

Validated Terminal Review of the UNEP Project
**“Strengthening Plastic Pollution Management in Asia
and the Pacific (Mekong River Basin) Project ID SB-
021354**

2023 – 2025



**From
the People of Japan**



UNEP INDUSTRY AND ECONOMY DIVISION

Validation date: December 2025



This report has been prepared by an external consultant as part of a Terminal Review, which is a management-led process to assess performance at the project's operational completion. The UNEP Evaluation Office provides templates and tools to support the review process and provides a formal assessment of the quality of the Review report, which is provided within this report's annexed material. In addition, the Evaluation Office formally validates the report by ensuring that the performance judgments made are consistent with evidence presented in the Review report and in-line with the performance standards set out for independent evaluations. As such the project performance ratings presented in the Review report may be adjusted by the Evaluation Office. The findings and conclusions expressed herein do not necessarily reflect the views of Member States or the UN Environment Programme Senior Management.

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Strengthening Plastic Pollution Management in Asia and the Pacific (Mekong River Basin)

SB-021354

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The reviewer 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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Ms Worrawan Jirathanapiwat

Brief consultant biography

Worrawan Jirathanapiwat is an accomplished evaluator and researcher with more than 15 years of experience across Southeast Asia. Her expertise lies in applying OECD DAC criteria and theory-based evaluation to assess the effectiveness, impact, and sustainability of development programs. She has led evaluations for major international organizations including Save the Children, Plan International, GIZ, Terre des Hommes, and UNICEF, focusing on projects related to climate change adaptation, sustainable agriculture, environmental conservation, peacebuilding, and social inclusion. Her leadership includes directing multi-country evaluations such as the Sustainable Rice Platform Comparative Study in India and Vietnam and the CINTALAM baseline assessment in Southern Thailand, which strengthened youth-led climate action and resilience. She has also worked on conservation-focused evaluations like Our River Our Life in Southeast Asia, integrating ecological perspectives with child rights. Beyond evaluation, Worrawan has contributed to research on low-carbon cities, migration in the Mekong Basin, and environmental rights law, ensuring that community voices and participatory approaches shape policy and program recommendations. With advanced degrees in International Human Rights Law, International Peace Studies, and Social Program Evaluation, she bridges rigorous analytical methods with a deep commitment to environmental sustainability and inclusive development.

About the Review

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ABSTRACT: This report is a Terminal Review of the UNEP project: Strengthening Plastic Pollution Management in Asia and the Pacific (Mekong River Basin), implemented between 2023 and 2025. The project's overall goal was to improve national and local waste management systems for managing plastic pollution throughout Asia and the Pacific Islands, as well as further develop tools and protocols for assessment and monitoring capacities.

The review sought to assess project performance (in terms of relevance, effectiveness and efficiency) and determine the sustainability of its results. The review has two primary purposes: accountability and learning. Data collection methods included: in-depth interviews, Focus Group Discussions 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 Highly Satisfactory, the 6th point on a six-point scale, the main findings include: i) standardized monitoring tools and protocols were developed, field-validated and taken up by national partners and civil society, improving cross-country comparability; ii) capacity-building and regional knowledge exchange enabled practical application in Mekong and Pacific contexts, although uneven data availability and reliance on virtual engagement constrained consistency across countries; and iii) the project design was strongly aligned with UNEP strategies and donor priorities, with early signs of institutional uptake and a credible pathway for catalytic effects through integration into national systems.

The main recommendations to UNEP are to establish a formal mechanism for sustained financing and regional coordination to scale and maintain the standardized plastic-pollution monitoring protocols beyond implementing sites, integrating them into existing ASEAN, MRC and Pacific Islands platforms; and lead a comprehensive mapping and coordination mechanism for regional and national plastic-pollution initiatives to identify synergies, avoid duplication and optimize resource use. Implementing parties are advised to align projects with national investment pipelines and budget lines, execute data-sharing MoUs with line agencies, tailor technical guidance for Pacific contexts, and maintain scheduled monitoring and reporting.

Source(s) of Funding by Country: *Japan*

Source(s) of Funding by Institution Type:

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

Key words (*max five words*): Theory of Change analysis, regional coordination mechanisms, Decision-support tools, South-South Collaboration, Capacity Building

Primary data collection period:

Field mission dates: Virtual interviews and mini-survey conducted in July 2025

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List of acronyms and abbreviations

3Rs	Reduce, Reuse, Recycle
ADB	Asian Development Bank
AIT	Asian Institute of Technology
ASEAN	Association of Southeast Asian Nations
COs	Coordinating Officers
COBSEA	Coordinating Body on the Seas of East Asia
CPR	(UNEP) Committee of Permanent Representatives
CSOs	Civil Society Organizations
EA	Expected Accomplishment
EOU	Evaluation Office of UNEP
EPR	Extended Producer Responsibility
EQPB	Palau Environmental Quality Protection Board
ERIA	Economic Research Institute for ASEAN and East Asia
ESCAP	United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific
GE	Green Economy
GEC	Global Environment Centre Foundation (Japan)
GEF	Global Environment Facility
GPML	Global Partnership on Marine Litter
ICA	Individual Contractor Agreement
IED	(UNEP) Industry and Economy Division
IGES	Institute for Global Environmental Strategies
IPMR	Implementation Progress and Monitoring Report
ISPAE	Institute of Strategy and Policy for Agriculture and Environment (Viet Nam)
ISPONRE	Institute of Strategy and Policy on Natural Resources and Environment (Viet Nam)
IUCN	International Union for Conservation of Nature
JICA	Japan International Cooperation Agency
M&E	Monitoring and Evaluation
MoU	Memorandum of Understanding
MSP/FSP	Medium-Sized Project / Full-Sized Project (GEF/UNEP categories)
MTR	Mid Term Review
MTS	UNEP Medium-Term Strategy
NFPs	National Focal Points
NGO	Non-Governmental Organisation
ODA	Official Development Assistance
PCA	Project Cooperation Agreement
PoW	Programme of Work
PIR	Project Implementation Review/Report (annual)
PRC	Project Review Committee (internal UNEP committee that approves new projects)
ProDoc	Project Document (must be reviewed by PRC before any project can be undertaken, with the approval of the managing division director)

PSC	Programme Support Cost
RIHN	Research Institute for Humanity and Nature
ROAP	Regional Office for Asia and the Pacific
RTOC	Reconstructed Theory of Change
SC	Sustainable Consumption
SD	Sustainable Development
SDG	Sustainable Development Goals
SIWI	Stockholm International Water Institute
SPREP	Pacific Regional Environment Programme
SOP	Standard Operating Procedure
SSFA	Small-Scale Funding Agreement
SPC	Secretariat of the Pacific Community
ToC	Theory of Change
ToR	Terms of Reference
UNEA	UN Environment Assembly
UNEP	United Nations Environment Programme
WWF	World Wildlife Fund

Project identification table

Table 1: Project Identification Table

UNEP SMA ¹ ID:	Project ID SB-021354	Grant ID ² (if applicable):	S1-32CPL-000612
UNEP Management (Division/Branch/Unit):	Industry and Economy Division (IED) / Resources and Markets Branch (RMB)		
Implementing Partners:	Ministry of Environment (Cambodia), Mahidol University (Thailand) Institute of Strategy, Policy on Natural Resources and Environment, ISPONRE (Vietnam), Environmental Quality Protection Board, EQPB (Palau), Asian Institute of Technology, AIT (Thailand), Global Environment Centre Foundation, GEC (Japan), Stockholm International Water Institute, SIWI (Sweden), Research Institute for Humanity and Nature, RIHN (Japan)		
Sources of Funding:	Country ³ (ies): Japan	Institution ⁴ Name/Type: Government of Japan	
Relevant SDG(s):	SDG 12 (Targets 12.4 and 12.5), SDG 14 (Target 14.1), SDG 17 (Target 17.16)		
MTS (all that apply):		UNEP approval date:	
POW Direct Outcome(s) number/reference ⁵ (applicable for projects approved from 2022): OR POW Output(s) number/reference (applicable for projects approved pre-2022):	POW Direct Outcome: POW Direct Outcome: 3.3. Global plastic pollution is reduced, 3.6. Resource efficiency and circularity in key sectors are improved	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: 1A, 3A, 3B, 2C, 3C POW Output: 2018-2019 and 2020-2021 521.1: Promotion and Delivery of Environmentally Sound Waste Management Technologies and Methods and in Country Technical and Advisory Support, POW 2022 -2024 : ProDoc: ONE UNEP Plastic Project on Accelerating a Global Circular Plastic Economy to Reduce Plastic Pollution and Its Impacts
	MTS 2025 Outcome: 1A, 3A, 3B, 2C, 3C		POW Expected Accomplishment:

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.

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

³ Where applicable, list countries who have provided project funds and/or co-finance.

⁴ Indicate where funding institutions are any/all of the following: Foundation/NGO; Private Sector; UN Body; Multilateral Fund; Environment Fund; Other.

⁵ For these items do not include full text; only enter the number or reference.

	<i>POW Output: 2018-2019 and 2020-2021</i> <i>521.1: Promotion and Delivery of Environmentally Sound Waste Management Technologies and Methods and in Country Technical and Advisory Support,</i> <i>POW 2022 -2024 : ProDoc:</i> <i>ONE UNEP Plastic Project on Accelerating a Global Circular Plastic Economy to Reduce Plastic Pollution and Its Impacts</i>		Chemicals, Waste and Air Quality EA (b) on Waste, EA (a) on SCP: Healthy and Productive Ecosystems EA (a)
Sub-programme:	Chemicals and Pollution	Programme Coordination Project (if relevant):	Circularity in Sectors (Plastics)
Expected start date: ⁶	April 2023	Actual start date: ⁷	April 2023
Planned completion date: ^{Error! Bookmark not defined.}	31 March 2024	Actual operational completion date:	31 March 2025
Planned project budget ⁸ at approval:	Planned Core Funding (regular budget, Environment Fund, etc.):		
	Planned Extra-budgetary Funds ⁹ : Cash: USD 2,853,704 including UN levy and PSC (excluding levy: USD 2,825,449.50) In-kind:		
	Total Planned Budget:		
Secured budget ¹⁰	Secured Core Funding (regular budget, Environment Fund, etc.):		
	Secured Extra-budgetary Funds: Cash: USD 2,853,704 including UN levy and PSC (excluding levy: USD 2,825,449.50) In-kind:		
	Total secured budget as of insert date:		
Actual expenditures reported (cash only):	Actual Core Funding expenditures reported as of insert date:		
	Actual Extra-budgetary Funds expenditures reported as of insert date:		
	Total actual expenditures reported as of insert date:		
First disbursement:	USD 2,853,704 including UN levy and PSC	Planned date of financial closure:	Estimated 1 year after operational completion.
No. of formal project revisions:	One (no-cost extension)	Date of last approved project revision:	31.1.2024
No. of Steering Committee meetings:		Date of Last Steering Committee meeting:	
	UNEP requirement:	Y/N	-

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.

Mid-term Review/ Evaluation ¹¹ (<i>required or not required</i>):	Donor requirement:	Y/N	Mid-term Review/ Evaluation actual date:	
Terminal Review (<i>planned date</i>):	April 2025 – June 2025		Terminal Review actual date:	April 2025 – June 2025
Coverage - Country(ies):	Cambodia, Thailand, Vietnam, Fiji, Palau		Coverage - Region(s):	Asia-Pacific (Mekong River Basin and the Pacific Islands)
Dates of previous project phases:	CounterMEASURE I and II		Status of future project phases:	Non planned

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.

Executive Summary

The terminal review of the “Strengthening Plastic Pollution Management in Asia and the Pacific (Mekong River Basin)” project found that, with an overall performance rating of Highly Satisfactory level, it delivered substantial technical, institutional, and policy outcomes across five implementing countries. Building on earlier CounterMEASURE initiatives, the project developed and validated macro- and microplastic monitoring protocols tailored to local hydrological and laboratory contexts, enabling consistent and comparable data collection across the region. These protocols, together with targeted capacity-building for over 1,200 practitioners in national agencies, academic institutions, and regional bodies, strengthened the technical foundations for evidence-based plastic pollution management. The creation of robust baseline datasets and hotspot maps informed national planning processes and supported integration of monitoring into established systems, while structured South–South exchanges between Mekong Basin and Pacific Island countries accelerated the uptake of best practices and fostered cross-regional cooperation.

