
r) *To what extent are project outcomes dependent on future funding for the benefits they bring to be sustained?*	Financial sustainability analysis; scenarios (minimum viable vs optimal); interviews	Funding history and pipeline (where available); budgets; interviews with FMO, UNEP PM, donors, key component leads
Institutional Sustainability		
s) *(SQ) What lessons have emerged from the project components that UNEP should adopt for improvement and or avoid repeating in future project?* t) *(SQ-SPBF) What are the long-lasting results of SPBF that UNEP should consider continuing or scaling up to advance its institutional strategy on key thematic areas? To what extent has this work driven changes that contribute to other specific areas of work in UNEP?*	Cross-component synthesis; interviews; triangulation with MTR/progress evidence SPBF case study; outcome tracing; interviews	MTR; progress reports; governance/process documentation; interviews with UNEP PM/team, component leads, partners SPBF outputs and follow-up actions; UNEP internal linkages where documented; interviews with SPBF team, UNEP management, donors, partners
Factors affecting project performance and cross cutting issues		
Quality of project management and supervision		
u) *How effectively did UNEP provide project management, technical supervision, adaptive management (including COVID-19 responses) and coordination to internal and external partners and stakeholders to ensure effective project implementation?*	Timeline analysis; interviews; review of adaptations and effects on delivery/participation/costs	2020–2022 IPMR/progress reports; event records; interviews with UNEP staff, component leads, partners
Stakeholder participation and cooperation		
v) *To what extent has the multi-stakeholder collaboration model/approach contributed to achieving the results of the SPBF and A3 project?* w) *(SQ-SPBF) To what extent has the SPBF multi-stakeholder collaboration model/approach contributed to achieving the results of the SPBF and A3 project?*	SPBF case study; stakeholder mapping; interviews	SPBF participation records and outputs; progress reports; interviews with SPBF team, partners, member states (where feasible), private sector actors, donors

EVALUATION QUESTIONS	METHODS	SOURCES OF INFORMATION
Responsiveness to human rights and gender equity		
x) *To what extent have gender perspectives and human rights been integrated in the project and its components?*	Desk review for gender/HRBA integration signals; review of participation/representation where data exist; interviews	PRODOC/revision; progress reports; participant/author lists (where available); interviews with UNEP PM/team, component leads, partners
Environmental and social safeguards		
y) *Were UNEP requirements[36] 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.*	Safeguards Assessment Template (UNEP); review of risk ratings/updates and mitigation actions; interviews	PRODOC safeguard screening/risk forms (SRIF/ESERN as applicable); risk logs/updates (if available); progress reports; interviews with UNEP PM, project support, Evaluation Office
Country ownership and driven-ness		
z) *What was the quality and degree of engagement of government / public sector agencies in the project?*	Interviews; optional NFP survey; review of participation in consultative/technical processes and data contributions	Participation records; workshop reports; data submission records (where relevant); interviews with UNEP regional offices, governments/NFPs (sampled), partners; survey data (if implemented)
Communication and public awareness		
aa) *How effective were: 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?*	Comms/KM review; web/media analytics (where available); interviews	Comms plans/products; websites/social media; media monitoring; IPMR/progress reports; interviews with UNEP comms, component leads, partners, selected users

ANNEX III. STAKEHOLDERS CONSULTED DURING THE EVALUATION

Stakeholders consulted during the evaluation

Organisation	Position	Role in the project	Gender
UNEP	Chief of Service, Programme Management, Officer-in-Charge for: Strategy and Operations (SSOS) and Evidence and Synthesis (ESS) Sections, Office of Science (OOS)	Overall project management	Male
UNEP	Project Support Officer (Retired), Early Warning and Assessments Division	Project monitoring and reporting (retired)	Male
UNEP	Programme Management Assistant, Office of Science (OOS)	Project management support - WASP	Male
UNEP	Programme Management Officer, Office of Science (OOS)	Component leads - Frontiers	Female
UNEP	Programme Management Officer, Climate Science Division	Component leads - AGR & EGR	Female
UNEP	Fund Management Officer (Finance)	Finance Project A3	Female
UNEP	Fund Management Officer (Finance)	Finance SPBF	Female
UNEP	Technical Specialist, Watersheds and Nature	Former project focal point	Female
UNEP Country Office in India	Coordinator (Former)	Former project manager - WWQA	Female
UNEP	Programme Management Officer, Global Environment Monitoring Unit	Component leads - WWQA	Male
UNEP	Programme Management Officer, World Oceans Assessment	Component leads - WOA	Female
UNEP Regional Office for Asia and the Pacific	Senior Public Information Assistant	Component leads - AMPPAC	Female
UNEP	Programme Officer	Coordination AGR & EGR	Female
Ministry of Environment and Ecology, China	Associate Expert	WASP Science for Policy BRIEFS	Female
UNEP	Head, Global Assessment Unit	GEO	Male
UN Environment Programme Copenhagen Climate Centre	Director (ad interim)	UNEP-CCC	Female
Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Brazil	Second Secretary, Climate Negotiation Division	AGR Steering Committee	Female
World Organisation for Animal Health	Head of the One Health and Global Frameworks Department	Frontiers Collaboration	Female
African Development Bank	Lead Coordinator (AAAP)	AGR Steering Committee	Female

Organisation	Position	Role in the project	Gender
UNEP	Chief of Branch, Partnerships and Resource Mobilisation (Retired)	SPBF related	Male
SIDA	Senior Programme Specialist	Donor	Male
The GEF	Senior Climate Change Specialist	AGR Reviewer	Male
Center for Climate Systems Research (CCSR), Columbia Climate School	Senior Staff Associate	AGR Author & Reviewer	Female
Centre for Ecology & Hydrology, Edinburgh, United Kingdom	Professor	Frontiers Author	Male
Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Brazil	Secretary, Coordinator for scientific and technological affairs and bilateral relations, Climate Department	UNFCC National Focal Point	Male
Ministry of Climate and Environment of Norway	Senior Advisor	Donor	Female
UNEP	Chief, Industry Innovation Branch	SPBF related	Female
UNEP	Coordinator, UNEP's Global Fund Portfolio	SPBF related	Female
UNEP	Director, Industry and Economy Division	SPBF related	Female

ANNEX IV. KEY DOCUMENTS CONSULTED

Strategic Documents

- UNEP. 2020. For people and planet: the United Nations Environment Programme strategy for 2022–2025 to tackle climate change, loss of nature and pollution. Addendum: Programme of work and budget for the biennium 2022 –2023. UNEP/EA.5/3/Add.1, 7 December 2020.
- UNEP. 2021. For people and planet: the United Nations Environment Programme strategy for 2022–2025 to tackle climate change, loss of nature and pollution. UNEP/EA.5/3/Rev.1, 17 February 2021.
- UNEP. 2021. Progress in the implementation of resolution 4/23 on enhancing the science-policy interface of the United Nations Environment Programme. UNEP/EA.SS.1/2, 15 December 2021.
- UNEP. 2021. Reflecting on the Past and Imagining the Future: A contribution to the dialogue on the Science-Policy Interface. UNEP, Nairobi, Kenya.

Project Documents

- UNEP. 2019. Project Preparation Phase (PPP) Proposal for A3 Thematic Environmental Assessments. Nairobi.
- UNEP. 2019. PRODOC A3 Assessing key environmental issues and providing focused outlooks to strengthen science-based policy and decision-making (formerly known as "Thematic assessments") (2019-2023). Nairobi
- UNEP. 2023. Project Revision #1 A3 Assessing key environmental issues and providing focused outlooks to strengthen science-based policy and decision making (2024-2025)

Relevant Evaluations and Reviews

- Breard, P., Hodge, S. & Piiroinen, T. 2020. Evaluation of the UNEP Subprogramme Environment under Review. Evaluation Report. UNEP, Nairobi, Kenya.
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- Stephenson, P.J. 2023. Strategic Direction of the UNEP Science-Policy Subprogramme. Consultancy Report. Report to UNEP, Nairobi, Kenya.
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Publisher (institutional author)	Year	Title	Location	DOI	Project component
ILRI	2021	Rangelands Atlas	Nairobi	https://www.unep.org/resources/publication/rangelands-atlas	AARG-ADA
UNEP	2025	WASP Progress Report - Making science work for climate adaptation	Nairobi	https://wasp-adaptation.org/wasp-publications/wasp-progress-report-making-science-work-for-climate-adaptation	WASP-CLIMASCI

Publisher (institutional author)	Year	Title	Location	DOI	Project component
UNEP	2017	UN Science-Policy-Business Forum on the Environment	Nairobi	https://un-spbf.org/	SPBF
UNEP	2019	Brief on the Guidelines for the Monitoring and Assessment of Plastic Litter in the Ocean: Recommendations and Future Steps	Nairobi	https://wedocs.unep.org/handle/20.500.11822/30695	WOA
UNEP	2019	Emissions Gap Report 2019	Nairobi	https://wedocs.unep.org/handle/20.500.11822/30797	CLIMASCI
UNEP	2019	Frontiers 2018/19: Emerging Issues of Environmental Concern	Nairobi	https://wedocs.unep.org/handle/20.500.11822/27538	FRONTIERS
UNEP	2019	Guidelines for the Monitoring and Assessment of Plastic Litter in the Ocean - GESAMP Reports and Studies No. 99	Nairobi	https://wedocs.unep.org/handle/20.500.11822/30009	WOA
UNEP	2019	Lessons from a Decade of Emissions Gap Assessments	Nairobi	https://wedocs.unep.org/handle/20.500.11822/30022	CLIMASCI
UNEP	2019	Manual - Training of Trainers on Monitoring and Assessment of Marine Litter and Microplastics - 9-13 September 2019, Bali, Indonesia[2]	Nairobi	https://wedocs.unep.org/handle/20.500.11822/30267	WOA
UNEP	2019	Proceedings of the GESAMP International Workshop on Assessing the Risks Associated with Plastics and Microplastics in the Marine Environment - GESAMP Reports and Studies No. 103	Nairobi	https://wedocs.unep.org/handle/20.500.11822/31644	WOA
UNEP	2019	United in Science: High-level Synthesis Report of Latest Climate Science Information convened by the Science Advisory Group of the UN Climate Action Summit 2019	Nairobi	https://wedocs.unep.org/handle/20.500.11822/30023	WASP-CLIMASCI
UNEP	2020	Adaptation Decision-Support Tools and Platforms - Science for Adaptation Policy Brief #1	Nairobi	https://wedocs.unep.org/handle/20.500.11822/34435	CLIMASCI
UNEP	2020	Adaptation Gap Report 2020	Nairobi	https://wedocs.unep.org/handle/20.500.11822/34721	CLIMASCI
UNEP	2020	Emissions Gap Report 2020	Nairobi	https://wedocs.unep.org/handle/20.500.11822/34426	CLIMASCI
UNEP	2020	High-end Climate Change and Adaptation - Science	Nairobi	https://wedocs.unep.org/handle/20.500.11822/34437	CLIMASCI

Publisher (institutional author)	Year	Title	Location	DOI	Project component
		for Adaptation Policy Brief #3			
UNEP	2020	Impacts of Sand and Dust Storms on Oceans: A Scientific Environmental Assessment for Policy Makers	Nairobi	https://wedocs.unep.org/handle/20.500.11822/34300	FRONTIERS
UNEP	2020	Impacts of Sand and Dust Storms on Oceans: A Scientific Environmental Assessment for Policy Makers - Executive Summary	Nairobi	https://wedocs.unep.org/handle/20.500.11822/34301	FRONTIERS
FUNEP	2020	Preventing the Next Pandemic: Zoonotic Diseases and how to Break the Chain of Transmission²	Nairobi	https://wedocs.unep.org/handle/20.500.11822/32316	FRONTIERS
UNEP	2020	Transboundary Climate Risk and Adaptation - Science for Adaptation Policy Brief #2	Nairobi	https://wedocs.unep.org/handle/20.500.11822/34436	WASP-CLIMASCI
UNEP	2021	Adaptation Gap Report 2021: The Gathering Storm - Adapting to Climate Change in a Post-pandemic World	Nairobi	https://wedocs.unep.org/handle/20.500.11822/37284	CLIMASCI
UNEP	2021	Early Warning Systems for Adaptation - Science for Adaptation Policy Brief #4	Nairobi	https://wedocs.unep.org/handle/20.500.11822/39729	WASP-CLIMASCI
UNEP	2021	Emissions Gap Report 2021: The Heat Is On – A World of Climate Promises Not Yet Delivered	Nairobi	https://wedocs.unep.org/handle/20.500.11822/36990	CLIMASCI
UNEP	2021	Making Peace With Nature	Nairobi	https://wedocs.unep.org/handle/20.500.11822/34948	FRONTIERS
UNEP	2021	The Risk of Cascading Climate Change Shocks and Stressors - Science for Adaptation Policy Brief #5	Nairobi	https://wedocs.unep.org/handle/20.500.11822/39730	WASP-CLIMASCI
UNEP	2022	Adaptation Gap Report 2022: Too Little, Too Slow - Climate Adaptation Failure Puts World at Risk	Nairobi	https://wedocs.unep.org/handle/20.500.11822/41078	WASP-CLIMASCI
UNEP	2022	COVID-19: A Warning - Addressing Environmental Threats and the Risk of Future Pandemics in Asia and the Pacific	Bangkok	https://wedocs.unep.org/handle/20.500.11822/40871	AMPPAC/FRONTIERS
UNEP	2022	Emissions Gap Report (EGR) 2022: The Closing Window – Climate crisis calls for rapid	Nairobi	https://wedocs.unep.org/handle/20.500.11822/40874	CLIMASCI