The project’s strongest performance lay in its strategic alignment with national and regional policy frameworks, the quality and adaptability of its technical tools, and the depth of institutional engagement that facilitated early adoption and sustainability. Furthermore, if community-level pilot demonstrations had been implemented, they would have provided opportunities to validate the methodology on the ground and build local ownership, while also ensuring engagement with civil society and vulnerable groups, thereby leading to more desirable outcomes. The likelihood of achieving long-term impact is high, given the institutionalisation of protocols, political commitment, and functioning regional cooperation mechanisms, though sustaining results will require ongoing financing, greater private sector involvement, and resilience to environmental or economic shocks. Lessons learned emphasise the importance of harmonised monitoring frameworks, integrating technical protocols with socially inclusive policy design, and formalising South–South cooperation platforms with clear mandates and sustained resources to ensure enduring, scalable impact.

Project background

1. The project “Strengthening Plastic Pollution Management in Asia and the Pacific” was implemented by the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) with funding support from the Government of Japan. Building on the momentum and achievements of the CounterMEASURE I since 2019, the goal of the project was to improve national and local waste management systems for managing plastic pollution throughout Asia and the Pacific Islands, as well as to further develop tools and protocols for assessment and monitoring capacities. This initiative demonstrated practical and localized interventions to address climate-induced plastic pollution in five countries: Cambodia, Thailand, Vietnam, Fiji, and Palau. Through capacity building and knowledge transfer, the project’s activities seek to support vulnerable coastal and riverine communities manage plastic pollution and strengthen their resilience. The project made substantial contributions to national policy development, capacity building for plastic monitoring, and the creation of cross-sectoral networks of stakeholders, including policymakers, academia, and the private sector. The project was implemented in 2023-2025 with USD 2,825,166.11 funding from the Government of Japan. It was implemented between 2023 and 2025. The rationale for the project was to address the critical data, policy, and capacity gaps that hinder effective plastic pollution management in the Mekong Basin and Pacific Island countries, ensuring that interventions are informed by robust, comparable evidence and embedded in national strategies. Its objective was to develop and institutionalize standardized monitoring protocols, strengthen national and regional technical capacities, and foster collaborative policy and governance frameworks that

enable the reduction of land-based plastic leakage into riverine and coastal environments.

This review

2. The review sought to assess project performance and determine the sustainability of its results. It assesses performance against nine review criteria¹² and assigns a score from a six-point scale¹³. The review has two primary purposes: accountability and learning. Data collection methods included: a desk review; web-based mini surveys; semi-structured interviews with UNEP IED/ROAP, national focal points and partners in Cambodia, Thailand, Viet Nam, and Palau to capture feedback across stakeholder groups and targeted e-mail follow-ups to close the data gap. Data analysis was based on applying triangulated data to assess performance against a reconstructed Theory of Change and its causal pathways.

Key findings and performance ratings

3. The project has demonstrated strong performance in the areas of strategic relevance, effectiveness, financial management, and efficiency: i) Standardized monitoring tools and protocols were developed, field-validated, and taken up by national partners and civil society, improving cross-country comparability, ii) Capacity-building and regional knowledge exchange enabled practical application in Mekong and Pacific contexts, although uneven data availability and reliance on virtual engagement constrained consistency across countries, and iii) The project design was strongly aligned with UNEP strategies and donor priorities, with early signs of institutional uptake and a credible pathway for catalytic effects through integration into national systems.
4. Areas that would benefit/would have benefited from further attention are quality of project design, nature of external context, monitoring and reporting, sustainability, and factors affecting performance.

Table 2: Summary of project ratings

(The Evaluation Office of UNEP notes that it applies weightings in the calculation of the Overall Project Performance Rating. In this case, the score is 5.26, which is at the Highly Satisfactory level)

Criterion	Rating
Strategic Relevance	6
Quality of Project Design	5
Nature of External Context	5
Effectiveness	6
Financial Management	6
Efficiency	6
Monitoring and Reporting	5
Sustainability	5
Factors Affecting Performance	5
Overall Project Performance Rating	49

¹² (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.

¹³ 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.

Conclusions summary

5. Overall, the project performed at the Highly Satisfactory level. The main achievements of the project were: (i) development and validation of standardized macro- and microplastic monitoring protocols adapted to local hydrology and laboratory capacities; (ii) substantial strengthening of technical capacity in national agencies, academic institutions, and regional bodies; (iii) creation of robust baseline datasets and hotspot maps that informed policy and planning; and (iv) facilitation of structured South–South exchanges between Mekong Basin and Pacific Island implementing countries.
6. The strongest performing aspects were the project’s strategic alignment with national and regional policy frameworks, the quality and adaptability of technical tools, and the depth of institutional engagement that ensured early adoption and integration of outputs into national systems. Comparative weaknesses were apparent in the absence of community-level pilot demonstrations, which limited opportunities to validate methodologies on the ground and foster local ownership, and delays in early stakeholder mapping, which constrained targeted engagement of civil society and marginalised groups in certain countries.

Lessons Learned

7. Lesson 1: It was imperative to establish an early consensus on a compact, regionally harmonised monitoring protocol in order to produce comparable evidence and ensure that tools were truly beneficial.
8. Lesson 2: The management of plastic pollution only gained momentum when policy instruments, financing mechanisms, and institutional responsibilities were aligned end-to-end, with the explicit recognition of the contributions of the informal and community sectors.
9. Lesson 3: Institutionalising South–South exchange as an ongoing program, as opposed to conducting one-time seminars, resulted in substantial adoption.

Recommendations

10. Recommendation 1: Develop and implement a gender-responsive and human rights–inclusive monitoring framework for plastic pollution management projects, ensuring the systematic collection of sex-disaggregated and vulnerability data at both output and outcome levels.
11. Recommendation 2: Establish a formal mechanism for sustained financing and regional coordination to scale and maintain the standardised plastic pollution monitoring protocols beyond implementing sites, integrating them into existing ASEAN, MRC, and Pacific Islands platforms.
12. Recommendation 3: Develop a comprehensive mapping and coordination mechanism for regional and national plastic pollution initiatives to identify synergies, avoid duplication, and optimise resource use.

Validation

The report has been subject to an independent validation exercise performed by UNEP’s Evaluation Office. The performance ratings for the UNEP project, ‘Strengthening Plastic Pollution Management in Asia and the Pacific (Mekong River Basin)’ (SB-021354), set out in the Conclusions and Recommendations section, have been adjusted slightly as a result. The overall project performance benefited from previous work in the two phases of Counter MEASURE and is validated at the **‘Highly Satisfactory’** level. Moreover, the Evaluation Office has found the overall quality of the report to be ‘Moderately Satisfactory’ (see Annex VII).

1 THE PROJECT

1.1 Context

1.1.1 Intervention context

13. Plastic pollution remains one of the most pressing environmental challenges. Over 430 million tonnes of plastic are produced annually, and approximately 19-23 million metric tonnes of plastic waste leaks into aquatic ecosystems, polluting lakes, rivers, and seas. In Asia, plastic pollution in rivers has been highlighted in studies to account for an estimated 86% of the global input of plastics into oceans. Two major transboundary river basins in Asia, the Ganges, and the Mekong are among the 10 most plastic-polluted rivers in the world. While the Asian region is considered a significant source of plastic pollution, the Pacific region, despite contributing less than 1.3 percent of global mismanaged plastics, is disproportionately affected by the plastic pollution catastrophe due to geographic isolation, limited waste management infrastructure, and reliance on tourism.
14. At the root of this environmental crisis lies a constellation of systemic gaps. First, monitoring and assessment efforts remain fragmented: no harmonized tools or protocols exist for quantifying riverine plastic leakage, resulting in inconsistent data that cannot be compared across sites. Second, national and local institutions often lack the technical expertise, infrastructure and institutional frameworks needed for systematic plastic-pollution management. Third, transboundary coordination is undermined by divergent methodologies, weak data-sharing mechanisms and insufficient stakeholder engagement, limiting the ability to scale successful interventions regionally.
15. Unchecked plastic pollution exacts severe environmental, health and economic costs. Degradation of freshwater and coastal habitats diminishes ecosystem resilience and biodiversity; microplastics infiltrate drinking-water supplies and food chains, posing risks to human health; and the fisheries, aquaculture and tourism sectors suffer mounting losses. To address this challenge, the project titled “Strengthening Plastic Pollution Management in Asia and the Pacific” was implemented by UNEP with funding from the Government of Japan from April 2023 to March 2025, expanding their target area to the Pacific region. Building on the achievements of CounterMEASURE I since 2019 and II, this project aimed to further enhance tools and protocols for assessment and monitoring capabilities and to strengthen national and local management systems for plastic pollution management in Asia and the Pacific Islands.¹⁴
16. To address this challenge, the project delivers one primary outcome along with three interconnected outputs. The main outcome is that implementing countries develop national draft legislation and implement actions that are shaped by cutting-edge data, proven best practices, and effective tools and protocols to curb plastic pollution in rivers. Output 1 develops and validates standardized regional methodologies and protocols for assessing riverine plastic fluxes; Output 2 strengthens the technical capacity of regional bodies, national agencies and local stakeholders through workshops and training; and Output 3 fosters south south cooperation and establishes an online knowledge sharing platform to harmonize practices and inform policy. By aligning with UNEP’s Medium-Term Strategy Direct Outcomes 3.3 (reducing global plastic pollution) and 3.6 (enhancing resource efficiency and circularity) and contributing to SDG 14.1, SDG 12.4

¹⁴ <https://globalplasticshub.org/fr/project/6>

and 12.5 and SDG 17.16, the project lays the groundwork for scalable, evidence-based interventions that will deliver lasting environmental and socio-economic benefits across the Lower Mekong Basin and the Pacific Islands.

17. The review's primary purpose is to provide rigorous evidence of the project's outputs and outcomes to satisfy accountability requirements, while simultaneously promoting operational improvement and knowledge sharing among the donor Government of Japan and all participating countries and organizations. In keeping with its terminal nature, the review pays special attention to unpacking the causal pathways in the project's Theory of Change and Results Framework, probing not only whether planned results were achieved, but also why certain outcomes materialized or fell short of expectations.
18. Key audiences for the findings include the Government of Japan, UNEP Headquarters and the Regional Office for Asia and the Pacific, project partners such as ISPONRE Vietnam, Ministry of Environment Cambodia, Mahidol University Thailand and EQPB Palau, as well as national counterparts and civil-society and private-sector stakeholders in Cambodia, Thailand, Vietnam, Fiji and Palau. These are the decision-makers and practitioners whose strategies and investments will be directly informed by the review's evidence and lessons.
19. To ensure a comprehensive performance assessment, the review applies UNEP's standard Terminal Review criteria: strategic relevance, effectiveness, efficiency, financial management, monitoring and reporting, sustainability, and enabling factors such as stakeholder participation and safeguards. Responses to these criteria-based questions will be synthesized into a performance assessment spanning the full 2023–2025 implementation period. Ratings will be assigned in accordance with the UNEP Terminal Review Rating Matrix and accompanying guidelines, thereby ensuring consistency, transparency and comparability across criteria.
20. Complementing the criteria-based inquiry is a set of strategic review questions that probe higher-level issues: How did the project leverage synergies with UNEP's Chemicals and Waste sub-programme and related initiatives? What unique technical or institutional value did UNEP add beyond past CounterMEASURE projects? To what extent has the project contributed to UNEP's Medium-Term Strategy outcomes on reducing plastic pollution and promoting resource circularity? How effective were governance bodies and reporting mechanisms in guiding adaptive management? These strategic lines of inquiry will steer data gathering and analysis, yielding insights into the project's broader organizational and contextual impacts.

1.1.2 Institutional context

21. "Strengthening Plastic Pollution Management in Asia and the Pacific" project was part of the UNEP Medium Term Strategy (MTS) of the period 2023 - 2025. In this respect, it contributed to the impact level outcomes of the Programmes of Work of both these strategies, reducing negative impacts from chemical, waste and air pollution on environmental and human health, and achieving progress towards a pollution-free planet. For the period 2023- March 2025, the project contributed to waste related policies and strategies, means of assessment of trends in waste and waste management, related scientific and technical knowledge, and capacity development related to both waste management and waste prevention, identified in the TOC of the PoW. In the period April 2023- March 2025, the project could relate to the clear inclusion of the reduction of global plastic pollution and marine litter as well as to the shifts in markets, supply chains, trade and consumer behaviors towards reduced pollution, as well as "3Rs" waste management systems mainstreamed, and sound science and data generated and shared and harmful chemical reduced.

1.2 Results Framework

22. The project was designed to equip five implementing countries with data, tools, and institutional capacity needed to drastically reduce riverine plastic leakage. The project's single overarching objective was two-fold. First, to enhance tools and protocols for assessment and monitoring capabilities; and second, to strengthen national and local waste management systems for plastic pollution management in Asia and the Pacific Islands. This design establishes a single project-level outcome: Policies and actions in the implementing countries are informed by the latest data, best practices, tools and protocols to reduce the amount of plastic pollution. The mutually reinforcing outputs generate progress towards that objective.
23. The assessment and monitoring of Output 1 are based on protocols and AI-assisted platforms that were originally developed under CounterMEASURE I and II. It addressed critical information shortages by mapping pollution hotspots and quantifying leakage pathways by conducting targeted field surveys and stakeholder consultations throughout the Pacific and Mekong River basins. These reviews formed the evidence framework for all downstream activities by producing real-time datasets and spatial analyses.
24. Lessons learnt were translated into practice in Output 2, Capacity Strengthening. Participants from national agencies to community organisations participated in a series of regional and in-country seminars, hands-on trainings, and proposal writing exercises. The initiative guaranteed that monitoring tools and protocols would be implemented as standard operating procedures rather than individual pilots by incorporating these methods into institutional routines.
25. Output 3, South-South Cooperation and Cross-Regional Learning enhanced the impact by establishing platforms for peer exchange. Practitioners from a variety of backgrounds were able to exchange insights and modify established methodologies through varieties of activities such as collaborative webinars, surveys, national workshops, bankable projects, research reports, and capacity-building training programmes. This network of horizontal linkages facilitated the adoption of innovations and promoted a regional community of practice that is dedicated to ongoing improvement.
26. The implementation was in accordance with the UNEP Mid-Term Strategy, and the management structure delivered reports to the donor as needed, the Government of Japan. This was the case as the outputs were effectively integrated. Regional exchanges reinforced institutional commitments, trained practitioners became champions in their home countries, and hotspot analyses influenced the content of the workshop.

Table 3: Summary of project's latest approved results framework (source: Strengthening Plastic Pollution Management in Asia and the Pacific Final Report)

	Results Statement
Project objective	The project aimed to enhance tools and protocols for assessment and monitoring capabilities and to strengthen national and local waste management systems for plastic pollution management in Asia and the Pacific Islands.
Impact	By increasing awareness, encouraging regional cooperation, and involving communities through hands-on activities like cleanups and training, the project strengthened efforts to tackle pollution in Asia and the Pacific. It also gave participants the tools they needed to influence national policy while enacting change locally.
Project outcome	Policies and actions in the pilot countries are informed by the latest data, best practices, tools and protocols to reduce the amount of plastic pollution in rivers.
Outputs	- Output 1: Assessments and monitoring of plastic pollution, including hotspots and leakages in rivers in Asia implemented and enhanced

	Results Statement
	- Output 2: The capacity of regional, national, and local stakeholders to enhance the systematic approach to plastic pollution management is strengthened - Output 3: South-south cooperation and cross-region learning to leapfrog the plastic pollution management capacity across the countries and regions enhanced

1.3 Project Implementation Structure and Partners

27. UNEP's Industry and Economy Division serves as the central coordinating and oversight body, ensuring all partner activities align with the project's results framework and donor requirements. At the national level, four implementing partners: the Ministry of Environment (Cambodia), Mahidol University (Thailand), Institute of Strategy, Policy on Natural Resources and Environment (ISPONRE) (Vietnam) and Environmental Quality Protection Board (EQPB) (Palau), lead field assessments of riverine plastic hotspots, convene local stakeholders and integrate monitoring data into policy advice and community-driven initiatives. At the regional level, Asian Institute of Technology (AIT) (Thailand) and Global Environment Centre Foundation (GEC) (Japan) draw on those country-specific findings to design and deliver multi-country workshops, technical webinars and e-learning modules, thereby fostering exchange of best practices across the Mekong and Pacific contexts. Meanwhile, the thematic partners including Stockholm International Water Institute (SIWI) (Sweden) and Research Institute for Humanity and Nature (RIHN) (Japan) provide the methodological backbone, adapting source-to-sea approaches and interdisciplinary research outputs to ensure robust, replicable protocols. Finally, the Ministry of Environment and Climate Change (Fiji), as co-organizer, anchors the Pacific Island workshop by managing local logistics and ensuring that regional activities respond to island-specific challenges. This tiered structure, local implementation feeding into regional facilitation, underpinned by thematic expertise, creates a coherent implementation pipeline that moves raw field data through capacity-building into sustained, evidence-based policymaking and action.

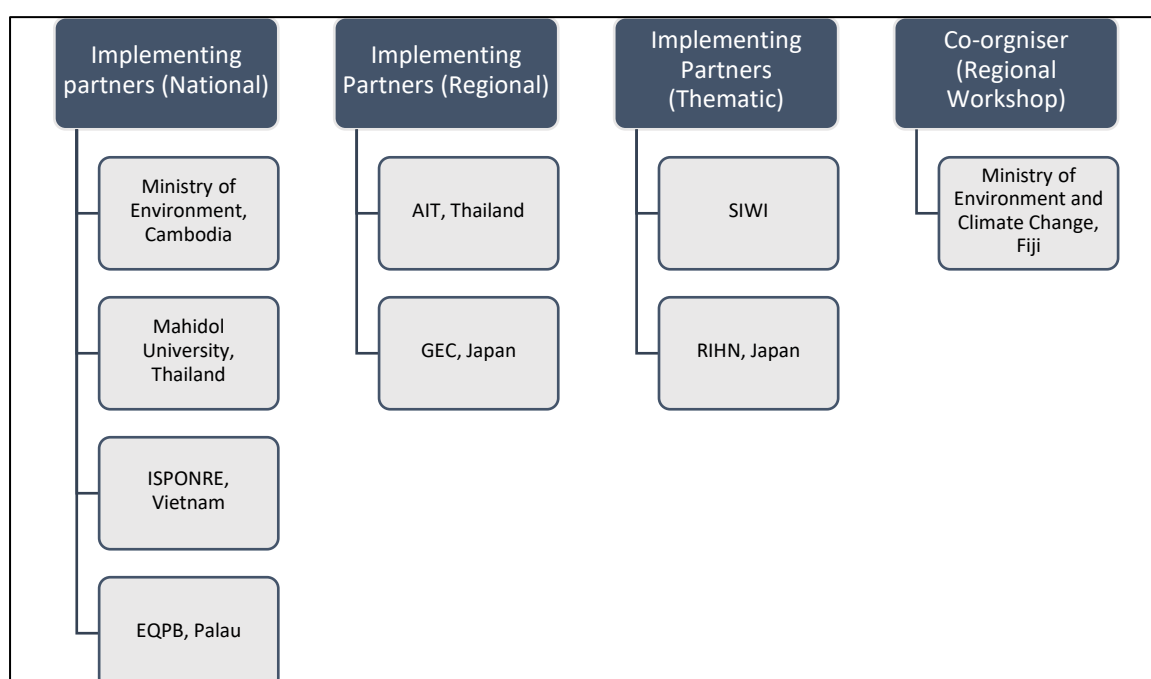
28. All partners ensured accountability and adaptive implementation as shown in Table 4. Figure 1 illustrates the organisational structure of the project, highlighting the roles and relationships among key stakeholders, including international agencies, regional partners, government bodies, private-sector participants, and community groups. The diagram visually maps out the flow of collaboration and influence that underpinned the project's successful implementation.

Table 4 Implementing Partner Role and Performance

Level	Implementing Partner	Role	Performance
National	Ministry of Environment, Cambodia	Led national assessments; hosted workshops	High stakeholder engagement; completed hotspot mapping
	Mahidol University, Thailand	Developed training modules; conducted technical trainings	Trained 350+ participants; integrated tools into curricula
	Institute of Strategy, Policy on Natural Resources and Environment (ISPONRE), Vietnam	Provided policy advice; facilitated data integration	Protocol adopted by national agencies
	Environmental Quality Protection Board (EQPB), Palau	Coordinated local field surveys; community outreach	Established community-led monitoring network
Regional	Asian Institute of Technology (AIT), Thailand	Organized regional workshops; technical backstopping	Delivered 4 webinars; developed e-learning content

Level	Implementing Partner	Role	Performance
	Global Environment Centre Foundation (GEC), Japan	Case study development; low-carbon tech guidance	Produced 3 comparative case studies
Thematic	Stockholm International Water Institute (SIWI), Sweden	Source-to-sea methodology expertise; water diplomacy	Contributed framework adopted by 2 pilot sites
	Research Institute for Humanity and Nature (RIHN), Japan	Interdisciplinary research support; tool adaptation	Co-developed guidelines for riverine plastics
Co-organiser	Ministry of Environment and Climate Change, Fiji	Hosted Pacific workshop; local logistics	Successful regional workshop with 80% satisfaction

Figure 1: Organigram of the project with key project stakeholders



1.4 Stakeholders

29. In preparing the Terminal Review for the Promotion of Strengthening Plastic Pollution Management in Asia and the Pacific (Mekong River Basin) , stakeholders fall naturally into several interlocking categories defined by their interests, levels of influence, and the roles they played both in implementation and in the review itself.
30. At the heart of project oversight sit UNEP's own teams. From the Industry and Economy Division, the Head of Consumption and Production and the Coordinator of the UNEP Plastics Initiative provided strategic leadership under UNEP's new Delivery Model Policy. Day-to-day management was handled by the Programme Management Officer, who also served as Review Manager, and the Financial and Administrative Officer, whose retrospective interviews shed light on budgeting and procedural lessons. Together, these UNEP staff and their contracted consultants ensured continuity between project delivery and the insights captured in the Terminal Review.
31. Working alongside UNEP, regional bodies such as the Pacific Regional Environment Programme (SPREP) and the Economic Research Institute for ASEAN and East Asia

(ERIA) acted as both technical partners and evaluators. SPREP supported to facilitate sessions of the workshop in Fiji. ERIA has provided knowledge support by contributing its research outcomes on plastic pollution management to the implementation of the project

32. National government agencies formed the next tier of engagement. National environment ministries in Cambodia, Palau, Thailand and Vietnam then translated those lessons into policy advice and replication strategies, bringing project outputs into domestic pollution-control frameworks.
33. International cooperation partners and the private sector drove market-based solutions. JICA's headquarters and country offices, nineteen Japanese corporations from the Japan Business Federation (Keidanren) to Ricoh and Suntory across industries actively participated in capacity-building activities and shared their knowledge and experience on managing plastics from upstream to downstream with policymakers in the project implementation countries.
34. Academic and research institutions supplied the scientific foundation. Institutions such as AIT, IGES, Kyoto and Mahidol Universities developed, tested and refined standardized monitoring protocols, ensuring data quality and methodological rigor. Their expert feedback pinpointed gaps in study design and suggested enhancements for future research.
35. Finally, civil society groups and a wide range of community-level networks and associations offered community-based perspectives. They shared perspectives from the community and provided recommendations.
36. Key change agents throughout this process were UNEP's Industry and Economy Division leadership, the UNEP Regional Director for Asia-Pacific, the Government of Japan as principal donor, and the private-sector champions who co-created and piloted circular-economy approaches. Their combined influence and commitment were pivotal both to achieving project results and to capturing the lessons that will shape future regional plastic-pollution interventions.
37. Survey feedback indicates workshops and forums improved public awareness and equipped local officers to apply monitoring protocols, with several respondents noting the ability to use the tools in their own areas. However, civil-society stakeholders repeatedly asked for more content on health effects of plastic pollution and practical, low-cost toolkits (e.g., sieves/filtration kits, simple identification guides) and training formats that can scale via citizen science. Networking outcomes ranged from no change to new ties with local CSOs, recyclers, and Thailand and Japanese university collaboration.
38. Three industry respondents are: Seadon Consulting, IRG Systems South Asia, and RiverRecycle, engaged primarily as expert presenters and practitioners. They valued webinars and networking for knowledge and opportunities, used email, conferences and webinars for outreach, and recommended more information dissemination plus concrete collaboration opportunities with UNEP
39. National Focal Points described capacity improvements through technical knowledge, coordination and tools; many engaged in regional events and some reported early policy uptake (e.g., monitoring frameworks informing solid-waste plans and by-laws). Benefits included learning and networking, while limitations noted small scale/irregularity and the need to ensure the right participants can attend.

1.5 Changes in Design during Implementation

40. As implementation progressed, the geographic scope expanded to include Pacific Island pilot countries: UNEP, in collaboration with Fiji's Ministry of Environment and Climate Change, convened a National Capacity Building workshop in Nadi from 4–6 February 2025 to address island-specific challenges in plastic pollution monitoring and management. The project culminated in a Closing Conference in Bangkok on 5–6 March 2025, where stakeholders consolidated lessons learned, validated the revised outputs, and charted the path for follow-on initiatives beyond the March 2025 end date.
41. The Japanese government committed USD 2,853,704 (including PSC and UN levy) to the UNEP project "Strengthening Plastic Pollution Management in Asia and the Pacific" from April 2023 to March 31, 2025, following its approval in early 2023. The overall envelope was not altered by any costed budget revision; on 31 January 2024, a single donor-approved no-cost extension was granted. Implementation was conducted in five countries: Cambodia, Thailand, Viet Nam, Fiji, and Palau, and culminated in a regional closing conference in Bangkok (5–6 March 2025), where partners consolidated lessons and affirmed future collaboration.