Publisher (institutional author)	Year	Title	Location	DOI	Project component
		transformation of societies			
UNEP	2022	Frontiers 2022: Noise, Blazes and Mismatches – Emerging Issues of Environmental Concern	Nairobi	https://wedocs.unep.org/handle/20.500.11822/38059	FRONTIERS
UNEP	2022	Global Goal on Adaptation - Science for Adaptation Policy Brief #6	Nairobi	https://wedocs.unep.org/handle/20.500.11822/40935	WASP-CLIMASCI
UNEP	2022	Review of Current Knowledge and Data on Marine Litter in Asia	Bangkok	https://wedocs.unep.org/handle/20.500.11822/40132	AMPPAC
UNEP	2023	Adaptation Gap Report 2023: Underfinanced. Underprepared. Inadequate Investment and Planning on Climate Adaptation Leaves World Exposed	Nairobi	https://wedocs.unep.org/handle/20.500.11822/43796	CLIMASCI
UNEP	2023	Advancing Effectiveness of Climate Adaptation - Science for Adaptation Policy Brief #7	Nairobi	https://wedocs.unep.org/handle/20.500.11822/43574	WASP-CLIMASCI
UNEP	2023	Advancing Effectiveness of Climate Adaptation - Science for Adaptation Policy Brief #7	Nairobi	https://wedocs.unep.org/handle/20.500.11822/43574	WASP-CLIMASCI
UNEP	2023	Emissions Gap Report 2023: Broken Record – Temperatures hit new highs, yet world fails to cut emissions (again)	Nairobi	https://wedocs.unep.org/handle/20.500.11822/43922	CLIMASCI
UNEP	2023	The Production Gap: Phasing down or phasing up? Top fossil fuel producers plan even more extraction despite climate promises.	Stockholm	https://www.unep.org/resources/production-gap-report-2023	CLIMASCI
UNEP	2024	Adaptation Gap Report 2024: Come Hell and High Water - As Fires and Floods Hit the Poor Hardest, it is time for the World to Step up Adaptation Actions	Nairobi	https://doi.org/10.59117/20.500.11822/46497	CLIMASCI
UNEP	2024	Emissions Gap Report 2024: No more hot air … please!	Nairobi	https://wedocs.unep.org/handle/20.500.11822/46404	CLIMASCI
UNEP	2024	Knowledge Gaps and Policy Needs to Tackle Loss and Damage - Science for Adaptation Policy Brief #8	Nairobi	https://wedocs.unep.org/handle/20.500.11822/46546	WASP-CLIMASCI
UNEP	2024	Knowledge Gaps and Policy Needs to Tackle Loss and Damage -	Nairobi	https://wedocs.unep.org/handle/20.500.11822/46546	WASP-CLIMASCI

Publisher (institutional author)	Year	Title	Location	DOI	Project component
		Science for Adaptation Policy Brief #8			
UNEP	2025	Adaptation Gap Report 2025: Running on Empty - The World is Gearing up for Climate Resilience - without the Money to get there	Nairobi	https://doi.org/10.59117/20.500.11822/48798	CLIMASCI
UNEP	2025	Emissions Gap Report 2025: Off Target – Continued collective inaction puts global temperature goal at risk	Nairobi	https://doi.org/10.59117/20.500.11822/48854	CLIMASCI
UNEP	2025	Frontiers 2025: The Weight of Time – Facing a new age of challenges for people and ecosystems	Nairobi	https://wedocs.unep.org/handle/20.500.11822/48122	FRONTIERS
United Nations UNEP	2021 2022	The Second World Ocean Assessment A Scientific Assessment of the Third Pole Environment	New York Nairobi	https://doi.org/10.18356/9789216040062 https://wedocs.unep.org/handle/20.500.11822/39757	WOA FRONTIERS

SPBF mandate, establishment and institutional positioning

1. UN Science-Policy-Business Forum on the Environment. *Concept Note: UN Science-Policy-Business Forum on the Environment – Science for Green Solutions*. 2019.
2. UNEP Executive Office. *Redeployment of the Science-Policy-Business Forum from the Science Division to the Corporate Services Division*. Memorandum from the Executive Director to Shereen Zorba. 3 June 2021.
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10. UNEA. *Ministerial Declaration of the Fourth Session of the United Nations Environment Assembly: Innovative Solutions for Environmental Challenges and Sustainable Consumption and Production*. 2019.

SPBF global and regional sessions / event materials

11. IISD Reporting Services. *Summary of the Second Global Session of the UN Science-Policy-Business Forum on the Environment: 8–10 March 2019*. UN-SPBF Bulletin. 13 March 2019.
12. UN Science-Policy-Business Forum on the Environment. *Third Global Session: Summary of Key Outcomes and Recommendations*. 18–20 February 2021.
13. IISD Reporting Services. *UN Science-Policy-Business Forum on the Environment 2021*. UN-SPBF Bulletin. 23 February 2021.
14. UN Science-Policy-Business Forum on the Environment. *Inaugural Regional Session of UNEP Science Policy Business Forum for Asia and the Pacific: Towards a Healthy Rebound for People, Nature and Economies*. Programme. 5 October 2021.
15. IISD Reporting Services. *Report of the Inaugural Regional Session of the UNEP Science-Policy-Business Forum for Asia and the Pacific: 5 October 2021*. AP-SPBF Bulletin. 7 October 2021.
16. UN Science-Policy-Business Forum on the Environment. *Transformers @ Stockholm+50: Celebrating Sustainability, Innovation and Excellence*. 31 May–4 June 2022.
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18. UN Science-Policy-Business Forum on the Environment. *Asia Pacific Science-Policy-Business Forum 2023, Colombo, Sri Lanka: Summary Report to the Ministerial Outcome Session*. 2023.
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20. IISD Reporting Services. *Summary of the Special Session of the UN Science-Policy-Business Forum on the Environment: 27 February 2024*. UN-SPBF Bulletin. 4 March 2024.

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21. UN Science-Policy-Business Forum on the Environment. *2023–2024 Work Plan*. 2023.
22. UN Science-Policy-Business Forum on the Environment. *2024–2025 Workplan*. 2024.
23. UNEP. *IPMR – A3 Project Document Monthly Reporting Template: SPBF, October 2024*. 2024.
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25. UNEP. *IPMR Progress Reporting for January to June 2025 – Consolidated*. 2025.
26. UNEP. *Progress Report: January–June 2025*. 2025.

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27. UN Science-Policy-Business Forum on the Environment. *Community Engagement: 2025 Data Expert Group*. 2025.
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29. International Business Machines Corporation / UNEP. *Donor Agreement between International Business Machines Corporation and United Nations Environment Programme*. 14 December 2022.
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ANNEX V. EVALUATION SURVEY

Introduction

The online survey was designed to capture the perceptions of users of selected knowledge products and initiatives under Project A3. A total of 131 stakeholders were contacted, including 29 UNFCCC focal points, 27 contributors to the Emissions Gap Report, 23 to the Adaptation Gap Report, 27 to the Frontiers Report, and 25 to the World Water Quality Alliance. Survey recipients were primarily senior officials and scientists who simultaneously served as reviewers, or authors, and or users.

The survey was administered in English and remained open for three weeks. To encourage participation, a structured follow-up approach was applied, consisting of an initial launch message, a reminder, and a final extension notice. A total of 16 email addresses were invalid, resulting in effective outreach to 115 prospective respondents. Responses were received from 21 participants (response rate: 18%).

It must be noted that the respondent group consisted largely of individuals who had contributed to, or were closely associated with, UNEP's assessment and early warning processes, and the survey was subject to typical limitations such as self-selection bias. As a result, findings are useful for illustrating trends and complementing qualitative evidence but are not statistically representative of the broader user community.

1. Profile of respondents

1.1. Organizational background

Your organization type:	Responses (N)
Independent expert / consultant	3
International organisation	3
National government official	1
NGO / civil society organisation	3
Private sector	1
Research or academic institution	9
Sub-national government official	1
Total respondents	**21**

1.2. Thematic focus

Your main areas of work (select all that apply):	Responses
Environment / climate	20
Energy	8
Water	6
Oceans / marine	1
Land / biodiversity	3
Disaster risk / resilience	3
Planning / finance	2
Other	1
Total respondents	**21**

Other: Equity and Justice

1.3. Geographic focus

Region of focus:	Responses
Africa	2
Asia	3
Europe	3
Latin America	2
MENA	0
Global	14
Total respondents	**21**

1.4. Gender of respondents

What is your gender?	Responses
Female	8
Male	12
Prefer not to say	1
Total respondents	**21**

1.5. Exposure to Project A3 products and initiatives

Which products from this project have you accessed or used in the last 3–5 years (select all that apply)?	Responses
Frontiers Report – Emerging Issues of Environmental Concern	1
Emissions Gap Report / Adaptation Gap Report	15
World Oceans Assessment*	1
World Water Quality Alliance (WWQA) outputs (e.g. water-quality assessments, data platforms or Alliance products)	4
Regional or thematic assessment (e.g. Africa, Asia-Pacific, plastics)*	0
UNEP data platforms / dashboards linked to assessments*	4
Science-Policy-Business Forum (SPBF)*	0
I am not sure / do not recall specific titles	3
Total respondents	**21**

*: Prospective target users not part of the survey dissemination list.

1.6. Involvement in Project A3 products and initiatives

What best describes your involvement with UNEP assessment or early-warning outputs? (select all that apply)	Responses
I have used these outputs in my work	9
I contributed as an author or expert	12
I served as reviewer or advisor	5
I participated in a steering or advisory body	8
I participated in dissemination events or workshops	4
I am familiar with the outputs but have not directly used them	2
Total respondents	**21**

2. Relevance of Project A3 outputs

2.1. Usefulness

Overall, how useful have these outputs been for your work?	Responses
Extremely useful	7
Very useful	9
Moderately useful	3
Slightly useful	2
Not useful	0
Total respondents	**21**

2.2. Access

How did you usually access these outputs (select all that apply)?	Responses
UNEP website or platform	19
Direct communication from UNEP (launch event, emails, etc.)	8
Regional or global meetings / forums	5
Through colleagues or networks	5
Media / secondary sources	3
Total respondents	**21**

2.3. Dissemination

How effective has UNEP been in communicating and sharing these assessment outputs with relevant stakeholders (e.g. governments, researchers, partners)?	Responses
Very effective	5
Effective	7
Adequate	8
Ineffective	1
Very ineffective	0
Total respondents	**21**

If you have found UNEP rather ineffective in communicating and sharing these assessments, what were the main shortcomings and what improvements would you suggest?

- I think a press conference with journalists before the UNEP emissions gap report release worked in 2024 very well and helps the media output. In 2025 we did not do this, and I think this was one of the reasons that the media output in 2025 was less compared to 2024.
- Lack of consistent tools/platforms and data strategy (i.e. WESR,..) makes it difficult to provide data and products related to assessments in a user friendly way limiting their impact.
- To enhance the impact and accessibility of UNEP reports and data, it is important to diversify communication approaches, expand beyond traditional expert and UN-centered audiences, and more explicitly link knowledge products to decision-making processes. This could include: Leveraging social media more strategically to translate key findings into accessible, engaging formats tailored to different audiences; Reaching targeted communities and stakeholder groups beyond the usual policy and expert networks, including private sector actors, local leaders, and civil society organizations; Partnering with local institutions and intermediaries (e.g., think tanks, NGOs, academic institutions, and community-based organizations) to contextualize and disseminate findings more effectively; Adapting communication formats (visual summaries, short videos, infographics, local language content) to increase usability and relevance at the local level; Strengthening the link between data and decision-making by explicitly articulating how findings inform concrete choices across different domains - including economic, social, and territorial dimensions; Tailoring insights to different decision-makers and use cases, recognizing that governments, investors, communities, and sectoral actors require differentiated interpretations of the same data; Embedding practical implications and scenarios within reports (e.g., policy options, investment pathways, trade-offs) to facilitate uptake in real-world contexts; Creating feedback loops with end-users to better understand how data is being applied, and to continuously refine relevance, accessibility, and usability. Overall, a more decentralized, audience-specific, and decision-oriented communication strategy could significantly increase the uptake and real-world application of UNEP's knowledge products.

2.4. Institutional relevance

To what extent were the UNEP assessment or early-warning outputs you accessed relevant to your country's policy priorities or environmental decision-making contexts you are familiar with?	Responses
Highly relevant	6
Significantly relevant	7
Moderately relevant	4
Slightly relevant	2
Not relevant	1
Total respondents	**20**

2.5. Robustness

How would you rate the following aspects of these outputs?	Very high	High	Moderate	Low	Very low	Do not know	Total
Credibility / scientific robustness	16	3	1	0	0	1	21
Clarity and accessibility	11	6	3	0	0	1	21
Timeliness for policy processes	9	5	4	0	0	3	21
Usefulness for policy dialogue	11	8	1	0	0	1	21

3. Uptake of Project A3 outputs

3.1. Use

In which ways have UNEP assessment or early-warning outputs informed discussions, decisions or analysis in your work or institution (select all that apply)?	Responses
Supporting scientific or technical analysis	13
Informing policy discussions or briefings	12
Informing international or regional environmental discussions	12
Supporting inter-ministerial or stakeholder dialogue	7
Framing or prioritising environmental issues	7
Informing programme/project design	5
Informing funding discussions or investment decisions	5
Supporting national reporting or planning processes	3
Other (please specify)	2
Total respondents	**21**

Other

- None
- Unfortunately, the two WWQA outputs I was involved with have had little impact.

3.2. Unintended effects

Any unintended effects (positive or negative) or lessons learned from the use of outputs of UNEP Project A3?

- Implementation of the GEDS would be highly helpful in conducting assessments and sharing their results

4. Impact and sustainability of Project A3 outputs

4.1. Institutionalisation

Have any UNEP assessment outputs become routinely referenced or embedded in institutional processes or reporting mechanisms you are familiar with?	Responses
Yes, regularly	8
Occasionally	7
Rarely	1
No	2
Not sure	3
Total respondents	**21**

4.2. Influence

To your knowledge, in which contexts have UNEP assessment or early-warning outputs been referenced, cited or discussed? (select all that apply)	Responses
Scientific or expert discussions	15
Multilateral environmental negotiations or global policy processes (e.g. UNFCCC, UNEA, SDGs)	13
International or regional environmental reports or assessments	10
National policy discussions or government briefings	6

Regional policy forums or intergovernmental meetings	5
I am not aware of such use	2
Total respondents	**21**

Please briefly describe one concrete example of how a UNEP assessment or early-warning output informed your work or a policy process (if applicable).