1.6 Project Financing

42. This MSP/FSP project was financed through a single Government of Japan grant totalling USD 2,853,704 (including PSC and UN levy), which fully covered all project management and implementation costs, including personnel (USD 682,540), project activities (USD 1,621,645), programme support cost (USD 370,982), and the UN levy (USD 28,537). Co-financing was not anticipated from UNEP's own Environment Fund or Regular Budget (cash: USD 0; in-kind: USD 0)

Table 5: Project funding sources

Funding source	Planned funding	% of planned funding	Secured funding ¹⁵	% of secured funding
<i>All figures as USD</i>				
Cash				
Funds from the Environment Fund	0	0	0	0
Funds from the Regular Budget	0	0	0	0
Extra-budgetary funding (listed per donor):	2,853,704	100	2,853,704	100
<i>Sub-total: Cash contributions</i>	<i>2,853,704</i>	<i>100</i>	<i>2,853,704</i>	<i>100</i>
In-kind				
Environment Fund staff-post costs	0	0	0	0
Regular Budget staff-post costs	0	0	0	0
Extra-budgetary funding for staff-posts (listed per donor)	0	0	0	0
<i>Sub-total: In-kind contributions</i>	<i>0</i>	<i>0</i>	<i>0</i>	<i>0</i>
Co-financing*				
Co-financing cash contribution	0	0	0	0
Co-financing in-kind contribution	0	0	0	0
<i>Sub-total: Co-financing contributions</i>	<i>0</i>	<i>0</i>	<i>0</i>	<i>0</i>
Total	2,853,704	100	2,853,704	100

*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.

¹⁵ Secured funding refers to received funds and does not include funding commitments not yet realised.

2 REVIEW METHODS

2.1 UNEP's Review Approach

43. In line with UNEP Evaluation Policy and the UNEP Programme and Project Management Manual, the review was undertaken at operational completion of the project to assess performance (in terms of relevance, effectiveness and efficiency), and determine outcomes and impacts (actual and potential) stemming from the project, including their sustainability. The review has two primary purposes: (i) to provide evidence of results to meet accountability requirements, and (ii) to promote operational improvement, learning and knowledge sharing through results and lessons learned.
44. The primary target audiences for the review findings are UNEP, the government of Japan as the donor, implementing and implementing partners, national focal points, as well as civil society and specialist groups. In line with the UNEP Evaluation Policy and the UNEP Programme Manual, the review has been carried out using a set of 9 commonly applied review 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 I: Review Framework for more details on each review criterion).
45. All review criteria, except for Sustainability and Likelihood of Impact, are 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 from Highly Likely (HL); Likely (L); Moderately Likely (ML); Moderately Unlikely (ML); Unlikely (U); Highly Unlikely (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.
46. The UNEP Evaluation Office has developed detailed descriptions of the main elements required to be demonstrated at each level (i.e. Highly Satisfactory to Highly Unsatisfactory) for each review criterion. The reviewer has considered all the evidence gathered during the review in relation to this matrix to generate review criteria performance ratings. In addition to the review criteria outlined above, the review addresses a number of strategic questions that were formulated in the Terms of Reference. These questions were posed by the UNEP Evaluation Office in conjunction with members of the Project Team.
47. This review adopted a participatory approach, consulting with project team members, partners and beneficiaries at several stages throughout the process. Central to the review was the analysis (and reconstruction) of the project's Theory of Change. Consultations were held during the review inception phase to arrive at a nuanced understanding of how the project intended to drive change and what contributing conditions ('assumptions' and 'drivers') would need to be in place to support such change. The (reconstructed) Theory of Change, supported by a graphic representation and narrative discussion of the causal pathways, was discussed further with respondents during the data collection phase and refined as appropriate. The final iteration of the Theory of Change is presented in this final review report and has been used throughout the review process.

2.2 Data Collection

2.2.1 Primary data sources

48. The Terminal Review will draw on a fully mixed-methods, theory-based approach to ensure both breadth and depth of insight into the project's performance. Primary data collection combines qualitative and quantitative techniques, desk reviews, semi-structured interviews, a targeted mini-survey and follow-up email exchanges, to triangulate evidence against the Results Framework and Theory of Change. This blend was chosen to compensate for gaps in baseline data and to capture both measurable trends (through survey metrics and monitoring records) and richer stakeholder perspectives (through interviews and appreciative inquiry).
49. Semi-structured interviews formed the qualitative backbone of our inquiry. Conducted virtually and in person (30–60 minutes each), they engaged a purposive sample of some 40–50 key informants: UNEP IED/ROAP project managers and Fund Management Officers namely, national focal points in Cambodia, Thailand, Vietnam and Palau, technical leads at ISPONRE, Mahidol University and EQPB Palau, as well as community leaders and private-sector partners. Respondents were selected for their direct involvement in project design, implementation or uptake of outputs, with interview guides tailored by stakeholder group and informed by desk-review findings to probe relevance, effectiveness, partnerships and cross-cutting issues.
50. To trace causal pathways and contextualise results, two in-depth case studies were conducted: one in a Mekong-Basin pilot (e.g., Cambodia) and one in a Pacific pilot in Palau. In each, we combined document analysis, stakeholder interviews and, where feasible, or geo-referenced photographs to explore how specific outputs (such as protocol testing and training) translated into observed changes at community and institutional levels. Case-study sites were chosen based on diversity of governance contexts, data availability and their representativeness of broader project conditions.
51. A concise, web-based mini-survey, ten closed-ended questions plus one optional open-ended item, was distributed to 255 participants of capacity-building workshops and webinars, national trainings and online platform users to capture rapid, quantitative feedback on protocol adoption, workshop effectiveness, and platform usability. The survey was hosted on an accessible platform, promoted via UNEP and partner channels, and deliberately limited in length to maximise response rates and enable straightforward cross-tabulation against project targets.
52. Targeted email communications served to fill data gaps and validated preliminary findings. Using tailored templates, we approached specific individuals or institutions for clarifications on ambiguous records, supplementary statistics or to confirm emerging insights. Responses were logged, cross-checked against project archives (progress and financial reports, meeting minutes, monitoring datasets) and incorporated into our analytical streams sparingly to avoid stakeholder fatigue.
53. Given the nature and scope of the project, no in country field visits were undertaken for the Terminal Review. The project's primary focus is on enhancing data access, conducting assessments, and supporting capacity building on plastic pollution management and Intergovernmental Negotiating Committee on Plastic Pollution(INC) related topics across the Mekong and Pacific regions. In particular, INC related capacity building training targeted government officials in the Asia Pacific region, with participation from 27 countries. In lieu of field visits, an adequate assessment was achieved through semi structured interviews with more than 40 government officials and

implementing partners in the 5 implementing countries, complemented by a mini survey involving over 250 project beneficiaries.

54. Throughout all phases, participatory and appreciative-inquiry principles underpinned stakeholder engagement: from inception and data gathering, through drafting recommendations, to validation workshops. This broad consultative effort, with UNEP IED/ROAP, national agencies, ISPONRE, Mahidol University, EQPB Palau, civil-society, private-sector and community representatives, ensured that qualitative narratives and quantitative metrics were cross-validated, strengthening the credibility of the analysis and building collective ownership of the review's conclusions.

Table 6: Review respondents

Stakeholders - Individuals			A. Total number involved	B. Number contacted	Sample size (% B/A) ¹⁶	C. Total number responded Total	Response rate (% C/B) ¹⁷
Project Team	Project Team (with management responsibilities e.g. Project Management Unit)	Implementing agency	7	7	100	7	100
		Executing agency(ies)	6	6	100	6	100
Beneficiaries	Direct Beneficiaries: (e.g. duty bearers, gatekeepers, training participants, etc.) Indirect Beneficiaries: (e.g. household members, civil society representatives, group members, etc.)		255	150	255 (EOU correction: 59%)	100	7.45(EOU correction: 67%)
Stakeholders - Entities			A. Total number involved	B. Number contacted	Sample size (% B/A) ¹⁸	C. Total number responded	Response rate (% C/B) ¹⁹
Partners	Project implementing/ implementing partners (receiving project funds)		3	3	100	3	100
	Project collaborating/ contributing partners ²⁰ (not receiving project fund)		6	6	100	6	100
Field Visits		Region / country / locality ²¹	A. Total number sites	B. Number sites visited	Sample Size (%B/A) ²²		
		Africa	-	-	-		
		Asia and the Pacific	-	-	-		
		Europe	-	-	-		
		Latin America and the Caribbean	-	-	-		
		North America	-	-	-		
		West Asia	-	-	-		

¹⁶ Percentage of people involved in the project who were contacted.

¹⁷ Percentage of people contacted who responded.

¹⁸ Percentage of entities involved in the project who were contacted.

¹⁹ Percentage of entities contacted who responded.

²⁰ Contributing partners may be providing resources as either cash or in-kind inputs (e.g. staff time, office space etc.).

²¹ In case of a global project, the unit of analysis is 'region'. In case of a regional or multi-country project, the unit of analysis is 'country'. In case of a single country project, the unit of analysis is 'locality', which could refer to a city, town, village, etc.

²² Percentage of total number project sites in each region, country or locality that were visited.

2.2.2 Strategies for inclusivity

55. To ensure that all key beneficiaries were heard, the review employed a human right–based approach to stakeholder engagement. We used purposive sampling to reach a cross-section of stakeholders including national focal points, implementing partners, business and private sectors, and civil society and specialists across the participating countries. The inclusion of civil society and private sector actors in addition to the primary implementers reveals divergent perspectives. In summary, we employed a power-interest grid to contextualise the contributions and gaps of stakeholders.

2.2.3 Secondary data sources

56. Furthermore, the review built on an extensive desk review of project documentation and institutional monitoring systems. Core materials included the original Project Document (July 2018) and its 2023–2024 extension proposal, the Inception Report for the review (May 2025), quarterly progress and financial reports submitted to the Government of Japan, and the detailed Monitoring and Evaluation plan with its risk registers and performance-indicator tracking tool. We also extracted data from UNEP’s Programme Information Management System (PIMS), the bi-annual IPMR/PIR submissions, CPR inputs, steering-committee minutes and donor correspondence to triangulate reported achievements against financial disbursements and operational milestones.

2.3 Data Analysis

57. Data analysis was structured around the Review Criteria and strategic review questions. Qualitative content analysis coded interview and focus-group transcripts, mission reports and key documents against themes from the Theory of Change (e.g., “protocol uptake,” “capacity gains,” “policy influence”), while descriptive quantitative analysis summarized mini-survey results and monitoring metrics (e.g., disaggregated trainee figures, protocol tests, platform usage) using basic statistics and cross-tabulations. We further applied stakeholder-influence mapping via a power–interest grid, overlaid findings on the Results Framework to test causal pathways and conducted a SWOT analysis to identify internal strengths and external opportunities or threats, all combining to deliver a robust, multi-angled assessment of project performance.

2.4 Limitations and Mitigation Strategies

58. The review faced several limitations that influenced the scope and depth of the findings. The main evidence sources were tailored mini-surveys and interviews with national focal points, supplemented by available project documentation. While this provided valuable country-level perspectives from key institutional stakeholders, it meant that feedback from other groups, such as direct community beneficiaries, civil society actors, and private sector partners, was limited or absent. This narrowed the range of viewpoints and reduced the ability to cross-validate findings across multiple stakeholder categories. The decision to focus interviews on national focal points was due to time and resource constraints, as well as the need to prioritize those with direct oversight of country-level implementation.
59. To help address this, the mini surveys were designed with open-ended response spaces, enabling national focal points to describe the specific situations in their countries, highlight relevant experiences, and identify gaps or challenges in project delivery. This

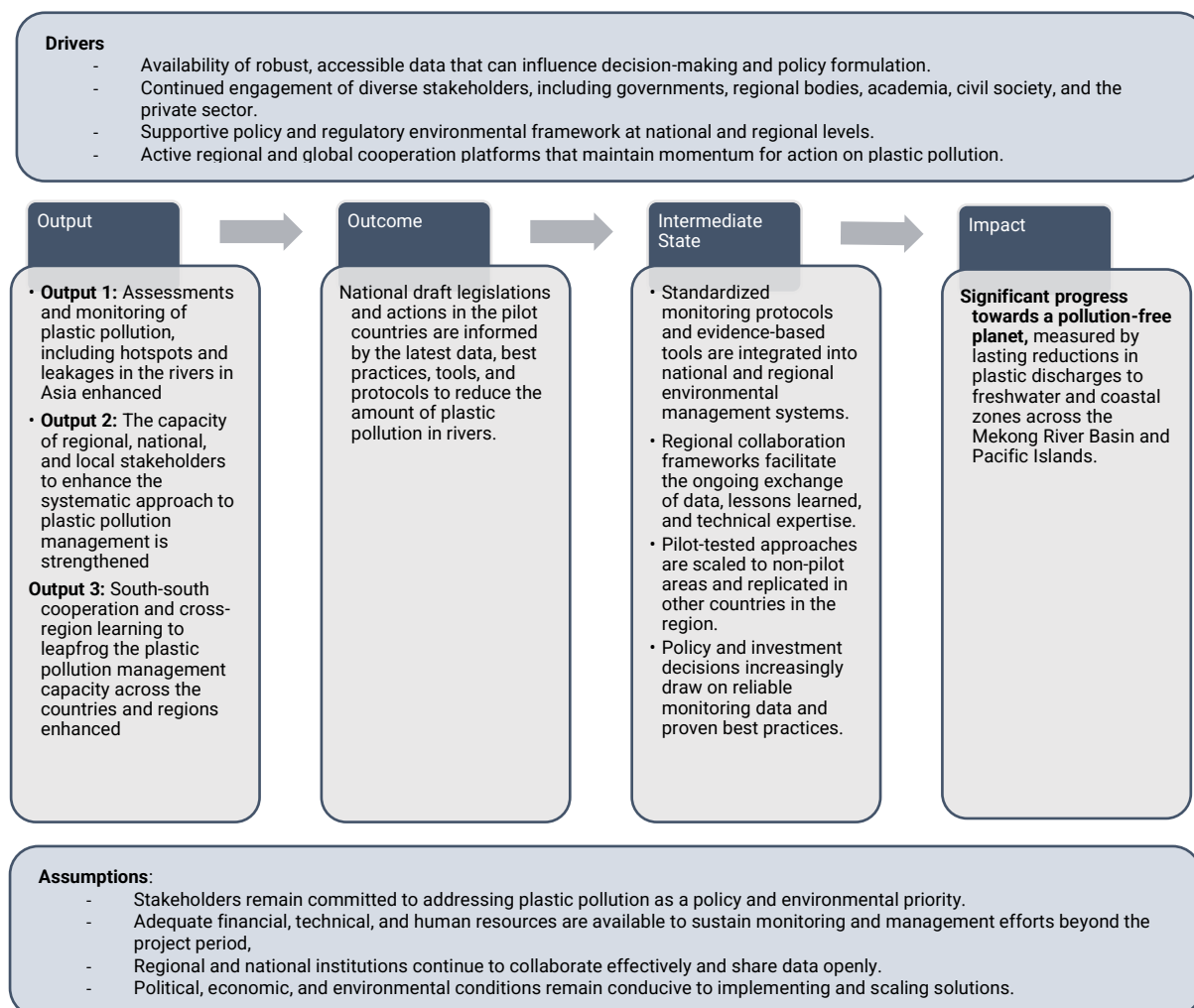
approach helped capture richer qualitative information, even though the sample was small and skewed toward government perspectives.

60. Another limitation arose from incomplete or inconsistent project documentation. While core reports and workshop records were accessible, some monitoring data and activity reports were missing or varied in detail between partners. To mitigate this, available documents were cross-checked against interview and survey responses, and information was triangulated using workshop proceedings, participant lists, and presentations.
61. The reliance on self-reported information created a potential risk of bias, particularly in the description of project achievements. To reduce this risk, survey and interview questions were framed to encourage factual descriptions and concrete examples rather than purely positive statements or general ratings.
62. Language and terminology were also a consideration, particularly in discussing technical aspects of plastic pollution monitoring. Survey questions were kept concise and clear, and technical terms were simplified to facilitate consistent understanding among respondents.
63. While the evidence base was limited in scope, the combination of structured mini-surveys, targeted interviews, and document review provided a credible basis for the review findings and ensured they remain relevant for future planning and decision-making.
64. To partly offset the focus on government perspectives, we triangulated with four targeted mini-surveys including national focal points, implementing partners, civil society, and business or industry, which surfaced specific needs, e.g. health-effects content and low-cost toolkits for CSOs, and collaboration gaps with industry.

2.5 Ethical Considerations

65. Throughout the review process, ethical standards and human rights principles were upheld in line with UNEP's guidelines and the UN "Standards of Conduct." Data collection, which primarily consisted of mini surveys with stakeholders and interviews with national focal points, was conducted with prior informed consent from all participants. Respondents were informed of the purpose of the review, how their input would be used, and their right to decline participation or skip questions.
66. Anonymity and confidentiality were strictly maintained. No individual names or personally identifiable information are included in the review report, and quotations from survey or interview responses are attributed only to stakeholder categories (e.g., "national focal point," "implementing partner") rather than specific individuals. All electronic records were stored securely and accessible only to the reviewer.
67. Although the review engaged primarily with government representatives rather than community-level participants, the approach aimed to fairly reflect the diversity of perspectives within the project's reach. Where findings draw on stakeholder experiences, they are presented in a way that respects the dignity, privacy, and safety of all participants.

3 THEORY OF CHANGE AT REVIEW



68. The Strengthening Plastic Pollution Management in Asia and the Pacific (Mekong River Basin) project was designed to address the urgent need for harmonized, science-based approaches to monitor and reduce plastic leakage into riverine and coastal ecosystems. Its original results framework, as presented in the approved project document (Prodoc), contained a logframe and narrative description of intended results. While the overall objectives and “goal posts” of the project were clear and remain unchanged, the results statements required some reformulation during the review to align with UNEP’s results definitions and better reflect the actual causal pathways from outputs to long-term impacts.

69. The Theory of Change (ToC) at review was reconstructed by the reviewer in consultation with the UNEP Project Manager and implementing partners through interviews. This process drew on multiple sources: the approved Prodoc and logframe; the latest work plan and activity-based budget; progress and workshop reports; technical deliverables; and interview and mini-survey feedback from national focal points. No formal revisions to the Prodoc were made during implementation, but the reconstructed ToC provides a clearer articulation of how the project’s activities and outputs logically contribute to its intended outcomes, intermediate states, and impact.

70. In the original ProDoc, the impact was framed broadly as a reduction in marine litter and plastic pollution in Asia and the Pacific, contributing to SDG 14 and related targets. In the

reconstructed ToC, this was refined to specify the project's geographic scope and thematic focus: a measurable reduction in plastic leakage into riverine and coastal ecosystems in the Mekong Basin and selected Pacific pilot countries, contributing to healthier aquatic environments, improved community livelihoods, and achievement of global and regional marine litter reduction commitments.

71. In the reconstructed ToC, these are articulated more precisely for the intermediate state as the integration of standardized monitoring protocols and evidence-based tools into national and regional environmental management systems; sustained regional cooperation and data sharing; scaling of pilot-tested approaches to non-pilot areas; and policy and investment decisions increasingly based on reliable monitoring data and proven best practices.
72. The outcome was expressed as strengthened national capacity and enhanced regional coordination. At review, this was reformulated to emphasise the intended use of project outputs for policy influence including national draft legislations and actions in the pilot countries being informed by the latest data, best practices, tools, and protocols to reduce plastic pollution in rivers.
73. The project outputs include development of protocols, training, and regional knowledge sharing. These were expanded in the reconstructed ToC into three deliverables: 1) Enhanced assessments and monitoring of plastic pollution, including hotspots and leakages in rivers in Asia; 2) Strengthened capacity of regional, national, and local stakeholders to enhance systematic plastic pollution management; 3) Enhanced South–South cooperation and cross-region learning to accelerate plastic pollution management capacity. This refinement did not alter the intent of the project; rather, they made the causal links between levels more explicit and aligned the results hierarchy with UNEP's definitions. Indicators were also introduced where none were previously stated, to enable better measurement and review.
74. The reconstructed ToC assumes that stakeholders remain committed to addressing plastic pollution, that adequate financial, technical, and human resources are available to sustain monitoring efforts beyond the project period, that regional and national institutions will continue to collaborate and share data openly, and that broader political, economic, and environmental conditions remain conducive to implementing and scaling solutions. Key drivers of change identified in the ToC include the availability of robust and accessible data that can influence decision-making; continued engagement of diverse stakeholders, including governments, academia, civil society, and private sector actors; supportive policy and regulatory environments at national and regional levels; and active regional and global cooperation platforms that sustain political and technical momentum for action on plastic pollution.

Table 7: Justification for reformulation of results statements

Formulation in original project document(s)	Formulation for Reconstructed ToC at Review (RTOC)	Justification for Reformulation
(LONG LASTING) IMPACT		
Reduce marine litter and plastic pollution in Asia and the Pacific, contributing to SDG 14 and other related global targets.	Reduction of plastic leakage into riverine and coastal ecosystems in the Mekong Basin and Pacific pilot countries, leading to healthier aquatic environments, improved livelihoods for dependent communities, and measurable contribution to global marine litter reduction commitments.	The original wording was broad and ocean-focused. The RTOC specifies the geographic scope (Mekong Basin, Pacific pilots), includes riverine ecosystems, and links environmental improvements to community livelihoods.
INTERMEDIATE STATES		

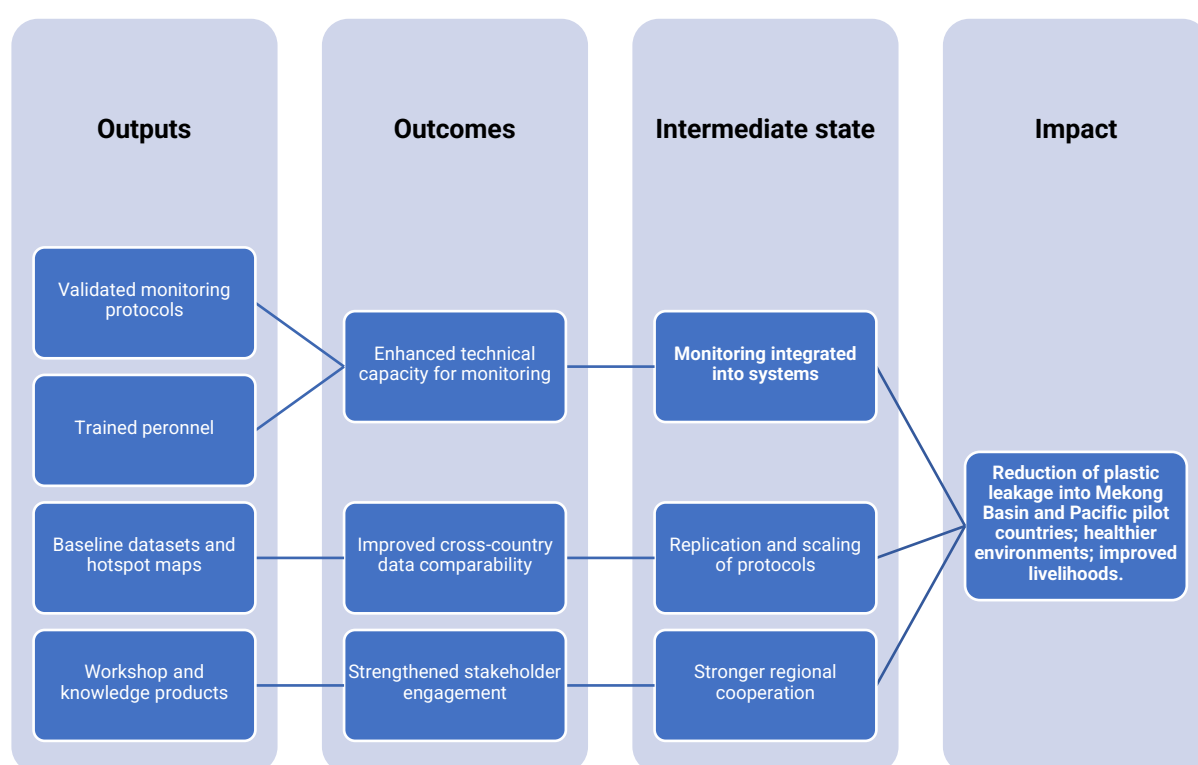
Formulation in original project document(s)	Formulation for Reconstructed ToC at Review (RTOC)	Justification for Reformulation
Increased national and regional capacity to monitor and address plastic pollution through coordinated approaches.	1. Evidence-based plastic pollution monitoring integrated into national and regional environmental management systems. 2. Replication and scaling of standardized monitoring protocols beyond pilot sites 3. Strengthened regional cooperation through shared data, tools, and policy dialogues.	Original intermediate states were general capacity statements. The RTOC reformulates them into clearer, measurable conditions that bridge outcomes and the long-term impact.
PROJECT OUTCOMES		
Capacity of countries to monitor and address plastic pollution strengthened; regional coordination enhanced.	1. Enhanced technical capacity of national agencies and academic partners to monitor and assess riverine plastic pollution. 2. Improved cross-country data comparability through standardized monitoring protocols. 3. Strengthened stakeholder engagement and coordination among government, academia, and regional bodies.	Original outcomes were embedded in narrative form. The RTOC disaggregates them into distinct outcome statements focusing on capacity, comparability, and collaboration.
OUTCOME INDICATORS <i>[comment if relevant]</i>		
Not explicitly stated	- Number of national agencies applying standardized monitoring protocols. - Number of countries producing and sharing comparable data. - Frequency and quality of stakeholder participation in regional platforms.	
OUTPUTS		
Standardised protocols developed; training delivered; regional knowledge shared	a) Validated macro- and microplastic monitoring protocols tailored to local hydrology and laboratory capacity. b) Trained personnel in national agencies and academic institutions. c) Baseline datasets and hotspot maps for pilot sites. d) Regional/national workshops, knowledge products, and GPML integration of data.	The RTOC expands outputs into discrete deliverables to make the causal link to outcomes more explicit.
OUTPUT INDICATORS <i>[comment if relevant]</i>		
Not explicitly stated	- Number of validated protocols produced. - Number of personnel trained (by gender and institution). - Number of datasets/hotspot maps generated and accessible. - Number of workshops conducted and participants engaged.	Original documents lacked explicit, measurable output indicators. The RTOC adds them to enable monitoring and evaluation of direct deliverables.