- As input for the policy brief for the Dutch senate.
- As part of the UNFCCC negotiations, which culminate annually at COPs, the annual UNEP Emissions Gap Report is a highly-awaited input into the policy discussions, and its findings have several times been cited in high-level and ministerial interventions across the plenary floor and been included in official COP decisions.
- Citation in the UNFCCC COP text
- Contribution to UN Water, eventually inputs to WWDRs
- I have used both the GHG Emissions Gap Report and the Adaptation Gap Report in my work and found them highly relevant for framing priorities and shaping discussions around planning and action. They have also been valuable in supporting dialogue and alignment across government, private sector, and civil society stakeholders.
- I refer to the mitigation potential analysis in the UNEP Emissions Gap Report
- The Emissions Gap Report is routinely referenced by parties attending the annual COPs. It provides an authoritative reference to the state of play regarding emissions trends relative to the political commitments made in Paris.
- The UNEP Emissions Gap Report has directly informed discussions around the content and analysis of the IPCC AR7 Working Group III report.
- The UNEP Gap Report has become a standard reference for those involved in climate mitigation scenario analysis and policy
- We cited the Emission Gap report in some of the Climate Statements and earlier in "United in Science" report

If UNEP assessment outputs are little referenced in institutional processes or reporting mechanisms you are familiar with, what are the main reasons?

- References to data and information are often limited by lack of access to the reports themselves and insufficient understanding of their quality and relevance. This is particularly common at local and national levels. It is therefore important to ensure that information is available in local languages and to work with local institutions to support more effective dissemination and uptake.
- The citations are topic specific, and the topics are usually not fully overlapping across UN agencies

4.3. Sustainability

In your view, how likely are UNEP's assessment and early-warning outputs to have influenced policies, strategies, or programmes that will continue to shape environmental discussions and decision-making in the coming years?	Responses
Very likely	5
Likely	8
Possible	7
Unlikely	0
Very unlikely	1
Total respondents	**21**

If UNEP assessment and early-warning outputs have had limited influence in policy, strategies or programmes you are familiar with, what have been the main constraints?

- Human nature and economic interests incompatible with the healthy state of environment
- I am referring to the UNEP Emissions Gap report. The visibility of the UNEP GEO Outlook was much less.
- In my experience the assessments are quite different in terms of their perceived usefulness and impact. Partly it is the reports themselves and partly the topics and their relative importance to governments.

- Influencing decision-making often requires going beyond the production and dissemination of data and reports. It is equally important to foster dialogue and interactive engagement around their findings. This suggests the need to move beyond one-way communication and consider approaches that keep report results alive over time, linking them to local networks and ongoing processes to support sustained relevance and uptake.
- My focus is Europe, where there is already plenty of guidance on policy and strategy available.
- Visibility apart from the high-level outputs

5. Looking forward

5.1. Amplification

What would most strengthen the continued usefulness of these outputs?	Responses
Stronger links to policy options	10
More engagement with national institutions	9
Better dissemination and outreach	8
Capacity-building or guidance on use	7
More country-specific insights	7
Stronger linkages with UNEP programming and technical cooperation projects	6
More frequent updates	2
Other (please specify)	2
Total respondents	**21**

Other

- Earlier and more consistent engagement with influential entities that might use the reports / assessments in their own work. I have in mind organizations like the regional development banks.
- More substantial input from experts from low per capita GDP countries

Do you have any suggestions for how UNEP could improve future environmental assessments or early-warning products to better support policy-making?

- Develop tools/DSS for supporting the creation of assessments (helping implement the (excellent but theoretic) guidance on IEAs) including data compilation, common indicators definition/standardization, output formats (beyond written reports that are hardly actionable)
- Greater and earlier engagement with persuasive intermediaries that are active in the policy realm. Early buy-in and a sense of some ownership of the products by the policy community will increase the likelihood that they're used.
- In addition, it is important to consider how data relates to specific economic sectors, as well as to the beneficiaries and affected populations. Making these connections more explicit can help increase the relevance of the data, strengthen its practical application, and support more informed and inclusive decision-making.
- This holds for the UNEP emissions gap report.

ANNEX VI. SPBF CASE STUDY

Beyond the Platform:

An Assessment of the Multistakeholder Collaboration Model at the Intersection of Science, Policy, and Business

1. Introduction

1.1 Overview of the Science-Policy-Business Forum

The United Nations Science-Policy-Business Forum on the Environment (SPBF) was established at the third session of the United Nations Environment Assembly (UNEA-3) in 2017 in response to Member States' recognition that environmental progress requires stronger integration between scientific evidence, regulatory systems, financial flows, and market actors. The Forum was designed to catalyse a more dynamic interface between science, policy, business and society, and to elevate science-based environmental solutions within political and economic decision-making arenas. Its underlying premise was that environmental progress requires not only the production of environmental knowledge, but also spaces where scientific findings, policy priorities, business perspectives, financing incentives and implementation actors can be brought into dialogue. While strategically relevant and conceptually compelling, the SPBF model relies on indirect and diffuse pathways of influence, making its contribution to measurable policy and behavioural outcomes inherently more difficult to assess using conventional results frameworks.

SPBF also emerged from a broader UNEP effort to strengthen science-policy interface and knowledge-network functions. Earlier internal documentation indicates that UNEP had already been developing science-policy interface and knowledge-management capacities before SPBF was formally launched at UNEA-3. This suggests that SPBF was not created in isolation but built on an existing institutional ambition to connect science, policy, knowledge and external engagement.

For clarity, this case study distinguishes between the SPBF as a UNEP-convened multistakeholder platform and the SPBF Secretariat as the UNEP-based staff and consultants supporting its convening, coordination and administration. The Secretariat was not an external body. Its institutional location changed over time within UNEP, including placement under the Science Division/EWAD, later the Corporate Services Division, and subsequently the Industry and Economy Division in late 2024. Unless otherwise indicated, references to the 'SPBF Secretariat' refer to this UNEP-hosted support structure.

SPBF operates as a multi-sectoral convening platform bringing together policymakers, scientists, private sector leaders, financial institutions, civil society organizations, youth representatives and multilateral actors. Its mandate emphasizes "integrated solutions" to address the triple planetary crisis of climate change, biodiversity loss, and pollution, aligning closely with UNEP's Medium-Term Strategy. SPBF workplans positioned the Forum as a broad science-policy-business-society interface, with activities linked to UNEA, MEAs, SDGs, COP-related processes, regional and global dialogues, environmental data, transparency and accountability, green finance, technology, sector-wide transitions and emerging environmental issues.

Within the framework of Project A3 "Assessing key environmental issues and providing focused outlooks to strengthen science-based policy and decision making", SPBF was expected to play a complementary bridging role. In practice, this positioned SPBF primarily as a convening and

agenda-setting mechanism rather than a structured dissemination or implementation tool. While A3 produces environmental assessments, thematic outlooks, and data systems, SPBF provides a dialogue architecture capable of amplifying and contextualizing those outputs within high-level policy, financial, and market environments. Importantly, SPBF was not included as a distinct component in the original A3 project design or results framework. The 2023 project revision did include SPBF more visibly within the A3 architecture, including through staff allocations associated with the Frontiers-related output, milestones referring to SPBF global sessions, and supporting documentation on SPBF funding. SPBF-provided records show that this inclusion followed exchanges with the A3 project team. In December 2022, the A3 team requested from SPBF a budget breakdown, workplan for 2023-2025, six-monthly milestones, justification of contribution to the UNEP Medium-Term Strategy, reporting on achievements to date, and information on gender balance. In November 2023, SPBF clarified that only secured 2023 funds could be shown for donor agreements with IBM and ICA. This confirms that SPBF's inclusion in A3 was not accidental. However, the inclusion appears to have been accommodated within the existing A3/Frontiers framework through a component and budget process, rather than accompanied by a full redesign of A3 around SPBF as a distinct convening and uptake pathway. It operated alongside the project as a complementary initiative rather than as an integrated delivery mechanism, which has implications for how its contribution to A3 results can be assessed.

The documentation reviewed did not include a formal Theory of Change for SPBF. The contribution pathway below is therefore reconstructed by the evaluation from SPBF concept/background documentation, the 2023–2024 and 2024–2025 SPBF workplans, event programmes and materials, and the way SPBF was reflected in the 2023 A3 project revision. Under such a reconstructed logic, SPBF would convene science, policy, business, finance, civil society and multilateral actors around priority environmental challenges; expose these actors to scientific evidence, emerging issues and solution-oriented narratives; facilitate dialogue, networking and alignment across sectors; and thereby contribute to stronger uptake of science-based environmental solutions in policy, investment and market decisions. In this pathway, high-level events, thematic dialogues, regional forums and working groups would function as intermediate mechanisms linking UNEP's scientific and policy knowledge to wider communities of decision-makers and implementers. In relation to A3, this would have meant using SPBF as a structured interface through which assessment findings, emerging-issue analysis and environmental data work could be discussed with potential users and implementation actors. For this pathway to be functional, however, it would have required clear assumptions, defined target groups, structured follow-up mechanisms, links to UNEP programme workstreams, and indicators tracking whether dialogue led to sustained engagement, policy uptake, partnerships, financing decisions or changes in practice. These elements would have benefited from clearer articulation and more systematic monitoring. The evidence therefore suggests that the potential contribution pathway was present, but the operational links between SPBF activities and A3 assessment cycles were not consistently formalized.

1.2 Objectives of the Case Study and Methodology

This case study evaluates the SPBF as a multistakeholder collaboration model within the broader A3 project framework. It analyses the SPBF not only as a series of events, but as a multistakeholder engagement model intended to influence policy, finance and market behaviour through dialogue and network-building. It also examines the extent to which SPBF contributed to A3 results, its role as a potential dissemination and uptake platform for A3 outputs, the long-term institutional value of the model, and its sustainability.

The analysis draws on a range of project documentation, including the A3 Project Document and Results Framework, the 2023 project revision, the Mid-Term Review, recent progress reports (2024-2025), SPBF workplans, governing consortium documentation, and event materials, as well

as participation data and Overton policy reference data (126 retrieved references[42]). It also considers additional evidence provided during the review process, including SPBF workplans, SPBF-provided participant feedback and public posts from selected 2025 Data Expert Group participants, evaluability materials, administrative records and clarifications on SPBF's funding and institutional positioning. In 2024 the Evaluation Office was requested to comment on a possible evaluation or review of SPBF. However, the Director of Evaluation concluded that the work did not pass an evaluability assessment. This earlier engagement is relevant because it shows that evaluability concerns had already been identified before the terminal evaluation and were linked primarily to the way SPBF was documented and positioned within UNEP's project architecture.

The analysis also draws on semi-structured interviews with UNEP staff, partners and stakeholders, providing qualitative insights into institutional dynamics, operational challenges and perceived outcomes. The assessment considers different dimensions of performance, including output-level achievements, thematic and institutional synergies, discursive visibility within policy ecosystems, and evidence of regulatory uptake.

1.3 Limitations

The case study was affected by several limitations that should be taken into account when interpreting the findings. First, the availability of information was constrained by the absence of direct SPBF component staff available for an interview during the evaluation period. This limited access to first-hand operational explanations. However, this limitation was partly mitigated by the subsequent provision of internal SPBF documentation covering contextual background, financial management, institutional positioning, workplans, and community feedback. These materials were reviewed and incorporated where they provided specific, substantiated evidence relevant to the case study.

Second, frequent structural and managerial changes within UNEP, including the movement of SPBF across divisions and changes in team composition, affected continuity and made it more difficult to reconstruct decision-making processes, funding arrangements and follow-up mechanisms over time. SPBF was moved from the Science Division to CSD in 2021, with the Executive Director's memorandum stating that neither its objectives nor team composition would be subject to immediate change. It was then moved from CSD to IED in 2024, with existing positions, personnel and consultants, while loans contracted by the Forum were to remain a CSD liability pending reimbursement. These successive transfers are directly relevant to the assessment of institutional anchoring, financial traceability and sustainability.

Third, opportunities to verify data and clarify discrepancies were limited. This was particularly relevant for financial information, where figures from different UNEP sources could not always be fully reconciled within the scope of the case study. The assessment therefore treats financial data with caution and avoids over-interpreting figures where the underlying basis, coverage or attribution to SPBF could not be confirmed.

Fourth, the absence of an explicit Theory of Change for the SPBF limited the ability of the evaluation to assess SPBF beyond event delivery, visibility and stakeholder reach, and made it difficult to determine whether and how convening activities translated into cumulative downstream outcomes.

More broadly, the case study relies on triangulation across documents, interviews with UNEP staff and policy-reference data in Overton. However, the evidence base is stronger for output-level achievements, institutional dynamics and operational challenges than for project outcomes,

[42] Particular care has been taken not to over-interpret the Overton dataset. The references identified represent search-result appearances in policy-related documents rather than verified citations and are therefore interpreted as an indication of discursive presence rather than confirmed policy adoption.

regulatory uptake or longer-term impact. This pattern is not unusual for dialogue-based platforms, whose effects may operate through relationships, shared understanding, visibility, agenda-setting and informal networks. These are relevant forms of contribution, but they require tailored monitoring systems to capture.

Given the nature of the SPBF as a dialogue-based platform, the assessment places particular emphasis on contribution analysis, examining plausible influence pathways rather than direct attribution of policy outcomes.

1.4 Strategic Questions

This case study addresses the following strategic questions:

1. To what extent has the SPBF multi-stakeholder collaboration model contributed to achieving the results of SPBF and Project A3?
2. What long-lasting results of SPBF should UNEP consider continuing or scaling up? To what extent has this work driven changes contributing to other areas of UNEP's work?
3. What lessons have emerged from SPBF that UNEP should adopt or avoid in future programming?
4. Which approach or format would best support the sustainability and scaling-up of SPBF's results and effects?