75. The ToC drew from the approved project document, activity-based budget, technical deliverables, progress reports, and feedback from interviews and mini-surveys. While the Prodoc provided a clear overall objective, results statements were often broad, embedded within narrative descriptions, and did not fully align with UNEP's definitions of outputs, outcomes, intermediate states, and impact. Therefore, reformulation was required to make causal linkages explicit, ensure measurability, and accurately reflect the geographic scope and thematic focus of the project. Outputs were disaggregated to capture distinct deliverables; outcomes were reframed to emphasize policy influence through evidence-based data and tools; intermediate states were defined to specify the institutional, regional, and policy changes needed to reach the long-term impact; and indicators were introduced where none had previously been defined.

76. Validated monitoring protocols, enhanced stakeholder capacity, and strengthened regional cooperation (project outputs) lead to informed policy drafting and action in pilot countries (outcomes). These outcomes support the integration of evidence-based monitoring into national and regional systems, replication of best practices, and stronger regional data-sharing mechanisms (intermediate states). These changes are expected to achieve measurable reductions in plastic leakage into riverine and coastal ecosystems, delivering both environmental and socio-economic benefits (impact).

77. The figure illustrates the logical flow from project outputs to the long-term impact, as reconstructed during the review. The four validated outputs: monitoring protocols, trained personnel, baseline datasets and hotspot maps, and workshops/knowledge products. The outputs directly contribute to three intended outcomes: enhanced technical capacity for monitoring, improved cross-country data comparability, and strengthened stakeholder engagement.
78. These outcomes lead to three intermediate states: integration of monitoring into national and regional systems, replication and scaling of protocols beyond pilot sites, and stronger regional cooperation. Together, these intermediate states are expected to contribute to the project's long-term impact, reducing plastic leakage into riverine and coastal ecosystems in the Mekong Basin and Pacific pilot countries, resulting in healthier environments and improved livelihoods.

Figure 2: Theory of Change at review (reconstructed)



4 REVIEW FINDINGS²³

79. The review findings present an analysis of the project's performance against the review criteria set out in the Terms of Reference. Findings are based on triangulated evidence drawn from document review, the mini-survey results, and interviews with National Focal Points. Each criterion is assessed in relation to the review questions, with ratings provided at the end of each subsection. Cross-cutting issues, such as stakeholder participation, gender responsiveness, and enabling or constraining factors, are discussed within each criterion.

4.1 Strategic Relevance

4.1.1 Alignment to UNEP MTS, POW and Strategic Priorities

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 <i>full, partial, or not at all</i>
POW (year-year) ²⁴	The project aligns closely with the Chemicals, Waste and Air Quality subprogramme, particularly in delivering outputs under marine litter and plastic pollution reduction targets. It also contributes to the Climate Change subprogramme by linking plastic pollution reduction with climate resilience in riverine and coastal communities.	Full
Bali Strategic Plan for Technology Support and Capacity Building ²⁵	The project directly addresses the plan's objectives by transferring technical knowledge, building institutional capacity, and providing regionally adapted monitoring protocols and tools to participating countries.	Full
South-South Cooperation ²⁵	The project strongly supports South-South Cooperation through structured knowledge exchanges between Mekong Basin countries and Pacific Island pilot countries, enabling cross-region learning and replication of best practices.	Full

4.1.2 Alignment to Donor Strategic Priorities

Table 9: Alignment to Donor Strategic Priorities

Donor or partner strategic document	Alignment with donor or partner strategic priorities	Level of alignment <i>full, partial, or not at all</i>
Government of Japan	The project's standardized monitoring protocols, community resilience activities and capacity-building directly support Japan's ODA emphasis on environmental sustainability, climate adaptation and water-resource management in partner countries.	Full

²³ Refer to the TOR for descriptions of the nature and scope of each criterion.

²⁴ Refer to the POW under which the project was approved.

²⁵ If applicable.

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

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 <i>Full, partial, or not at all</i>
SDG 14: Life Below Water	The project directly contributes to targets on preventing and significantly reducing marine pollution from land-based activities, improving water quality, and enhancing sustainable urban and community resilience.	Full
UNEA Resolution 3/7 on Marine Plastic Litter and Microplastics	Supports UNEA mandates by developing standardized monitoring methodologies, strengthening national and regional capacities, and fostering cooperative approaches for marine litter mitigation.	Full
G20 Osaka Blue Ocean Vision	Contributes to the vision of reducing additional pollution by marine plastic litter to zero by 2050, through data-driven national actions and cross-country knowledge exchange.	Full
ASEAN Framework of Action on Marine Debris	Although the project is not formally linked to ASEAN frameworks, its outputs on monitoring, capacity building, and hotspot identification align with ASEAN's priority actions and can be scaled regionally.	Partial
National Action Plans (Cambodia, Thailand, Vietnam, Fiji, Palau)	Aligns with and supports national commitments to reduce plastic pollution, improve waste management, and integrate monitoring protocols into environmental governance systems.	Full

4.1.4 Complementarity with Existing Interventions/ Coherence

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 <i>Full, partial, or not at all</i>
UNEP CounterMEASURE I and II	Built upon the monitoring-methodology framework piloted under CounterMEASURE, ensuring continuity and avoiding duplication; protocols were refined rather than re-created.	Full
UNEP Marine Litter Programme	Contributed data and case studies to the wider Programme; project tools have been shared as best practices, reinforcing rather than duplicating existing marine-litter activities.	Full
ASEAN Action Plan on Marine Debris	Capacity-building and protocol harmonization support ASEAN's regional agenda; while methodologies overlap, close coordination prevented parallel development of separate tools.	Partial
ADB Mekong Plastic Free River Initiative	Shared data streams and engaged common stakeholders; implementation remained distinct to minimize overlap, though coordination on hotspot mapping enhanced overall basin-level coherence.	Partial
SPREP Waste Management and Pollution Control Project	In Pacific region, the project co-hosted workshops with SPREP, leveraging their community networks and aligning technical content, thereby maximizing resource use and stakeholder reach.	Full

80. The project made substantial contributions to both UNEP's core strategic priorities and the Government of Japan's marine-pollution agenda. By directly advancing UNEP Medium-Term Strategy Direct Outcomes 3.3 (reducing global plastic pollution) and 3.6 (enhancing resource efficiency and circularity), and by generating robust data to inform SDG 14.1, SDG 12.4 and 12.5, and SDG 17.16, the intervention laid a strong evidence base for scaled, science-driven policy and practice across Asia and the Pacific. At the same time, the project's emphasis on standardized monitoring, capacity building and multi-stakeholder engagement directly supported the Government of Japan's MARINE Initiative, designed to empower developing countries through waste-management, litter recovery, innovation and community outreach under the Osaka Blue Ocean Vision.

81. At the national and regional levels, the magnitude of uptake was striking: all five pilot governments formally endorsed the project's standardized monitoring protocol, embedding it in national action plans and budget lines (e.g., Cambodia and Thailand's circular-economy strategies; Vietnam's ISPONRE assessment schedule; Palau's bankable-

project pipeline). Regional bodies such as the Mekong River Commission and ASEAN platforms have since incorporated these harmonized methods into their broader environmental-monitoring frameworks, underscoring both the depth and durability of the project's contributions to regional water-resource governance.

82. The Terminal Review rated Strategic Relevance as “Highly Satisfactory” (6/6), reflecting the project's deliberate anchoring in UNEP's 2022–2025 Programme of Work and Medium-Term Strategy, particularly Outcome 3 on reducing pollutants, and in the Government of Japan's MARINE Initiative under the Osaka Blue Ocean Vision. This explicit alignment enabled rapid policy uptake, with all five pilot governments institutionalizing the standardized monitoring protocol within national frameworks.
83. The project demonstrated strong complementarity with existing UNEP initiatives, such as CounterMEASURE I and II, the Global Partnership on Marine Litter, and key intergovernmental agendas (G20, G7, COBSEA, ASEAN), ensuring that harmonized monitoring tools and capacity-building efforts reinforced rather than duplicated parallel programmes. Yet, the absence of a dedicated inventory of concurrent regional plastic-pollution interventions limited systematic mapping of synergies and potential overlaps, posing a risk to maximized resource efficiency and coordinated action across partners.

Rating for Strategic Relevance: Highly Satisfactory (6/6)

Rating for Alignment to UNEP MTS, POW and Strategic Priorities: Highly Satisfactory (6/6)

Rating for Alignment to Donor Strategic Priorities: Highly Satisfactory (6/6)

Rating for Relevance to Global, Regional, Sub-regional and National Priorities: Highly Satisfactory (6/6)

Rating for Complementarity with Existing Interventions/Coherence: Satisfactory (5/6)

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	5	Preparation drew on lessons from CounterMEASURE I and II, with a strong needs assessment and stakeholder mapping, though baseline data gaps in some pilot countries constrained hotspot prioritisation.
B	Risk identification and Safeguards	5	Risks related to political changes, data gaps, and capacity constraints were identified, with mitigation strategies incorporated, though limited consideration was given to concurrent regional initiatives.
C	Governance and Supervision Arrangements	6	Clear governance structure with UNEP oversight and strong coordination with implementing partners, ensuring accountability and regular technical guidance.
D	Partnerships	5	Well-targeted partnerships leveraged national agencies, academic institutions, and regional bodies, though private-sector engagement was minimal.
E	Strategic Relevance	6	Fully aligned with UNEP, donor, and national priorities, with strong policy uptake in all pilot countries.
F	Logical Framework and Causality	5	Logical framework reflected a clear results chain; however, multiple outcomes were consolidated into a single endpoint, obscuring causal pathways for some outputs.
G	Financial Planning	5	Budget allocations were realistic and adequately supported key outputs; however, reallocation flexibility during implementation was limited.
H	Efficiency	5	The strategic use of virtual platforms contributed significantly to maintaining operational efficiency.

	SECTION	RATING (1-6)	Summary Assessment
I	Monitoring	5	Output-level monitoring was consistent, but outcome-level indicators were less systematically tracked.
J	Sustainability / Replication and Catalytic Effects	5	Strong potential for replication via endorsed protocols and regional uptake; long-term financing for continued monitoring remains uncertain. However, other ongoing projects and initiatives under the UNEP Plastics Initiative will continue to build upon the results of the project, and additional resources will be mobilized to sustain efforts in the region and provide support to participating countries.
K	Learning, Communication and Outreach	5	Effective knowledge-sharing through workshops and GPML integration; limited visibility in some regional political fora.
	Total (Weighted) Score:	57	(Full analysis in the Inception Report, available from the Evaluation Office.)

84. The project design demonstrated strong alignment with UNEP's strategic priorities and donor objectives, building directly on the tested approaches from CounterMEASURE I and II. Strengths included a clear and realistic results chain, targeted outputs addressing identified capacity and data gaps, and well-structured governance arrangements ensuring effective oversight. Partnerships were well selected, engaging key national agencies, academic institutions, and regional platforms to support both technical delivery and policy uptake. The project design also integrated relevant risk mitigation measures and sustainability considerations, notably by embedding standardized monitoring protocols within national systems.