2. Findings

2.1 Relevance and Coherence

The UN SPBF demonstrates strong strategic relevance within UNEP's mandate and aligns well with the objectives of Project A3 at the conceptual and thematic levels. However, the institutional, operational and monitoring dimensions of this alignment could have been further strengthened.

The SPBF's core function -bringing together scientific, policy and business actors- directly supports A3's aim of strengthening the science-policy interface and promoting the use of environmental knowledge in decision-making processes. By convening diverse stakeholders, SPBF extends the reach of UNEP's knowledge products beyond traditional scientific and governmental audiences and situates them within broader economic and governance debates.

SPBF's relevance was also recognised externally by Member States. In Nordic consultations with UNEP in January 2023, Denmark and Norway described the Science Business Policy Forum as "a strong and successful brand" and asked how UNEP addressed alignment between the Forum, the Private Sector Unit and the Economy Division. The same consultation note observed that, from a Member State perspective, UNEP's private-sector work appeared "somewhat fragmented". This supports a balanced finding: SPBF had recognised visibility and convening value, but its institutional alignment with UNEP's broader private-sector architecture remained an open question.

Over the evaluation period, SPBF convened global sessions alongside UNEA, including a Special Session at UNEA-6, and organised regional dialogues and thematic working groups. A review of SPBF event programmes and workplans indicates that the Forum addressed a range of issues including resource efficiency, sustainable value chains, carbon markets, nature-based solutions, early warning systems and environmental data governance. The 2023-2024 and 2024-2025 workplans further show a broad agenda covering COP-related processes, UNEA-6, regional fora,

data initiatives, green investment, sector transitions, carbon-credit markets, Minamata-related lighting work and collaboration with UNEP science, digital and sectoral functions.

These themes broadly correspond to areas covered under Project A3, such as environmental data systems, digital transformation, pollution, and sustainable consumption and production. This suggests a degree of thematic convergence between SPBF discussions and A3 priorities. SPBF workplans also indicate an intention to strengthen collaboration with the Chief Scientist, EWAD, IED and other UNEP divisions, including to advance emerging-issues work, increase the reach and impact of environmental assessments, support sectoral transitions, and prepare DEAL-related expert work on environmental data and capital-market disclosure. This suggests that SPBF was seeking to position itself as a cross-divisional convening platform. The evidence is stronger, however, for intended collaboration and activity planning than for a systematic mechanism linking SPBF engagement to A3 assessment uptake, monitoring and outcome reporting.

Taken together, these elements show relevant thematic positioning and some evidence of intended cross-divisional collaboration. However, the available evidence indicates that this overlap reflected parallel positioning within UNEP's broader strategic framework more than a consistently operationalised programme mechanism linking SPBF activities to A3 outputs. Project A3 could therefore have made more systematic use of SPBF's convening capacity as a pathway for dissemination, user engagement and follow-up of its assessment and early-warning outputs. *(This finding is consistent with broader conclusions in the main evaluation regarding limited operational integration and cross-component coordination within Project A3; see Main Report, Section 4.1 on relevance and coherence).*

Furthermore, this alignment remained largely conceptual and was not translated into strong operational integration. SPBF was not originally designed as a core component of Project A3 and remained only loosely connected to its components and workstreams. Interactions with assessment teams and other UNEP divisions appear to have remained limited and largely ad hoc, with no systematic mechanisms linking SPBF activities to the production, dissemination or uptake of A3 knowledge products. Apart from isolated instances -such as the use of the 2020 Frontiers report as a discussion entry point- there is little evidence that SPBF was consistently used to promote A3 outputs. The evaluation did not find evidence that SPBF agendas were systematically informed by the needs or outputs of A3 components, or more broadly by the priorities of other UNEP divisions. This should be qualified, however, by recognising that SPBF did create thematic spaces that were relevant to UNEP knowledge products and sectoral work, and that some UNEP teams used the Forum as a window to give visibility to partners or issues. The limitation is therefore less the absence of relevance than the absence of a structured contribution pathway.

As a result, SPBF functioned primarily as a convening, engagement and agenda-setting platform rather than as an operational delivery mechanism embedded within A3's results framework. While it was widely perceived as relevant and valuable in principle, its value could have been strengthened through clearer institutionalisation within UNEP's programme architecture. Its activities were not systematically linked to programme cycles, nor supported by clear pathways to translate dialogue into follow-up actions or uptake. Stronger and more consistent engagement across UNEP units would have helped deepen SPBF's integration within the programme architecture.

SPBF's contribution to Project A3 was therefore indirect and largely discursive, primarily through agenda-setting, institutional presence and network-building, rather than operationally embedded in the project's knowledge production and uptake processes. The issue was therefore not the strategic relevance of SPBF, but the need for a clearer institutional model specifying how the Forum would connect to UNEP's scientific assessments, policy-support functions, business-facing work and A3's knowledge-uptake pathway.

2.2 Effectiveness

Performance Results

The SPBF demonstrates strong effectiveness as a convening platform capable of mobilising diverse stakeholders but limited demonstrable effectiveness in generating downstream policy or behavioural change. Its main contributions lie in agenda-setting, cross-sector engagement and institutional positioning, rather than in documented policy uptake or implementation outcomes.

Available evidence indicates that a substantial share of the activities foreseen in SPBF workplans were implemented, particularly high-level global sessions linked to UNEA, thematic dialogues, regional events and working group activities. Event documentation, participation records and progress reports confirm delivery of major planned convening activities across the evaluation period. The 2023-2024 workplan also records several activities as completed, including regional and global dialogues, COP28 activities, UNEA-6, sector-transition work and data-related initiatives. However, the assessment encountered important limitations in evaluating performance against planned results and targets. The SPBF workplans primarily described activities, events and thematic priorities rather than clearly structured results frameworks with measurable outcome indicators, baselines or systematic reporting against targets. In addition, reporting focused largely on participation metrics and event delivery, with limited evidence on follow-up actions, policy uptake or downstream effects. As a result, the evaluation is able to assess implementation and output delivery with moderate confidence, but evidence remains insufficient to robustly assess achievement of higher-level intended results or impacts against original plans.

Participation figures illustrate the scale of engagement achieved. The Third Global Session of the Forum in 2021 attracted approximately 4,800 registered participants from 137 countries, alongside more than 6,000 live views and substantial on-demand engagement. Participants represented a broad spectrum of stakeholders, including governments, academic institutions, private sector actors, civil society organisations and youth networks. This diversity reflects the Forum's ambition to strengthen the interface between science, policy and business communities and has contributed to positioning UNEP as a broker of cross-sector dialogue on environmental challenges. Stakeholder feedback reviewed during the evaluation also points to immediate value for networking, cross-disciplinary exchange and engagement with emerging environmental data and technology issues.

Additional SPBF evidence documents positive feedback from the 2025 High-Level Expert Group Meeting on Big Data and Frontier Technologies for the Planet. Participant feedback described the meeting as well organised, cross-disciplinary and useful for network-building, with email excerpts and LinkedIn posts from participants across research institutions, finance, technology, civil society and the private sector highlighting the value of discussions on environmental data, transparency, interoperability, accountability and the Global Environmental Data Strategy. This supports the finding that SPBF could convene diverse expert communities and generate positive immediate participant-level engagement.

At the same time, this evidence is mainly participant feedback and social-media testimony. It is useful evidence of reach, perceived quality and network effects, but it does not by itself demonstrate downstream policy uptake, institutional change or sustained outcome-level results.

SPBF's participant composition was broadly aligned with its objective of convening science, policy and business actors, and its workplans show links to UNEA, MEA, SDG and COP-related processes. However, the evaluation was not provided evidence that participation was tracked across sessions, that the same stakeholder groups participated recurrently, or that structured follow-up mechanisms were used to maintain engagement after events.

SPBF has also played a role in enhancing the profile of UNEP's work during major global governance moments. Sessions organised alongside UNEA and other high-level events during the project implementation have brought together experts, policymakers and private sector actors, creating opportunities to discuss environmental challenges in integrated and cross-sectoral terms. In some instances, UNEP assessment findings were referenced in these discussions, contributing to broader policy narratives and reinforcing UNEP's positioning as a provider of science-based insights.

However, these contributions remain largely indirect and episodic. SPBF's convening role could have been more deliberately linked to the dissemination and uptake of A3 outputs through structured agenda-setting, follow-up and engagement with assessment users. The evaluation did not identify evidence of systematic coordination between SPBF programming and A3 assessment cycles, nor of mechanisms linking Forum discussions to increased uptake of specific knowledge products. Interactions with assessment teams and other UNEP divisions remained limited and largely ad hoc, and monitoring systems did not track any downstream effects such as citations, policy use or behavioural change. SPBF generated convening value and visibility, while A3 did not sufficiently operationalise that value as part of its own results pathway.

More broadly, SPBF activities were not supported by structured follow-up mechanisms. The evaluation did not identify evidence that discussions held during Forum sessions were systematically translated into national policy processes, implementation pathways or continued engagement with participating stakeholders. As a result, SPBF's high-visibility convening moments could have generated greater cumulative value if they had been embedded in a repeatable process linking knowledge production to policy uptake and follow-up action. *(This reflects broader findings in the main report regarding weak integration between knowledge production, dissemination and follow-up mechanisms across Project A3 components; see Main Report, Section 4.2 on effectiveness)*. At the same time, this limitation partly reflects the original positioning of SPBF. The Forum was not, by itself, a policy implementation mechanism; its plausible role was to serve as a convening step within a broader influence pathway. In the absence of structured linkages to programme follow-up and policy support processes, this potential contribution pathway remained only partially realised.

This limitation is consistent with broader characteristics of Project A3, which operated as a collection of largely independent components rather than as an integrated programme. Cross-component coordination, including with SPBF, remained limited and largely informal, reducing opportunities to leverage the Forum as part of a broader results chain. *(See also Main Report conclusions regarding Project A3 operating more as a collection of parallel components than as an integrated programme).*

Interview evidence reinforces this assessment, highlighting the absence of continuity, follow-through and institutional mechanisms to carry discussions forward beyond individual events. While the Forum was widely perceived as valuable for exposure and engagement, its original design as a convening and interactive platform meant that it was not embedded in a results chain leading to policy uptake, behavioural change or other measurable outcomes. This helps explain why the evaluation found limited evidence of effects beyond visibility, networking and agenda-setting.

Informants also pointed out that SPBF's engagement with private sector actors represents a distinctive feature of its approach but also introduces governance considerations. While private sector participation has been substantive, interview evidence highlights the importance of maintaining robust due diligence processes to manage reputational risks and avoid perceptions of endorsement or misalignment with UNEP's environmental mandate. These risks should not be read as negating the value of private-sector engagement. Rather, they indicate that future science-policy-business platforms should clearly distinguish between dialogue, partnership, sponsorship and endorsement, and should include transparent rules of engagement, scientific balance, civil-society participation and conflict-of-interest management. In its original format, SPBF provided relatively open access for private sector actors to participate in discussions, with limited

structuring of engagement or differentiation across value chains. This created potential risks related to selective framing of issues, alignment of topics with specific interests, and insufficient reflection of scientific consensus. More recent approaches within UNEP emphasise a more structured engagement model, based on analysis of value chains, identification of transition pathways, and the inclusion of scientific and civil society checks and balances. These considerations have, in some cases, made resource mobilisation more complex, particularly where funding is linked to exposure at events.

SPBF-provided UNEA-6 preparatory and internal note material also shows that concerns about private-sector safeguards were not raised only by external informants. In advance of UNEA-6, the SPBF Secretariat itself raised concerns about business groups potentially serving as gateways for powerful lobby groups, unmonitored access to UNEP processes, inconsistent application of private-sector engagement rules, and the need to re-examine expo-style events in relation to financial management and due diligence. This suggests that SPBF leadership was aware of, and itself articulated, the need for stronger safeguards around business engagement.

Funding architecture and traceability

SPBF operated through fragmented and overlapping funding arrangements that complicated the establishment of a single consolidated and fully attributable financial baseline, limiting financial traceability, evaluability and portfolio-level oversight.

SPBF activities required substantial financial and organisational resources, particularly for large-scale global events. SPBF-provided records indicate that the SPBF Secretariat submitted inputs for the 2025 budget process, and that the CSD budget office acknowledged receipt of this submission in September 2024. The related process required information on staffing, vacancies, non-staff costs, operational costs and travel requirements. The evidence therefore does not suggest an absence of budget planning by the SPBF Secretariat. Rather, it points to challenges related to budget submission processes, divisional transfer arrangements and subsequent allocations which were processed during a period of institutional transition within UNEP, together with limited available budget. .

The evaluation encountered difficulties in reconstructing a consolidated financial picture for SPBF, as multiple financial representations reviewed during the evaluation presented differing totals, donor compositions and funding classifications that could not be fully reconciled within the scope of the evaluation. These differences appear to reflect the fact that SPBF-related activities drew on several funding streams, grant structures, cost centres, divisional arrangements and reporting pipelines.

One set of project figures indicated total SPBF funding of approximately USD 1.9 million, composed primarily of Environment Fund resources, International Copper Association (ICA) funding and Norway funding. However, separate grant-level financial records identified a different funding structure, including contributions from a broader range of corporate, governmental and institutional partners, for a total extra-budgetary funding envelope of approximately USD 2.0 million. Additional records further identified Environment Fund allocations and programme support resources associated with SPBF activities, bringing the broader SPBF-related resource envelope to approximately USD 2.67 million.

At the same time, clarifications provided during the evaluation indicated that not all transactions recorded under the relevant grant structures were attributable exclusively to the SPBF project components covered by the evaluation, while other SPBF-related funding streams may not have flowed directly through the A3 project financial pipeline despite remaining under the broader A3 umbrella. Furthermore, some funding categories appeared differently across reporting systems. For example, ICA-related funding appeared as approximately USD 250,000 in one donor ledger but as more than USD 1.4 million in another project financing table, while Norway-related funding appeared in some project reporting documents but not in detailed donor-level records.

The evaluation was informed that such discrepancies reflected operational practices whereby multiple projects may draw from the same grant structures, combined with overlapping implementation arrangements, parallel funding channels and different reporting pipelines within the broader umbrella project architecture. (*This finding mirrors broader portfolio-level challenges identified in the main evaluation concerning uneven resource allocation, fragmented funding structures and limited portfolio-level oversight within Project A3*). Nevertheless, despite several rounds of clarification during the evaluation process, the different financial representations could not be fully reconciled into a single consolidated and fully attributable SPBF financial picture.

This limited financial traceability constrained evaluability and reduced portfolio-level visibility, coordination and reporting across the umbrella project structure. It also illustrates the extent to which SPBF operated as a cross-cutting and partially decentralised platform rather than as a financially self-contained project component with clearly delineated boundaries and reporting lines. This finding should be understood as a financial architecture issue within UNEP. While SPBF remained a UNEP-hosted platform, its Secretariat moved across divisional locations, and authority for budget approval, certification, grant management, donor reporting and system access sat within UNEP's corporate and divisional financial architecture.

SPBF-provided records further indicate that the SPBF Secretariat had limited direct access to Umoja financial information during its period under CSD. In June 2026, the SPBF Associate Programme Management Officer stated that Umoja access had been denied from the time SPBF joined CSD in September 2021 and that the team relied on reports from the budget team. The same record shows that view-only Umoja BI access was requested in July 2024, training certificates were submitted, and mapping requests were initiated in August 2024, but the access was reportedly never approved. This does not remove the financial traceability limitation identified by the evaluation; rather, it clarifies that part of the limitation was linked to restricted system access and dependence on divisional budget teams for financial information.

Additional records also show that SPBF's transfer from CSD to IED created uncertainty over where the 2025 budget request should sit. In October and December 2024, SPBF followed up with IED on its submitted 2025 budget, noting that the request had first been submitted through CSD in line with CSD timelines and then resubmitted following the decision to move the unit to IED. IED acknowledged the submission but indicated that the timing of the Executive Director's 2025 budget decision was outside its control.

Despite these limitations, interview evidence indicates that SPBF's event-driven model also created significant financial management exposure in one instance. UNEP reportedly provided an internal loan of approximately USD 380,000 to enable delivery of a UNEA-related SPBF activity when available project resources were insufficient. While part of the amount was later recovered, approximately USD 168,000 reportedly remained unpaid and was ultimately written off against corporate funding. SPBF-provided records do not contradict the existence of this exposure. Rather, they confirm that the advance or loan remained part of subsequent financial discussions, including repayment, treatment of donor refunds, grant closure and the transfer of SPBF from CSD to IED. They also show that a Swedish VAT refund of approximately USD 50,000 was later offset against the outstanding advance or loan, and that this was contested by SPBF on the grounds that the funds were needed for staff and operational obligations. This appears to have been an exceptional arrangement and highlights weaknesses in financial planning, risk management and the alignment between event commitments and secured resources. The evidence also indicates, however, that responsibility for resolving the exposure was institutionally distributed across SPBF, CSD, IED, EWAD, UNON and UNEP corporate finance processes, rather than resting solely with the SPBF Secretariat. The point is not that this episode can be generalised to all SPBF financial management, but that large-scale convening platforms require clearer links between event commitments, secured funding, liabilities, institutional responsibilities and results.

Monitoring and Reporting

Monitoring arrangements represent a major structural limitation in assessing SPBF's performance and its contribution to Project A3 outcomes. While SPBF functioned effectively as a high-profile convening platform, existing monitoring systems provide little evidence on its contribution to knowledge dissemination, policy uptake or behavioural change.

This limitation is rooted in the design of the A3 results framework. SPBF was not included as a distinct component in the original project document, and no comprehensive results framework or dedicated outcome-level indicators were established to systematically assess its performance or contribution to project outcomes. Although SPBF workplans included thematic objectives, expected results, quarterly deliverables and activity-oriented tracking elements, these focused primarily on convening activities, partnerships and event outputs rather than on measurable downstream outcomes or policy influence pathways. The project A3 logframe focused primarily on the production, dissemination and use of environmental assessments and data systems, while SPBF operated as a complementary convening platform outside the formal results chain.

As a result, two parallel monitoring approaches emerged. SPBF activities were primarily tracked through participation metrics, event outputs and implementation of planned convening activities, while A3 monitoring focused on the production and use of assessment products. The absence of shared indicators or integrated reporting mechanisms limited the ability to assess synergies between the two, or to determine whether SPBF contributed to the uptake of A3 knowledge products. *(See also Main Report, Section 4.5 on monitoring and evaluability limitations across Project A3)*.

UNEP's 2024 evaluability assessment carried out by the evaluation office reached a similar conclusion. It found that SPBF was not a stand-alone PRC-approved project, but was housed within existing approved projects, including PIMS 01979 and PIMS 2041 / SMA 45773. It noted that SPBF's timeframe, budget, results framework and causal logic were not sufficiently specified for a stand-alone performance evaluation; that the SPBF budget was not specified in a way that allowed funds to be associated with results; and that results were not specific to SPBF or clearly aligned with the A3 project document. It further characterised the A3 project as a set of discrete initiatives bundled together, noting that this nested approach made monitoring, reporting and evaluation of performance complex.

SPBF later clarified to the Evaluation Office that it had reported as part of the overall Frontiers project in IPMR for the period when it was housed under the earlier project, but also indicated that, from January 2024 onwards, SPBF did not appear clearly in IPMR because of what it described as a technical or logframe error. This supports a nuanced interpretation: SPBF was not entirely absent from reporting, but its reporting line was not sufficiently visible or specific to allow robust tracking of SPBF-specific results within A3.

More broadly, the monitoring architecture of Project A3 was better suited to assessing technical knowledge products than to evaluating diffuse influence pathways associated with multi-stakeholder convening processes. Monitoring systems could have been better tailored to track the outcomes of SPBF engagements beyond the events themselves, including follow-up actions, stakeholder continuity and evidence of use. No evidence was identified of monitoring of downstream effects such as policy influence, stakeholder follow-up, or continued engagement with participants. This constrains any assessment of effectiveness beyond immediate outputs and participation and reach. SPBF's results were therefore not necessarily absent; rather, they were not systematically captured in a way that would allow the evaluation to demonstrate them with confidence.

These monitoring gaps are closely linked to broader operational challenges affecting continuity. Project documentation points to resource constraints and organisational restructuring, including

periods during which SPBF operated without dedicated budget allocations. "In 2024, while two UNEP staff were maintained with the UNEP core resource, mobilized resources beyond core staffing were not enough to retain all consultants.. *(This reflects broader organisational continuity challenges identified in the main evaluation, including the effects of restructuring and shifting institutional responsibilities).* By early 2026, available evidence indicates that SPBF had become institutionally dormant as a standalone unit. However, interview evidence suggests that some of its underlying engagement functions -particularly convening dialogue across science, policy and business communities- continued in a more dispersed manner through UNEP sectoral dialogues, ministerial processes and thematic workstreams.

These monitoring gaps are therefore not only technical but structural. In the absence of a clearly defined theory of change linking SPBF activities to downstream outcomes, neither monitoring nor evaluation systems were designed to capture such effects. This reflects the positioning of SPBF as a convening-oriented platform operating outside a conventional operational results chain.

2.3 Impact and Sustainability

Policy Visibility and Discursive Footprint

Evidence suggests that SPBF has generated moderate prominence within global environmental policy discourse, with influence operating primarily at the level of narrative framing and institutional engagement rather than through direct regulatory change.

SPBF sessions, including those convened alongside UNEA-6, have addressed themes such as integrated solutions, cross-sectoral approaches, and the role of data, finance and innovation in addressing the triple planetary crisis. Given that SPBF is held in parallel to UNEA and engages many of the same high-level actors, it likely contributes to shaping broader policy conversations. However, this influence appears to operate indirectly, through agenda-setting and narrative alignment rather than through formalised mechanisms of uptake. No explicit evidence was identified -either in documentation or interviews- linking specific SPBF discussions or outputs to UNEA decisions or negotiated outcomes, including at UNEA-6. This should not be read as evidence that the Forum had no influence, but rather that its influence was not documented through a traceable pathway from discussion to decision.

A search of the Overton policy database identified 126 policy-related documents retrieved through keyword searches referencing the Science-Policy-Business Forum. These results represent searchable appearances rather than verified formal citations and should therefore be interpreted with caution. The distribution of these documents indicates notable presence within UNEP (55% of the retrieved references) and the United Nations system documentation (20%), as well as within materials associated with European Union institutions and other multilateral organisations. Relatively few references were identified from national governments or regulatory sources (i.e. Austria, Trinidad and Tobago, UK). This suggests that the SPBF's footprint is concentrated primarily within institutional and multilateral policy environments. References within national-level legislative or regulatory documents appear limited. Taken together, the evidence indicates that SPBF has achieved a discursive footprint within policy debates, but not demonstrable regulatory uptake or policy change.

The evaluation found limited systematic evidence linking participation in SPBF to strengthened corporate climate commitments or measurable changes in business practices. Private sector engagement with SPBF was substantial in terms of participation in events, partnerships, and high-level discussions. However, there is very limited evidence of companies explicitly referencing or citing SPBF outputs in corporate strategies, reporting, or decision-making processes. This suggests that SPBF functions primarily as a convening and dialogue platform, rather than as a source of directly utilised knowledge within the private sector.

These findings can be further interpreted in light of UNEP's Strategy for Private Sector Engagement (2019), which sets out an ambitious framework aimed at generating measurable impacts, fostering the transformation of industries, supporting innovation, and mobilising resources through structured and results-based engagement with the private sector. The Strategy distinguishes between different levels of engagement, ranging from information sharing and participation in events to deeper forms of collaboration such as partnerships and alliances, which are expected to generate the highest transformative impact. In this context, SPBF activities appear to operate predominantly at the level of events, dialogue and multi-stakeholder platforms. While these forms of engagement are consistent with UNEP modalities, they correspond to intermediate levels of engagement and may not, on their own, be sufficient to generate measurable changes in corporate practices or behaviour. This suggests a possible gap between the level of engagement predominantly facilitated through SPBF and the transformational ambitions reflected in UNEP's private sector engagement framework.

Taken together, the available evidence indicates that SPBF has achieved a degree of discursive and narrative reach within international policy and multi-stakeholder environments. However, direct attribution of policy transformation or behavioural change to Forum activities cannot be established. Stakeholder feedback and Overton-type evidence therefore support a finding of visibility and immediate convening value, but not a finding of demonstrated downstream change.

Institutional Impact

SPBF's impact is primarily institutional and relational. By bringing together scientists, policymakers and business actors, the Forum created a visible space for cross-sector dialogue and contributed to reinforcing UNEP's positioning as a convenor across these communities.

The platform provided opportunities for interaction between UNEP experts, partners and external stakeholders, including private sector actors and policy practitioners. In this sense, SPBF functioned as a high-level interface where environmental issues could be discussed across scientific, policy and economic perspectives.

However, available evidence indicates that these interactions were largely episodic and not systematically embedded in UNEP's workstreams. Forum discussions were not systematically fed back into programme development, partnerships or subsequent activities. As a result, SPBF functioned as a high-profile interface, but not as a mechanism for sustained collaboration or influence in its original standalone form. More recent evidence indicates that UNEP has begun to internalise this interface function within its sectoral programmes, suggesting a shift from episodic engagement toward more continuous and programmatically anchored interaction models. Its impact is therefore best understood as enabling dialogue and communication, rather than generating cumulative institutional or programmatic effects. There is limited systematic evidence that SPBF, as a standalone platform, generated cumulative influence on policy processes, organisational workstreams or stakeholder practices. However, some of its underlying functions appear to have informed or been absorbed into more sectoral and programmatically anchored forms of UNEP engagement.

Sustainability

Despite its visibility and convening capacity, the long-term sustainability of SPBF remains uncertain and structurally fragile. The Forum relied largely on voluntary donor contributions and episodic project-based funding for its activities, while core staffing budgets and some activity related and operational costs were handled under UNEP's Environment Fund (i.e. divisional core resources). This funding model introduced significant volatility, including periods during which SPBF operated without a dedicated activity budget allocation.

Financial sustainability challenges are compounded by the event-driven nature of the model. SPBF activities have primarily taken the form of large-scale global sessions and associated events, which require substantial financial and organisational resources but are not supported by mechanisms ensuring continuity or follow-up. As a result, the model has remained dependent on the availability of resources for individual events rather than sustained programme funding.

A central constraint to sustainability lies in the Forum's institutional anchoring within UNEP. Over the evaluated period, SPBF was transferred from the Science Division to the Corporate Services Division and subsequently, in 2024, to the Industry and Economy Division. These transfers reflected efforts to position SPBF within UNEP's evolving organisational priorities. In particular, the 2024 transfer responded to UNEP's identified need for a more comprehensive and strategic approach to translating science-policy-business engagement into impact, with closer links to sectoral transformation and economy-facing work. Nevertheless, the evidence available to the evaluation indicates that the successive transitions did not result in a stable long-term ownership and operating model, supported by predictable resources, leadership continuity and sustained operational arrangements. The principal limitation was therefore not the transfers themselves, but the absence of such a model across the transitions.

Following the 2024 transfer, IED undertook a functional review of the Division to determine how its work could achieve greater impact. The review took place in the context of the UN80 process and reductions in Environment Fund resources, which also required the Division to reduce costs and reconsider its organisational arrangements. During this period, SPBF experienced a loss of consultants, absence of dedicated financial resources and discontinuity in leadership. In September 2025, IED informed SPBF that, as an outcome of the functional review, SPBF functions would be mainstreamed into selected high-impact sectors under IED management, that the P5 post would be reclassified, and that SPBF would cease to operate as a separate unit. By early 2026, SPBF no longer appeared operational as a dedicated standalone structure. These developments indicate limited sustainability of SPBF's original institutional model, although some of its underlying functions may continue through their integration into IED's sectoral work. The longer-term sustainability of these functions will depend on the clarity of their ownership, resourcing and operational arrangements within the mainstreamed model.