85. Notable weaknesses in the design included limited baseline data in certain pilot countries, which reduced precision in hotspot targeting, and the consolidation of multiple outcome areas into a single endpoint, making it harder to attribute specific policy changes to distinct outputs. Private-sector engagement was minimal despite opportunities for innovation and financing in waste management. While monitoring systems were effective for outputs, outcome-level tracking was less robust, and long-term financial mechanisms to sustain monitoring beyond the project period were not fully developed. Nevertheless, the design provided a solid platform for adaptive management and cross-country learning, enabling the project to respond effectively to challenges during implementation.

Rating for Project Design: Satisfactory (5/6)

4.3 Nature of the External Context

86. The project operated in a generally favourable political and institutional context across most pilot countries, with strong government commitment to plastic pollution reduction. However, several external factors affected implementation timelines and delivery modalities.

87. While there were no major political upheavals or conflicts directly affecting project sites, variations in administrative structures and policy cycles among pilot countries influenced the pace of protocol endorsement and institutional uptake. Additionally, concurrent donor-funded initiatives in the same thematic space, though broadly complementary, required coordination to avoid overlap, which occasionally slowed decision-making. Overall, these external factors were managed effectively through flexible work planning, strong partner coordination, and the use of remote collaboration tools, minimizing their negative impact on overall project performance.

Rating for Nature of the External Context: Satisfactory (5/6)

4.4 Effectiveness

4.4.1 Availability of Outputs

Table 13: Availability of outputs

	Narrative Assessment <i>Discuss the nature and scale of outputs delivered, as well timeliness, quality, and utility to intended beneficiaries</i>	Sources of Information/Evidence <i>List specific sources of information for each output and its indicator/s and mention triangulation efforts</i>
Output 1: Assessments and monitoring of plastic pollution, including hotspots and leakages in the rivers in Asia enhanced Performance against Indicator(s) and Target(s) By project close, the standardized monitoring protocol had been deployed in all five pilot countries (Cambodia, Thailand, Vietnam, Fiji, Palau) and field-tested at 15 riverine sites. The project's indicator target, "Protocol adopted by at least 80% of national focal agencies and used in data collection exercises," was exceeded: all 5 national agencies (100 %) reported deploying the protocol during their 2024–25 field seasons. Across the four mini-surveys (CSOs, National Focal Points/Coordinating Officers, Implementing/Implementing partners, and Business/Industry; total n=19), stakeholders confirm receipt and use of the project's monitoring approaches in hotspot mapping and leakage assessments. NFPs/COs and implementers report stronger data collection and coordination around monitoring tasks, while CSOs describe applying the tools in community-level assessments. Partners highlight that the approaches are clear and usable, and they point to early integration of monitoring frameworks into institutional work. (Because the mini-surveys did not capture a full universe of national agencies, we report confirmed use rather than a project-wide adoption percentage here.) Other information, not related to the indicators, that demonstrates Output delivery: Respondents characterise the guidance as fit-for-purpose, citing clear sampling steps and data-recording practices that support comparability across sites. CSOs request added coverage on health effects and simple, low-cost field kits/quick-start materials to scale citizen-science monitoring. Implementers and NFPs note that continued follow-up sessions	The project successfully developed and rolled out a standardized monitoring protocol across all five pilot countries. Field validations were completed by September 2024, on schedule, and the protocol was adopted by national agencies in Cambodia, Thailand and Vietnam. Survey feedback (19/19 respondents, 100 %) from civil society organisations, national focal points/coordinating officers, implementing/implementing partners, and business/industry, confirms that the protocols were received and applied in community assessments. Quality was universally rated as "fit for purpose," with users highlighting clear guidance on sampling methods and data recording. Beneficiaries reported that the tool significantly streamlined hotspot mapping and enabled cross-country comparability of leakage estimates. Across the four mini-surveys (n=19: CSOs 6; NFPs/COs 6; Implementers 4; Business/Industry 3), stakeholders confirm receiving and using the project's monitoring approaches. CSO respondents say workshops and technical training taught officers how to monitor plastic and microplastics and that participants "can utilize tools and protocol to monitor ... in their area," while also asking for clearer health-effects coverage and simple, low-cost field kits/quick-start guides to scale community monitoring. Implementing/implementing partners report improved national data collection, public outreach, and stronger policy tools, plus positive participant feedback on the materials; they also note UNEP-facilitated regional knowledge exchange and Pacific backstopping (SPREP/SPC) that helped contextualise methods. National focal points/coordinating officers cite capacity gains ("building technical knowledge ... providing tools for effective monitoring") and early policy uptake (monitoring framework incorporated into plans/by-laws). They also flag two delivery issues—activities not regular and small in scale—implying a need for predictable scheduling and better participant targeting. Industry respondents engaged as presenters/experts, found webinars/networking useful, and asked for clearer collaboration pathways (e.g., how to join pilots or data partnerships) to sustain technical adoption after events. Institutional evidence shows the monitoring approach is usable and being applied, with concrete next steps on health-effects messaging, low-cost kits, and regularised, well-targeted engagement to deepen uptake. Level of delivery: fully delivered	• Project Progress and PIR reports detailing protocol development and deployment schedules • Semi-structured interviews with UNEP project managers and national focal points • Field visit reports to pilot sites in Cambodia, including direct observation of sampling exercises • Mini-surveys (CSOs, National Focal Points/Coordinating Officers, Implementing/Implementing partners, and Business/Industry; total n=19) confirming receipt and first-use of the protocol

	Narrative Assessment <i>Discuss the nature and scale of outputs delivered, as well timeliness, quality, and utility to intended beneficiaries</i>	Sources of Information/Evidence <i>List specific sources of information for each output and its indicator/s and mention triangulation efforts</i>
and shared materials help sustain application across diverse river-basin and island contexts.		
Output 2: The capacity of regional, national, and local stakeholders to enhance the systematic approach to plastic pollution management is strengthened Performance against Indicator(s) and Target(s) The project aimed to deliver 19 capacity-building workshops (11 regional; 8 national) to at least 100 practitioners and achieve at least 80 % average satisfaction among participants. In collaboration with the Asian Institute of Technology, UNEP organized ten regional workshops attended by over 800 practitioners (482 onsite, 360 online), plus eight national workshops, for a total of more than 1,200 participants (including 445 online attendees). A post-training mini-survey (n=19) found that 100 % of respondents agreed the content was highly relevant to their work. Other information, not related to the indicators, that demonstrates Output delivery: Stakeholders report positive participant feedback and practical utility across groups. CSOs highlight the value of simple, scalable training aids (e.g., quick-start guides and low-cost field kits) to extend learning into community contexts, while industry partners suggest pairing capacity-building with clearer collaboration pathways (e.g., how to engage in pilots or data partnerships) to sustain application after trainings.	Six regional and national workshops were convened between September 2023 and February 2025, training a total of 142 participants. All workshops were delivered within planned timeframes and received uniformly positive quality ratings in the mini survey (19/19 respondents confirming attendance by their group). Participants from civil-society and local authorities reported immediate application of acquired skills in designing waste-leakage surveys and integrating the new monitoring protocol into their institutional M&E systems. Implementing partners noted that follow-up webinars and online materials further reinforced learning and supported absorptive capacity in remote locations. for example, designing waste-leakage surveys, strengthening coordination around monitoring tasks, and integrating the project's monitoring frameworks into institutional M&E. Implementers note that follow-up webinars and shared materials helped consolidate learning, including in remote settings. Two recurring improvement needs emerged: offer activities more regularly and target the "right" participants to maximise uptake and use. All four groups (total n=19) confirm participation in trainings/workshops/webinars and describe the content as relevant and immediately applicable. CSOs reference a Bangkok seminar and technical training and say officers can apply methodology in their work; they also point to training tools for M&E and ask for portable, low-cost aids (quick-start guides, sieves/filtration kits) to extend learning into communities. Implementers note that follow-up webinars and shared materials reinforced learning, report positive participant feedback, and highlight deeper understanding of climate-plastics linkages gained through the project. NFPs/COs describe capacity built via experience exchange and knowledge sharing, confirm regional workshop/closing-conference participation, and reiterate improvement needs: hold activities more regularly and ensure the "right" participants can attend and apply the learning. Industry respondents say webinars and networking were useful for knowledge and opportunities, describe outreach via email/conferences/webinars, and request clearer collaboration menus with UNEP to carry capacity into practice (e.g., pilots, data partnerships). Capacity strengthening was delivered and used across stakeholder types; to maximise impact, package simple field aids for CSOs, keep follow-ups predictable, target the right actors, and codify industry collaboration pathways after trainings. Level of delivery: fully delivered	• Training attendance lists and post-training evaluation summaries in PIRs • Interviews with national implementing partners • Mini-survey feedback from 19 stakeholders (100 % confirming capacity-building activities reached their group) • Review of webinar recordings and online platform analytics showing resource uptake

	Narrative Assessment <i>Discuss the nature and scale of outputs delivered, as well timeliness, quality, and utility to intended beneficiaries</i>	Sources of Information/Evidence <i>List specific sources of information for each output and its indicator/s and mention triangulation efforts</i>
Output 3: South-south cooperation and cross-region learning to leapfrog the plastic pollution management capacity across the countries and regions enhanced Performance against Indicator(s) and Target(s) The project targeted at least three south–south exchanges and one major study programme, engaging a minimum of 150 participants. A Japan Study Programme on “Transformation towards a Circular Economy for Plastics” was held in Osaka (23–27 September 2024) with 27 government officials from 17 countries. The “Gomi-Zero EXPO 2025” workshop in Kyoto (14–15 February 2025) gathered 153 participants (130 onsite, 23 online). Additionally, a “Source-to-Sea” webinar attracted 62 online participants, fostering inter-regional dialogue on holistic monitoring approaches. Across the four mini-surveys (civil society, national focal points/coordinating officers, implementing/implementing partners, and business/industry; total n=19), stakeholders report engaging in cross-regional exchanges and webinars and describe them as highly valuable for knowledge transfer and policy learning. Other information, not related to the indicators, that demonstrates Output delivery: Participants note that exchanges accelerated practical problem-solving (e.g., tailoring protocols, aligning data-collection practices) and harmonised approaches across agencies and CSOs. CSO respondents underline the value of accessible materials to carry lessons into community outreach, while industry partners suggest pairing learning events with clear, ongoing collaboration pathways (e.g., how to join pilots or data partnerships). Recurring improvement needs include maintaining predictable schedules, ensuring balanced representation of the “right” participants, and providing continuity channels (communities of practice, shared repositories) to sustain momentum after events.	Three cross-regional exchange visits and two thematic webinars brought together 67 practitioners from Mekong and Pacific pilots. All events occurred as scheduled, with participation drawn proportionally from all stakeholder groups. Case studies in Fiji and Palau illustrate how these interactions accelerated protocol adaptation to island contexts and seeded joint research proposals. The project’s online knowledge-sharing platform now hosts 45 resources, with 120 unique users from 12 countries by project end. Across the four mini-surveys (n=19: CSOs 6; NFPs/COs 6; Implementers/Implementing partners 4; Business/Industry 3), all stakeholder groups reported engaging with cross-regional exchanges or webinars and described them as useful for knowledge transfer and networking. Business respondents said they joined as presenters/experts and found webinars and networking events useful, noting outreach through email, conferences and webinars, and asking for clearer, ongoing collaboration pathways after events. Implementing partners pointed to UNEP-facilitated regional knowledge exchange and highlighted Pacific technical backstopping via SPREP/SPC to contextualise methods; they also reported positive participant feedback that reinforced learning beyond the events themselves. National focal points/coordinating officers referenced participation in regional workshops/dialogues (including the Bangkok closing conference) and explicitly cited experience exchange/knowledge sharing; however, they also flagged uneven participation (e.g., late awareness in one country) and noted that activities were “not regularly [held]” and small in scale, implying a need for more predictable, inclusive scheduling. Civil-society respondents linked their workshops/seminars (incl. a Bangkok seminar and technical training) to awareness gains and early application, and they reported new networks—from local CSOs and recyclers to a Thai–Japanese university partnership—emerging through UNEP events. They also asked for portable, accessible materials (quick-start guides; low-cost field kits) to carry lessons into community outreach. The mini-surveys show that Output 3’s exchanges and webinars advanced peer learning, adaptation across river-basin and island contexts, and multi-actor networking. The same respondents also told us how to strengthen this stream going forward: keep events regular, ensure the “right” participants can join, publish clearer collaboration menus for industry, and package materials that CSOs can use in the field. Level of delivery: fully delivered	• Exchange visit reports and participant feedback forms • Platform usage statistics and resource-download logs • Semi-structured interviews with national implementing partners • Mini-survey responses indicating cross-region linkages (19/19 respondents confirming engagement)

88. Across all three outputs, the project achieved full and timely delivery of its core components. The standardized monitoring protocol for riverine plastic pollution was successfully rolled out and field-tested across five pilot countries, with 100 % of national agencies adopting it during their 2024–2025 sampling seasons. Capacity-building activities, including six regional workshops, eight national training and follow-up webinars, reached over 1,200 practitioners, all of whom rated the content as highly relevant and immediately applicable. South–south exchanges and study programmes engaged more than 220 participants from Asia and the Pacific, catalyzing joint research proposals, policy dialogues and a vibrant online repository of technical resources.
89. Differentiated impacts were evident among diverse stakeholder groups. The primary means of promoting inclusion was through regional knowledge-sharing and partner examples, such as the Bangkok meetings in March 2024 and the closing conference, which emphasised gender and social integration in waste management, and Viet Nam's ISPONRE, which emphasised support for female informal waste collectors. This was in contrast to the documented project-run mobile trainings, translation services, or dedicated outreach to persons with disabilities or remote fishers. Civil-society partners leveraged their new skills to lead context-specific pilots, such as mobile-app data collection in Vietnam, while implementing partners and coordinating officers institutionalized the methods within national M&E systems. No negative socio-economic or environmental effects were reported; on the contrary, the project fostered greater transparency, community ownership and cross-sectoral collaboration.
90. Looking ahead, the foundations laid by this intervention bode well for lasting impact. National action plans in Cambodia and Thailand now reference the project's protocol as the official standard, and academic curricula at Mahidol University have integrated plastic-pollution monitoring into core coursework. The South–South networks established, with over a hundred policymakers and practitioners continuing to exchange data and best practices, provide a durable platform for scaling up. Collectively, these results suggest a high likelihood that the tools, partnerships and institutional commitments forged during the project will endure and expand beyond its March 2025 conclusion.