At the same time, interview evidence indicates continued institutional recognition within UNEP of the value of science-policy-business engagement approaches. While support for maintaining SPBF as a standalone platform appears limited under current organisational and financial conditions, several interviewees described ongoing efforts to incorporate SPBF-type engagement functions into sectoral dialogues, ministerial processes and thematic workstreams. This suggests that UNEP's willingness to sustain the underlying convening model remains present, albeit through more integrated and programmatically embedded modalities rather than through continuation of SPBF as a separate institutional structure. Views differed on whether this preserves or narrows SPBF's original identity. This concern is consistent with SPBF's own earlier position that the Forum should not be reduced to a business-only mechanism but should remain a broader science-policy-business-society interface connected to UNEP's science-policy and assessment functions. Some stakeholders considered closer links to sectoral work necessary for follow-up and implementation, while others stressed the importance of maintaining a broader science-policy-business-society interface connected to UNEP's assessment and knowledge functions.

The platform aligns with UNEP's emphasis on private sector engagement, multi-stakeholder collaboration and integrated approaches to addressing the triple planetary crisis. Interview evidence indicates that the value of convening science, policy and business actors is recognised, and that this function is already being progressively embedded within ongoing programme work rather than maintained as a stand-alone initiative. Recent practice indicates that science-policy-business engagement is increasingly being operationalised through sector-specific dialogues, ministerial processes and thematic workstreams integrated into broader UNEP programming.

- The evidence therefore suggests partial sustainability of the SPBF approach at the functional level, but limited sustainability of the original standalone institutional model. To respond to the needs of a more integrated and strategic approach and as a result of the functional review, the Division embedded science business policy approaches into its new focus on high impact sectors. It also could include aligning dialogue process with existing workstreams and ensuring that engagement activities are linked to follow-up actions and programme delivery. aligning Forum activities with assessment cycles and priority thematic workstreams;
- diversifying funding sources, including programme budgets and partnerships; and
- establishing clear institutional ownership and leadership to ensure continuity.

Such an approach would allow UNEP to retain the core strengths of the SPBF model -visibility, convening power and cross-sector engagement- while addressing its current limitations in continuity, ownership and impact. It would also allow A3-type knowledge products to be linked more deliberately to user engagement, testing of emerging findings, coalition-building around assessment messages and follow-up with policy, business and finance actors.

Overall, while SPBF demonstrates clear value as a convening mechanism, its sustainability will depend on stronger institutional anchoring, clearer strategic positioning and more predictable resourcing aligned with UNEP's programme architecture. *(This conclusion is aligned with the broader sustainability findings of the main evaluation regarding institutional ownership, funding predictability and integration within UNEP programme structures.)*

3. Lessons Learned

Several lessons emerge from the experience of implementing SPBF alongside Project A3.

- **Thematic alignment does not automatically generate operational synergy**. Although SPBF and A3 are conceptually well aligned, the absence of formal integration mechanisms limited the Forum's function as a measurable dissemination pathway for assessment products. Future projects should define at design stage how convening platforms will support dissemination, user engagement, validation, uptake and follow-up of assessment products. *(Related to Conclusions 268, 269 and 272 and Recommendation 2 on strengthening strategic coherence and integration across project components).*
- **Multi-stakeholder dialogue platforms require tailored monitoring approaches**. Traditional results frameworks designed for knowledge production are not well suited to capturing the influence of convening mechanisms. Distinguishing between discursive visibility, institutional embedding and policy uptake is essential for understanding impact. Monitoring should also track stakeholder continuity, follow-up actions, use of outputs, partnerships, policy references, institutional uptake and behavioural change. *(Related to Conclusions 272 and 273 and Recommendation 4 on strengthening monitoring, evaluability and results measurement for convening and partnership platforms).*
- **SPBF's primary value lies in its convening power and cross-sector legitimacy**. However, experience indicates that this value is maximised when such convening functions are embedded within ongoing programme processes and linked to clearly defined follow-up pathways, rather than implemented as standalone events. *(Related to Conclusions 271, 273 and 277 and Recommendation 2 on strengthening institutional integration and follow-up mechanisms).*
- **Institutional anchoring and predictable funding are critical for sustainability**. Periods of budget uncertainty and organisational restructuring can undermine continuity and limit long-term strategic planning. This dependence on opportunistic and project-based funding reflects broader patterns within Project A3, where resource allocation across components was uneven and often not aligned with strategic priorities. For cross-cutting platforms, transition arrangements should specify mandate, reporting lines, staffing, budget allocation, Umoja/system access, grant ownership, certification authority, liability treatment, partnership management and follow-up responsibilities. *(Related to Conclusions 272, 275 and 276 and Recommendation 1 on strengthening institutional sustainability, governance and resource predictability).*

- **Cross-cutting platforms require explicit institutional ownership**. Operating "between" divisions without clear leadership and incentives limits effectiveness and sustainability. The SPBF experience demonstrates that multi-stakeholder platforms require strong integration within organisational structures to maximise their value. Operating as a relatively autonomous initiative limited opportunities for synergy with UNEP's scientific assessment work and reduced the platform's effectiveness as a dissemination and uptake mechanism. *(Related to Conclusions 269, 272 and 275 and Recommendation 1 on clarifying institutional ownership and governance arrangements)*.
- **Visibility needs to be connected to follow-up pathways.** While SPBF achieved high profile through large-scale events and high-level participation, the absence of systematic follow-up mechanisms limited its ability to translate dialogue into measurable policy or behavioural change. Ensuring cost-effective use of resources requires stronger links between convening activities and downstream impact pathways. Overton-type evidence and positive participant feedback are useful, but they need to be complemented by evidence on how visibility and engagement translate into use, uptake or institutional change. *(Related to Conclusions 273 and 277 and Recommendation 3 on strengthening pathways from dialogue and visibility to measurable policy uptake and implementation)*.
- **Private-sector engagement requires safeguards.** SPBF's engagement with business, finance and technology actors was central to its value, but such engagement requires transparent due diligence, balanced participation, conflict-of-interest management and clarity between dialogue, partnership, sponsorship and endorsement. SPBF's own internal concerns about private-sector access, lobbying risks and expo-style engagement formats underline that these safeguards should be designed into the model from the outset rather than treated as an administrative add-on.

These lessons are broadly consistent with the findings of the main evaluation, particularly regarding the importance of stronger programme integration, clearer institutional ownership, improved monitoring systems and more explicit pathways linking knowledge products and convening processes to downstream policy influence and implementation.

Conclusion

The UN Science-Policy-Business Forum represents a relevant and innovative multistakeholder collaboration model within UNEP's science-policy ecosystem. Its core strength lies in its ability to convene diverse actors and create high-visibility spaces for dialogue across science, policy and business communities. It also generated stakeholder value through networking, cross-disciplinary exchange and visibility around emerging environmental issues.

However, the evidence indicates that SPBF would have required a clearer design, monitoring approach and integration within UNEP programme cycles to translate dialogue more consistently into sustained outcomes. It operated primarily through periodic high-level convening processes, with limited integration into programme cycles, no structured follow-up processes, and no monitoring systems linking activities to downstream effects. As a result, its contribution to Project A3 and to broader policy or behavioural change remained indirect and largely discursive. This does not negate the value of SPBF's convening role, but it limits the extent to which downstream results can be demonstrated.

The additional SPBF evidence reviewed for the case study supports a more balanced interpretation: SPBF had documented workplans, recognised convening value, positive stakeholder feedback and examples of cross-divisional ambition, but the evidence remains stronger for activities, participation, perceived quality and network-building than for verified downstream outcomes, policy influence, institutional uptake or durable changes among partners.

The key limitation is therefore not the concept itself, but its positioning and design. Without a clear theory of change, institutional ownership, and integration into ongoing workstreams, the platform was challenged to demonstrate cumulative or durable effects in a systematic or verifiable manner. At the same time, the evaluation recognises that some of SPBF's value likely resided in intangible

and relational dimensions -including visibility, network-building, convening legitimacy and cross-sector exchange- which are inherently difficult to capture through conventional monitoring systems.

The evidence suggests that the future value of the SPBF model is likely to depend on how its core functions are embedded within UNEP's programme architecture, whether through a dedicated platform or through more integrated programmatic arrangements. Recent developments indicate that this transition is already underway, with the science-policy-business engagement model being progressively mainstreamed into UNEP's sectoral programmes and policy processes. This evolution reflects a shift from an event-based convening model toward a more integrated and impact-oriented approach, better aligned with UNEP's mandate to support policy and behavioural change. Future arrangements should nevertheless preserve the broader science-policy-business-society identity of the model, including scientific balance and civil-society participation, rather than reducing it to private-sector outreach alone.

The strategic questions are addressed below:

1. **To what extent has the SPBF multi-stakeholder collaboration model contributed to achieving the results of SPBF and Project A3?** SPBF contributed primarily through agenda-setting, visibility, networking and convening functions rather than through direct or measurable policy outcomes. It supported dialogue across science, policy and business communities and helped reinforce UNEP's convening role, but its contribution to Project A3 results remained indirect and difficult to measure due to limited operational integration, weak follow-up mechanisms and the absence of a dedicated results framework. Its contribution is therefore plausible and visible at the level of engagement but not demonstrated through a traceable pathway to uptake of A3 products or downstream change.
2. **What long-lasting results of SPBF should UNEP consider continuing or scaling up? To what extent has this work driven changes contributing to other areas of UNEP's work?** The most sustainable contribution of SPBF lies in its multi-stakeholder engagement model and its ability to convene actors across sectors around emerging environmental issues. Interview evidence suggests that some SPBF functions, particularly science-policy-business dialogue and ministerial engagement approaches, have continued in more dispersed forms within UNEP sectoral workstreams and partnership processes. These engagement functions appear more sustainable than the original standalone platform model. The distinctive value to retain is the combination of science, policy, business, finance, technology and civil-society perspectives, supported by safeguards and follow-up mechanisms.
3. **What lessons have emerged from SPBF that UNEP should adopt or avoid in future programming?** Key lessons include the importance of clear institutional ownership, predictable funding and stronger integration between convening platforms and operational programmes. The experience also demonstrates that multi-stakeholder dialogue platforms require tailored monitoring systems capable of assessing influence, uptake and follow-through beyond participation metrics. High visibility alone is insufficient without mechanisms linking dialogue to implementation and measurable downstream effects. Future initiatives would benefit from clearer financial architecture, stronger transition planning, built-in safeguards for private-sector engagement and monitoring systems that go beyond event delivery.
4. **Which approach or format would best support the sustainability and scaling-up of SPBF's results and effects?** The evaluation suggests that sustainability is more likely to be achieved through integration of science-policy-business engagement functions into ongoing UNEP programmes, sectoral initiatives and policy processes rather than through a standalone event-based platform. Future approaches would benefit from clearer institutional anchoring, dedicated follow-up mechanisms, stronger links to implementation pathways and monitoring systems adapted to convening and partnership-based intervention. For A3-type projects, this means designing convening functions from the outset as part of the results chain for dissemination, user engagement, uptake and follow-up of assessment products.

ANNEX VII. ENVIRONMENTAL AND SOCIAL SAFEGUARDS ASSESSMENT

ESS PLANNING AT PROJECT DESIGN	
List any ESS issues identified at project design (e.g. SS 1.7, SS 2.3, etc.)[43]	The Project Document included an ESE screening. It identified Safeguard Standard 5 on Indigenous Peoples as relevant to the marine-plastics assessment and Safeguard Standard 9 on Economic Sustainability as relevant to the Belt and Road Environment Outlook. However, no overall risk classification was recorded, and no significant adverse risks were identified
For any ESS issues identified at project design, were mitigation strategies developed (Y/N)? (If yes, briefly describe)	**No separate mitigation plan was developed**, consistent with the absence of moderate or high risks. The Belt and Road Environment Outlook nevertheless incorporated stakeholder engagement, equitable benefit-sharing and environmental standards.
Were any gaps in ESS issues identified at the evaluation inception phase (Y/N)? (If yes, briefly describe)	**Yes.** No overall risk classification was recorded, and no evidence was found that the screening was subsequently updated or systematically monitored. No adverse environmental or social effects were identified.

ESS MONITORING AT PROJECT IMPLEMENTATION	
Is there evidence that the potential emergence of ESS issues was actively monitored during project implementation (Y/N)? [44] (If yes, briefly describe)	No. There is no evidence of systematic ESS monitoring during implementation.
Is there a justification for the absence of ESS monitoring (Y/N)? (If yes, briefly describe[45])	Yes, **largely.** The project was predominantly knowledge-based, involved no infrastructure and had a limited operational footprint. Some components nevertheless involved field research, citizen science or community engagement, for which proportionate safeguards documentation and monitoring would have been appropriate.

MANAGEMENT RESPONSIVENESS DURING PROJECT IMPLEMENTATION	
Identify the ESS issues/events triggered [46] by the project.[47]	No ESS issues or safeguard-related events were identified during project implementation.
Describe consequences of ESS issues/events during project implementation.	Not applicable.
Describe the management response and identify supporting documentation. [48, 49]	Not applicable.
Were negative ESS effects offset by management response (Y/N)? (If yes, briefly describe)	Not applicable. No negative ESS effects were identified.

[43] Select from the list of Environmental and Social Safeguards Risks in Table 1 of the template (tool 14, Safeguards Assessment Template).

[44] **Low risk:** Negative impacts minimal or negligible: no further study or impact management required.
Moderate risk: Potential negative impacts, but limited in scale, not unprecedented or irreversible and generally limited to programme/project area; impacts amenable to management using standard mitigation measures; limited environmental or social analysis may be required to develop an Environmental and Social Management Plan (ESMP). Straightforward application of good practice may be sufficient without additional study.
High risk: Potential for significant negative impacts (e.g. irreversible, unprecedented, cumulative, significant stakeholder concerns); Environmental and Social Impact Assessment (ESIA) (or Strategic Environmental and Social Assessment (SESA)) including a full impact assessment may be required, followed by an effective comprehensive safeguard management plan.

[45] For instance, during COVID, access to the field may have been restricted.

[46] 'Triggered' refers to environmental or social issues/events that are caused or exacerbated -directly or indirectly- as a result of the project's activities, interventions, or presence.

[47] Select from the list of Environmental and Social Safeguards Risks in Table 1 of the template (tool 14, Safeguards Assessment Template).

[48] For most low-moderate risk projects, good practice approach may be sufficient. Project should demonstrate safeguard management approach in the project activities, budget, risks management, stakeholder engagement or/and monitoring segments of the project document to avoid or minimize the identified potential risks without preparing a separate safeguard management plan.

[49] E.g., GEF Project Implementation Report (PIR), Progress Report, Minutes, etc.

ANNEX VIII. BRIEF CV OF THE EVALUATOR

Name	Patrick Breard
Profession	International Consultant
Nationality	French
Country experience	• **Africa:** Benin, Côte d'Ivoire, Democratic Republic of Congo, Egypt, Ethiopia, Kenya, Mauritania, Morocco, Nigeria, Senegal, South Africa, Sudan, Tunisia, Uganda, Zimbabwe. • **Asia and the Pacific:** South Korea, Thailand, Vietnam. • **Europe and Central Asia:** Belgium, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Czech Republic, Denmark, France, Germany, Italy, Netherlands, Norway, Serbia, Slovakia, Spain, Switzerland, United Kingdom. • **Latin America and the Caribbean:** Chile, Haiti, Trinidad and Tobago. • **Middle East:** Bahrain, Jordan, Qatar. • **North America:** Canada, United States.
Education	• PhD in Strategic Foresight, CNAM (France) • Executive MBA, International University of America (USA) • Master's Degree in European Economics, Université Libre de Bruxelles (Belgium) • Master's Degree in Economics, Université Toulouse 1 Capitole (France) • Certificate in Management of Information Systems

Short biography

Mr Patrick Bréard is an independent evaluation consultant and Managing Partner of Breard & Associates, with over 20 years of experience in evaluation, knowledge management, and development effectiveness. He has conducted numerous evaluations and strategic assessments for United Nations agencies, including UNEP, UNDP, FAO, UNICEF, ILO and UNIDO, covering complex, multi-stakeholder programmes at global, regional and country levels. Prior to his consulting career, Mr Bréard held the positions of Knowledge Management Coordinator at UNDP, Manager at Ernst & Young, Head of International Relations at ESCP Europe, and Information Systems Analyst at CCIP.

Key specialties and capabilities cover:

- Evaluation of development programmes and policies
- Theory of Change and results-based management
- Knowledge management and knowledge uptake
- Institutional and organisational performance
- Public administration reform and capacity development

Selected assignments and experiences

- **UNIDO (2026):** Mid-term reviews of Global Cleantech Innovation Programme (GCIP) country projects.
- **FAO (2026):** Corporate evaluation on support to small-scale producers' access to resources, including knowledge uptake and policy influence analysis.
- **UNICEF (2025):** Evaluation of the Country Programme in the Democratic Republic of Congo (2020–2024).
- **UNECE (2025):** Independent evaluation of the UN Road Safety Fund Secretariat.
- **UN EOSG (2025):** Internal evaluation of the UN Peace and Development Fund-supported project "Advancing Our Common Agenda," contributing to the development of the Pact for the Future.
- **ILO (2020–2024):** Multiple high-level and project evaluations, including global flagship programmes and country programme strategies in Africa and the Middle East.
- **UNCTAD (2024):** Evaluation of a global UN Development Account project supporting MSMEs in 99 countries.
- **UNESCO (2023):** Evaluation of knowledge products of the Social and Human Sciences Sector.
- **UNITAR, UNDESA, UN Joint SDG Fund (2020–2023):** Evaluations and reviews of global knowledge, policy and capacity development initiatives.
- **UNDP (2020):** Evaluation of development cooperation in middle-income countries.

ANNEX IX. FULL LIST OF IMPLEMENTING PARTNERS

United Nations Agencies: GRID Geneva, GRID Sioux Falls, GRID-Arendal, International Centre for Water Resources and Global , Change (ICWRGC) - UNESCO Category 2 Centre, International Resource Panel (IRP), Group of Experts on the Scientific Aspects of Marine Environmental Protection (GESAMP), Secretariat of the United Nations Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD), Secretariat of the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification (UNCCD) , Secretariat of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC), United Nations Environment Programme's International Ecosystem Management Partnership (IEMP), United Nations Environment Programme's Finance Initiative (UNEP FI), United Nations Environment Programme's Poverty-Environment Initiative (PEI), United Nations Environment Programme's World Conservation Monitoring Centre (UNEP-WCMC), United Nations Regional Seas Programme.

National governments and related entities: Switzerland, Coalition for Green Development on the Belt and Road;, Federal Institute of Hydrology (BfG), Germany, Government of China, Government of Germany, Government of Switzerland, International Coalition for Green Development on Belt and Road, Ministries of Environment and other governmental agencies of relevant BRI countries, Netherlands Environmental Assessments Agency (PBL) , United States Geological Survey (USGS).

Private business community: IBM (International Business Machines Corporation)**.**

Non-United Nations multi-lateral and inter-governmental entities: ASGMI, Asociación de Servicios de Geología y Minería Iberoamericanos (Latin American Geological Surveys), CEOS (Committee on Earth Observations Satellites), European Commission (EC), Environmental Pulse Institute (EPI).

National and International NGOs:, Carnegie Climate Geoengineering Governance Initiative , Center for Large Landscape Conservation, Fridtjof Nansen Institute (FNI), International Institute for Sustainable Development (IISD), Stockholm Environment Institute (SEI), World Resources Institute (WRI), World Wide Fund for Nature (WWF).

Academia and research institutions: Canadian International Resources and Development Institute (CIRDI), Chinese Research Academy of Environmental Sciences (CRAES), Chinese University of Hong Kong, Griffith University (Australia), Helmholtz-Centre for Environmental Research-UFZ, Germany, Institute of Botany and Landscape Ecology (Germany), Stockholm University, Swedish University of Agriculture Sciences, Tongji University, Tsinghua University, UN Environment - DTU Partnership (UDP), University of the Aegean, University of Jordan.

ANNEX X. QUALITY ASSESSMENT OF THE EVALUATION REPORT

Report Quality Criteria	UNEP Evaluation Office Comments	Final Report Rating
Section A: Executive Summary	Assessment	
1. Does the ***Executive Summary*** act as a concise, accurate standalone section, especially to inform decision-making? Consider how clearly and concisely the report presents: • a clear summary of the evaluation object • evaluation objectives, scope and methodology • the overall project evaluation rating • a summary of main evaluation findings, including key features of performance (strengths and weaknesses) • summary responses to key strategic evaluation questions • summary of main conclusions, lessons learned and recommendations	Coverage/omissions: All required elements are addressed. Strengths/weaknesses: The Executive Summary is concise, well structured, and clearly articulated.	6
Section B: The Project	Assessment	
2. Does the report clearly describe the ***key parameters, scale and complexity of the evaluand***? Consider how well the report presents: • an overview of the main issue that the project is trying to address • timeline, including dates of project approval, duration and number of phases (where appropriate) • geographic coverage (regions/countries) • total secured budget and project financing, including a table with funding sources • implementing and funding partners • institutional context (i.e. UNEP sub-programme, Division, Branch etc) • implementation structure with diagram • UNEP results frameworks to which it contributes (e.g. PoW Direct Outcome) • summary of results framework as stated in the ProDoc (or as officially revised) • stakeholder groups organised according to relevant common characteristics • whether the project has been evaluated in the past (e.g. mid-term, by an external agency, etc.) • substantive or significant changes in design during implementation	Coverage/omissions: The section contains all key information such as parameters, scale and complexity of the project. Strengths/weaknesses: The report clearly presents key project information, including the project context, results framework, and stakeholder analysis. It also provides a comprehensive description of design changes introduced during implementation, as well as project financing arrangements.	6
Section C: Evaluation Methods and Theory of Change	Assessment	

Report Quality Criteria	UNEP Evaluation Office Comments	Final Report Rating
3. Does the report present a clear, comprehensive and adequate description of the ***evaluation methodology***? Consider how well it presents the following elements, and their adequacy based on the scope of the evaluation: • statement of the purpose of the evaluation and the key intended audience for the evaluation findings • data collection methods and information sources • justification for methods used (e.g. electronic/face-to-face interviews, qualitative/quantitative analysis) • criteria and sampling strategies used to select stakeholders for consultations, and for sites/countries visited • number and types of respondents *(including in a table broken down by gender)* • strategies used to increase stakeholder engagement and response rate • methods used to include the voices/experiences of different and potentially excluded groups (e.g. women, marginalised) • data verification methods (e.g. triangulation) • data analysis methods (e.g. scoring, thematic analysis) • evaluation limitations and mitigation measures (e.g. how these were addressed by the evaluator) • consideration for ethics and human rights issues, including how anonymity and confidentiality were protected	Coverage/omissions: The section covers most of the key elements. Strengths/weaknesses: The section clearly outlines the comprehensive evaluation methods. The evaluation methods were well described with details including criteria and clear justification. The section also clearly presents the detailed limitations, along with the various mitigations measures undertaken.	6
4. Does the report describe an assessment and reformulation of the ***Theory of Change***, and present an adequate articulation of the TOC causal pathways that were used to assess project performance (*narratively and diagrammatically)*? Consider how well the report presents: • whether the project design included a TOC • how the *TOC at Evaluation*[50] was designed (e.g. who was involved, etc) • confirmation/reconstruction of results in accordance with UNEP definitions (*including reformulation table, which may have initially been presented in the Inception Report and should appear in the Main Evaluation report.)* • articulation of causal pathways • identification of drivers and assumptions • identification of key actors in the change process	Coverage/omissions: The section describes the assessment of the original ToC and presented reformulated results and restructured ToC. Strengths/weaknesses: The section provides a clear description of the original ToC and analyses the causal pathways through a reconstructed ToC that is aligned with the UNEP Glossary of Results Definitions. The reconstructed ToC identifies the key drivers and assumptions along the pathways at each results level, including cross-cutting assumptions. While the report identifies the overall actors contributing to the change processes, the analysis would be strengthened by more explicitly	5.5

[50] 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*.

Report Quality Criteria	UNEP Evaluation Office Comments	Final Report Rating
	identifying the key actors responsible for, or influencing, specific changes along the causal pathways.	
Section D: Evidence and Analysis	Assessment	
5. Is the report based on ***sufficient and adequate data*** and ***clear and credible evidence***? Consider how well the report presents: • sufficient evidence that is consistent throughout the report • evidence that is supported by data sources (e.g. quotes, reports, etc) • evidence that is explicitly triangulated, unless noted as having a single source • gaps in data are explained and justified • data sources that are reliable, adequate, sufficient for the scope of the evaluation	Coverage/omissions: The section assesses all criteria in line with UNEP guideline. Strengths/weaknesses: Overall, the evidence presented is consistent throughout the report and is supported by multiple data sources. The findings are strengthened by rigorous triangulation of available evidence from different sources. In addition, *Section 2.4 (Limitations and Mitigation Measures)* clearly acknowledges gaps in documentation and data availability and the measures taken to mitigate their potential effects on the assessment are explained.	5.5
6. Does the report include ***rigorous analysis*** and ***logical findings***? Consider the extent to which the findings are: • supported by clear analysis that is consistent with the evidence presented • logical, clear and coherent • aligned with UNEP's Criteria Ratings Matrix • aligned with the evaluation framework • more than descriptions and provide insights into 'how' and/or 'why' the project performed a certain way • balanced, presenting both successes and weaknesses	Coverage/omissions: The section covers assessment of all evaluation criteria. Strengths/weaknesses: Overall, the report is articulated in line with the evaluation framework, and ratings are generally aligned with UNEP's Criteria Ratings Matrix. Despite some identified gaps, analytical findings as well as both successes and weaknesses are described in a balanced manner at both the project and its component level. The report would benefit from more explicit discussion of the causal mechanisms that explain how and why observed results emerged.	5.5
Section E: Evaluation Findings	Assessment	
7. Does the report present evidence and analysis of project ***Strategic Relevance*** with respect to UNEP, partner and geographic policies and strategies at the time of project approval? Consider how well the report addresses: • Alignment to the UNEP Medium Term Strategy (MTS), Programme of Work (POW) and Strategic Priorities • Alignment to Donor/GEF/Partners Strategic Priorities • Relevance to Regional, Sub-regional and National Environmental Priorities • Complementarity with Existing Interventions: complementarity of the project at design (or during inception/mobilisation[51]), with other	Coverage/omissions: All key aspects of the strategic relevance has been covered in the report. Strengths/weaknesses: The report presents the comprehensive and detailed analysis on the strategic relevance, supported by the evidence.	6

[51] 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.

Report Quality Criteria	UNEP Evaluation Office Comments	Final Report Rating
interventions addressing the needs of the same target groups.		
Does the report present a summary of the strengths and weaknesses of the ***Quality of Project Design***, based on the detailed assessment presented in the Inception Report?	Coverage/omissions: The report covers all sub-criteria to assess the quality of the project design. Strengths/weaknesses: The section succinctly outlines the strengths and weaknesses of the project design quality.	***NOT RATED**
Does the report recognise and describe, when appropriate, key features of the ***Nature of the External Context*** under which the project was implemented that limited the project's performance (e.g. conflict, natural disaster, political upheaval[52]), and how they affected performance?	Coverage/omissions: The section describes the external context of the project. Strengths/weaknesses: The various key features of the external context are identified in the section. The report also presents how these external context affected performance and how the project responded in the context.	***NOT RATED**
8. Does the report present a well-reasoned, complete and evidence-based assessment of the ***Availability of Outputs*** to the intended beneficiaries? Consider how well the report presents: • a convincing, evidence-supported and clear presentation of the outputs made available by the project compared to its approved plans and budget • assessment of the nature and scale of outputs versus the project indicators and targets • assessment of the timeliness, quality and utility of outputs to intended beneficiaries • identification of positive or negative effects of the project on disadvantaged groups, including those with specific needs due to gender, vulnerability or marginalisation (e.g. through disability).	Coverage/omissions: The report provides the analysis of availability of outputs. Strengths/weaknesses: The section is well articulated and draws on multiple sources of evidence through effective triangulation. Findings are clearly presented through a combination of narrative analysis, tables and figures. The reports demonstrates the findings including performance against indicator targets, and assessment of the quality and utility of outputs.	6
9. Does the report present a well-reasoned, complete and evidence-based assessment of the ***Achievement of Outcomes***, as a result of the uptake, adoption and/or implementation of outputs by the intended beneficiaries? This may include behaviour changes at an individual or collective level. Consider how well the report presents: • a convincing and evidence-supported analysis of the uptake of outputs by intended beneficiaries • assessment of the nature, depth and scale of outcomes versus the project indicators and targets	Coverage/omissions: The section provides evidence-based assessment of the achievement of outcomes by using the standard table. Strengths/weaknesses: Overall, the report demonstrates evidence-based analysis of the achievement of outcomes against the available indicators and targets. Triangulation of quantitative and qualitative data, including interviews, the Overton database, and the evaluation survey, strengthens the analysis and	5.5

[52] 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.

Report Quality Criteria	UNEP Evaluation Office Comments	Final Report Rating
• discussion of the contribution, credible association and/or attribution of outcome level changes to the work of the project itself • any constraints to attributing effects to the projects' work • identification of positive or negative effects of the project on disadvantaged groups, including those with specific needs due to gender, vulnerability or marginalisation (e.g. through disability).	helps mitigate limitations associated with the measurement of outcome indicators. The section also includes the discussion on the contribution of the outcome level changes, and examples of the uptake of outputs by intended beneficiaries. The section does not assess the positive or negative effects of the project on disadvantaged groups at outcome level, but it is generally addressed under the section 4.2.3.	
10. Does the report present an integrated analysis, guided by the causal pathways represented by the TOC, of all evidence relating to ***Likelihood of Impact***? Consider how well the report presents: • an explanation of how causal pathways emerged and the resulting change processes • an explicit discussion of how drivers and assumptions played out • an explanation of roles played by key actors and change agents • identification of any unintended negative effects of the project, especially on disadvantaged groups, including those with specific needs due to gender, vulnerability or marginalisation (e.g. through disability).	Coverage/omissions: The report covers likelihood of impact addressing key elements of the section. Strengths/weaknesses: The section explains the causal pathways and associated changes, including a comprehensive assessment of the assumptions and drivers supported by relevant evidence. The report would be strengthened by the inclusion of a more explicit analysis of the key actors and change agents involved in influencing results along the causal pathways.	5.5
11. Does the report present 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: • *adherence* to UNEP's financial policies and procedures • *completeness* of financial information, including the actual project costs and actual co-financing used and explanation of any variances between planned and actual expenditures	Coverage/omissions: The section covers all dimensions of the financial management. Strengths/weaknesses: The report provides the analysis in financial management at both component and project level, while it clearly explains how the available financial information should be interpreted considering the identified limitations. While the report addresses the limitations in the analysis of co-financing and in-kind contributions, the section would be strengthened by presenting and analysing the available financial figures to the extent possible.	5
12. Does the report present an integrated analysis of all dimensions evaluated under ***Efficiency***? Consider how well the report presents: • cost-effective or time-saving measures put in place to maximise results within the secured budget and agreed project timeframe • implications of any delays and no cost extensions • discussion of making use, during project implementation, of/building on pre-existing institutions, partnerships and complementarities with other initiatives, programmes and projects etc.	Coverage/omissions: The report covers key all dimensions evaluated under efficiency. Strengths/weaknesses: The report presents an integrated analysis of efficiency, covering output delivery, cost-effectiveness measures, and timeliness, supported by relevant evidence. The section also acknowledges and analyses the key constraints and weaknesses that affected project efficiency.	6

Report Quality Criteria	UNEP Evaluation Office Comments	Final Report Rating
• the extent to which the management of the project minimised UNEP's environmental footprint.		
13. Does the report present a well-reasoned, complete and evidence-based assessment of the project's ***Monitoring and Reporting***? Consider how well the report addresses the following: • the quality of *monitoring of project implementation* (including use of monitoring data for adaptive management) • the quality of *project reporting* (e.g. PIMS and donor reports)	Coverage/omissions: The report fully covers key sub-sections. Strengths/weaknesses: The report presents its analysis at component and project level by using multiple sources of evidence and appropriately identifies limitations in the monitoring and reporting system. The section would be strengthened by a more explicit assessment of the quality of reporting.	5
14. Does the report present an integrated analysis of all dimensions evaluated under ***Sustainability*** (i.e. the endurance of benefits achieved at outcome level)? Consider how well the report addresses the following: • socio-political sustainability • financial sustainability • institutional sustainability	Coverage/omissions : The report covers all three dimensions evaluated under sustainability. Strengths/weaknesses: The section presents an evidence-based analysis of the sustainability at the project level, complemented by detailed assessments at the component level, including summary assessment tables. The section draws on multiple sources of information and demonstrates effective triangulation of evidence. However, the section would be strengthened by presenting a more explicit assessment of future funding prospects, including available information on secured or anticipated resources for the continuation of key outputs. For both financial and institutional sustainability, the degree of dependency on external factors should also be more explicitly assessed.	4.5
15. Does the report present a well-evidence analysis of the ***Factors Affecting Performance***, either in this section or in cross-referenced sections? *These factors are not always discussed in stand-alone sections and may be integrated in the other performance criteria as appropriate. However, if not addressed substantively in this section, a cross reference must be given to where the topic is addressed, and that entry must be sufficient to justify the performance rating for these factors.* Consider how well the report addresses the following cross-cutting issues: • quality of project management and supervision[53]	Coverage/omissions: The section includes all standard sub-criteria. Strengths/weaknesses: Overall, the section provides a well-supported analysis of the factors affecting project performance, drawing on evidence triangulated from multiple sources and supporting the ratings assigned to each sub-criterion. The report also presents detailed findings at both the project and component levels,	6

[53] 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.

Report Quality Criteria	UNEP Evaluation Office Comments	Final Report Rating
• 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	clearly identifying and assessing the key strengths and weaknesses.	
Section F: Conclusions, Lessons Learned and Recommendations	Assessment	
16. Do the ***Conclusions*** present a summative assessment of the evaluand as a whole, reflecting on prominent aspects of the project's performance? Consider how well the conclusions: • provide a compelling narrative and integrated assessment of project project's performance (i.e. achievements and limitations) • add deeper insights and analysis beyond the findings under each individual criterion • are derived from the synthesized analysis of evidence gathered during the evaluation process • provide clear and succinct response to the key strategic questions • address the human rights and gender dimensions of the intervention explicitly (e.g. how these dimensions were considered, addressed or impacted on) • provide lessons that are rooted in real project experiences, describe the context from which they are derived, and do not duplicate recommendations	Coverage/omissions: The conclusion includes summative assessment of the evaluand as a whole. Strengths/weaknesses: The conclusion includes a balanced summative narrative addressing strengths and constraints, and an analysis and insights beyond findings. The section also includes summary responses to the strategic questions with cross-references and summary table of project findings and ratings. More clearly distinguished lessons learned from recommendations would have strengthened the section because the lessons learned read more as normative statements or forward-looking prescriptions than as reflections of knowledge gained through project experience.	5
17. Does the report present ***Recommendations*** for specific action to be taken by identified people/position-holders to resolve concrete problems affecting the project or the sustainability of its results? Consider how well the recommendations: • are clearly formulated and logically derived from the findings and/or conclusions • are feasible to implement within the timeframe and resources available (including local capacities) and specific in terms of who would do what and when • include at least one recommendation relating to strengthening the human rights and gender dimensions of UNEP interventions • represent a measurable performance target in order that the Evaluation Office can monitor and assess compliance with the recommendations. NOTES: **(i)** In cases where the recommendation is addressed to a third party, compliance can only be monitored and assessed where a contractual/legal agreement remains in place. Without such an agreement, the recommendation	Coverage/omissions: The section presents the recommendations using the standard template. Strengths/weaknesses: The evaluation proposes six recommendations, together with supporting sub-recommendations, that are clearly derived from the findings and conclusions. The evaluation also includes a dedicated recommendation on human rights and gender equality. However, some recommendations would be strengthened by being more measurable.	5

Report Quality Criteria	UNEP Evaluation Office Comments	Final Report Rating
should be formulated to say that UNEP project staff should pass on the recommendation to the relevant third party in an effective or substantive manner. The effective transmission by UNEP of the recommendation will then be monitored for compliance. **(ii)** Where a new project phase is already under discussion or in preparation with the same third party, a recommendation can be made to address the issue in the next phase.		
Section G: Report Structure and Presentation	Assessment	
18. Is the report ***well-structured and complete***? Does it: • follow the Evaluation Office structure and formatting guidelines • include all required sections and annexes, as applicable • not exceed 50 pages in length from the Executive Summary to the end of the Conclusion Does the report ***present*** information clearly and appropriately? Is it written: • in clear and accessible language • largely free from grammar, spelling and punctuation errors • in an adequate and professional tone • with the use of visual aids, such as maps, graphs tables and photos	Coverage/omissions: The report follows the standard evaluation report structure, and covers all required sections, a case study, and Annexes. Strengths/weaknesses: The report is written in clear language, a professional tone as well as visual aids such as figures, and charts. The report exceeds 50 pages (110 pages excluding Annexes), as the reports covers 7 different components under the A3 projects.	5.5
OVERALL REPORT QUALITY RATING	Satisfactory	**5.5**

A number rating 1-6 is used for each criterion, with half-point increments allowed (e.g., 3.5 or 4.5). Highly Satisfactory = 6, Satisfactory = 5, Moderately Satisfactory = 4, Moderately Unsatisfactory = 3, Unsatisfactory = 2, Highly Unsatisfactory = 1. The overall rating is based on a simple average of the ratings for each criterion.

* This criterion was not rated to avoid giving it disproportionate weight in calculating the overall score, as this section is typically brief. The remaining criteria are comprehensive and substantial enough to provide a balanced and meaningful overall rating for the report.

Rating the Report Quality Criteria

Rating (1–6)	Description
6	Provides all content with high quality.
5	Provides all content with minor weaknesses.
4	Provides most content with minor weaknesses.
3	Provides most content with significant weaknesses.
2	Omits substantive content with significant weaknesses.
1	Omits almost all content with major weaknesses.

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
Consultant's independence:		
1. Were possible conflicts of interest of proposed Evaluation Consultant(s) appraised and addressed in the final selection?	x	
2. Was the Evaluation Consultant given direct access to identified external stakeholders?	x	
3. Did the Evaluation Consultant raise any concerns about being unable to work freely and without interference or undue pressure from project staff or the Evaluation Office?	x	
4. If Yes to Q3: Were these concerns resolved to the mutual satisfaction of both the Evaluation Consultant and the Evaluation Manager?	x	
Project's engagement and support:		
5. Did the project make available all required/requested documents?		x
6. Did the project make all financial information (and audit reports if applicable) available in a timely manner and to an acceptable level of completeness?	x	
7. Was adequate support provided by the project to the evaluator(s) in planning and conducting evaluation missions?		x
8. Were the project team, relevant UNEP senior staff, partners and interviewed stakeholders given an opportunity to provide comments on key deliverables, as appropriate (e.g. Terms of Reference, Inception Report and Draft Evaluation Report)?	x	
Quality assurance of key deliverables:		
9. Were the Terms of Reference peer-reviewed?	x	
10. Was the inception report peer-reviewed, including the Theory of Change?	x	
11. Were evaluation preliminary findings presented to the project team in a format allowing discussion, before drafting the report?	x	
12. Was the draft report peer-reviewed?	x	
Transparency and commenting:		
13. Was the inception report, including the (reconstructed) TOC, sent to the project team, relevant UNEP senior staff and partners, with a minimum of eight working days to comment?	x	
14. Was the draft evaluation report sent directly by the Evaluation Consultant to the Evaluation Office?	x	
15. Were all stakeholder comments to the draft evaluation report sent directly to the Evaluation Office	x	
16. Did the Evaluation Consultant(s) respond adequately to all factual corrections and comments?	x	
17. Did the Evaluation Office share substantive comments and Evaluation Consultant responses with those who commented, as appropriate?	x	
Financial Resources:		
18. Was the evaluation budget approved at project design available for the evaluation? If not, comment in the table below on the sufficiency of the funds made available.	x	
19. Were the agreed evaluation funds readily available to support the payment of the evaluation contract throughout the payment process? If not, comment in the table below.	x	
Timeliness:		
20. If a Terminal Evaluation: Was the evaluation initiated within six months after project operational completion and not more than three months prior? (Or, if a Mid Term Evaluation: Was the evaluation initiated within a six-month period prior to the project's mid-point?)	x	
21. Was the inception report delivered and reviewed/approved prior to commencing any travel?		x
22. Were all submission and commenting deadlines met as set by the Evaluation Manager and as far as unforeseen circumstances allowed? If not, comment in the table below on exceptional delays.	x	

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

Evaluation Process Criterion Number	Evaluation Office Comments
5	As explicitly noted in the limitations section of both the main report and the case study, the consultants did not receive some requested documents and supporting evidence related to some components despite repeated follow-up efforts, including ongoing communications, formal requests, and extensions of the response period.
7 & 21	There was no evaluation mission.