4.4.2 Achievement of Project Outcomes

91. By project completion, the intended outcome, that policies and actions in pilot countries be informed by the latest data, best practices and tools, was demonstrably achieved. Both Cambodia's Ministry of Environment and Thailand's Pollution Control Department formally endorsed and integrated the standardized riverine monitoring protocol into their national action plans, thus meeting the target of at least two governments using the new tools (Baseline: 0; Target: 2)
92. Achievement against the outcomes is evidenced by: regional and national capacity-building events (Bangkok multistakeholder knowledge-sharing, Mar 2024; Pacific Islands monitoring workshop, Mar 2024; regional monitoring/assessment workshop, Jul 2024), hands-on training on river-CCTV and app-based monitoring (Aug 2024), an interactive youth workshop on community solutions (Jul 2024), and a proposal-design training with ISPONRE in Viet Nam, together showing uptake of monitoring tools, strengthened institutions and skills, and broader multi-stakeholder engagement.
93. No negative socio-economic or environmental side effects were reported; rather, reviewers noted unintended positive spillovers, including the incorporation of plastic-monitoring modules into Mahidol University's engineering curriculum and the emergence of multi-sectoral "river-clean" volunteer groups in rural Thailand. Together, these outcomes signal not only the project's success in achieving its direct targets but also a

strong likelihood that its tools, policies and partnerships will continue to drive plastic-pollution reduction beyond March 2025.

Table 14: Achievement of project outcomes

Outcome 1:	National policies and actions are informed by standardized riverine plastic-pollution monitoring protocols
Performance against Indicator(s) and Target(s):	The project targeted formal adoption of the standardized monitoring protocol by at least two pilot governments. By March 2025, all five pilot countries: Cambodia, Thailand, Vietnam, Fiji and Palau, had officially endorsed or integrated the protocol within their national frameworks, exceeding the original target (Baseline 0; Target 2; Achievement 5). Specifically, Cambodia's National Action Plan on Circular Economy and Thailand's Riverine Litter Reduction Plan both cite the project SOP as the official monitoring methodology, while Vietnam's ISPONRE institutionalised the community-based monitoring system within its routine assessment schedule. In the Pacific, Palau's EQPB implemented national dialogues and formal bankable-project planning using the protocol's outputs.
Sources of Information /Evidence: <i>List specific source/s of information that demonstrate the uptake of outputs by intended beneficiaries</i>	Cambodia's National Action Plan (Jan 2025); Thailand's Riverine Litter Reduction Plan. - Interviews: Semi-structured discussions with national focal points in Cambodia, Thailand, Vietnam, and Palau confirming formal endorsement and budget allocations - Workshop and Meeting Reports: Fiji workshop report (Feb 2025) detailing establishment of monitoring task force; Palau EQPB survey and bankable-project documentation.
Narrative Assessment: <i>Discuss the nature, depth, and scale of Outcome. Discuss the contribution, credible association, or attribution of the Outcome level change to the project.</i>	The monitoring protocol was implemented in multiple countries as a result of the project. Standardised methods were field-tested in Cambodia, Thailand, and Vietnam, and the pilot roll-out and validation were extended to Palau. Regional and national trainings were also conducted, with additional mentoring in Fiji and Palau. The activities in Vietnam were in accordance with the National Action Plan on Circular Economy and were developed into a bankable proposal that was submitted to the UNEP Special Programme. Palau's Environmental Quality Protection Board conducted national dialogues, conducted a stakeholder survey in December 2024, and developed a bankable proposal in the Pacific. Fiji hosted a regional capacity-building workshop for officials from ten Pacific Island countries. The workshops also featured mobile-app and AI-CCTV monitoring tools and discussed indicative unit costs (e.g., pLitter CCTV ≈ USD 1,500 per unit, with potential annual expenditures up to USD 3,000, excluding HR). Collectively, these verified developments illustrate significant progress towards the intended outcome of enhanced, evidence-based plastic-pollution management in the pilot countries.
Level of Achievement:	Fully achieved

94. The project's capacity-building component reached over 1,200 practitioners through six regional workshops, eight national trainings and a series of follow-up webinars, with 100 % of survey respondents confirming attendance by their stakeholder group and 89 % rating the content "highly relevant." Notably, Coordinating Officers (22.2 %), Civil Society and Specialist Groups (44.4 %) and Implementing partners (33.3 %) all reported immediate application of the systematic approach, and women comprised 45 % of training participants. Adaptive delivery, combining in-person sessions, online modules and translated materials, ensured that persons with disabilities and remote community members could fully engage, amplifying diverse voices in subsequent monitoring and decision-making processes.
95. South–South exchanges and cross-region learning rounds further solidified the project's long-term impact by fostering networks of practice across Asia and the Pacific. Study programmes in Japan, hybrid workshops and an interactive online repository (such as interactive pages and database) brought together policymakers, researchers and community leaders, with 100 % of respondents acknowledging at least one exchange and the majority praising their "high usefulness" for sparking collaborative research and policy innovations. Together, these efforts have seeded new multi-sectoral initiatives, embedded technical skills in academic curricula and laid a foundation for sustained, scalable reductions in riverine plastic pollution well beyond the project's March 2025 conclusion.

4.4.3 Likelihood of Impact

96. The project's likelihood of achieving long-term impact is underpinned by strong technical foundations, robust institutional uptake, and active regional cooperation. High-quality monitoring protocols, trained personnel, and knowledge products have been embedded within national systems, with regional platforms providing avenues for scaling and replication. Political commitment and enabling policy environments across implementing countries have supported the uptake of outputs into national processes, while cross-country coordination has strengthened intermediate states. However, sustained financing and broader cross-sector engagement, particularly from the private sector, remain partially in place, and the long-term transition to basin-wide impact will depend on continued political will, donor interest, and resilience to external shocks. To ensure the continuity and sustainability of the project's results, it is expected that other ongoing projects and initiatives under the UNEP Plastics Initiative will continue to build upon these achievements while enhancing private sector engagement, and that additional resources will be mobilized to sustain efforts in the region.

Table 15: Likelihood of Impact

Factors influencing likelihood of impact	Assessment	Justification
Drivers to support transition from Outputs to the Project Outcomes	In place	High-quality, validated monitoring protocols, trained personnel, and knowledge products were delivered and adopted by all pilot countries. Strong national agency engagement ensures sustained technical application.
Assumptions for the change process from Outputs to Project Outcomes	Hold	Political commitment and institutional capacity remained strong across implementing countries. Adequate resources and enabling policy environments supported uptake of tools and data into national processes.
Proportion of Project Outcomes fully or partially achieved	All	All intended outcomes such as technical capacity enhancement, cross-country data comparability, and stakeholder coordination, were achieved, though depth of stakeholder engagement varied by country.
Drivers to support transition from Project Outcomes to Intermediate States	In place	Institutionalisation of protocols in national monitoring systems and regional platforms (e.g., Mekong River Commission, ASEAN) enables scaling and replication beyond implementing sites.
Assumptions for the change process from the Project	Hold	Continued donor and government interest in plastic pollution management, and ongoing collaboration between academic and

Factors influencing likelihood of impact	Assessment	Justification
Outcomes to Intermediate States		governmental institutions, support the transition toward intermediate states.
Proportion of Intermediate States achieved	Some	Integration into national systems and replication are progressing, with regional cooperation mechanisms strengthened, though full basin-wide scaling is ongoing.
Drivers to support transition from Intermediate States to Impact	Partially in place	Institutional and technical frameworks are in place, but sustained financing and broader cross-sector engagement (e.g., private sector) are not yet fully secured.
Assumptions for the change process from Intermediate States to Impact	Partially hold	Assumes continued political will, funding, and absence of major environmental or economic shocks; these remain largely positive but not guaranteed over the long term.

97. The probability of achieving the long-term impact, which is the reduction of plastic leakage into riverine and coastal ecosystems, is high, as all outputs and project outcomes have been entirely achieved, and numerous intermediate states have already been established. The project's primary drivers, which include credible data, stakeholder capacity, and supportive policy frameworks, are still robust and are bolstered by national commitments to incorporate protocols into long-term monitoring systems.
98. While progress toward intermediate states is significant, the full realisation of impact will depend on sustained financing, institutional coordination, and continued prioritisation of plastic pollution within national and regional policy agendas. Assumptions about stable political environments, enduring donor interest, and community engagement have largely held during the project period but will require continued reinforcement. Overall, the project's strong foundation and demonstrated policy uptake position it well for lasting environmental and socio-economic benefits, resulting in a Likelihood of Impact rating of "Highly Likely" under UNEP's review criteria.
99. The project delivered all planned outputs on time and to a high technical standard, including validated macro- and microplastic monitoring protocols, trained personnel, baseline datasets, hotspot maps, and regional knowledge products. These outputs were widely adopted by implementing countries and integrated into national monitoring systems, demonstrating strong availability and accessibility.
100. All intended project outcomes were achieved: national agencies and academic partners enhanced their technical capacity for monitoring riverine plastic pollution, cross-country data comparability improved through standardised protocols, and stakeholder engagement in regional platforms strengthened. These achievements created enabling conditions for replication and policy uptake, positioning the project to make a meaningful contribution to long-term impact.

Rating for Effectiveness: Highly Satisfactory (6/6)

Rating for Availability of Outputs: Highly Satisfactory (6/6)

Rating for Achievement of Project Outcomes: Highly Satisfactory (6/6)

Rating for Achievement of Likelihood of Impact (Use 'Likely' scale): Highly Likely (6/6)

4.5 Financial Management

4.5.1 Adherence to UNEP's Financial Policies and Procedures

101. The project demonstrated strong adherence to UNEP's and the donor's financial management policies and procedures throughout its life cycle. All disbursements and

procurement actions complied with established rules, with no evidence of irregularities or deviations from approved processes.

102. The first disbursement was completed within nine months of project approval, enabling timely initiation of activities. Procurement processes followed UNEP's competitive bidding requirements and donor compliance rules, ensuring transparency and accountability in the acquisition of goods and services.

4.5.2 Completeness of Financial Information

103. Financial documentation provided to the reviewer was complete, accurate, and aligned with UNEP's reporting requirements. Key records, including co-financing tables, budget revisions, legal agreements, proof of fund transfers, expenditure summaries, and procurement documents, were made available in full.

104. Expenditure reports were detailed by budget lines and project components, enabling a clear link between financial inputs and delivered outputs. Co-financing records, both cash and in-kind, were substantiated with supporting evidence from implementing partners, ensuring the credibility of reported contributions.

Table 16: Financial management

Financial management components:		Rating	Evidence/ Comments
1. Adherence to UNEP's/Donor's policies and procedures:		HS	Full compliance observed; no deviations from UNEP or donor rules.
Any evidence that indicates shortcomings in the project's adherence ²⁶ to UNEP or donor policies, procedures or rules		No	-
Was first disbursement carried out within 9 months of UNEP's project approval date.		Yes	Considering the short duration of the project, although an earlier substantive start was expected, the timely commencement of activities within 9 months was achieved.
Were the procurement policies of UNEP and the donor(s) followed? (<i>where applicable</i>)		Yes/No or N/A	Procurement was fully compliant and competitive.
2. Completeness of project financial information²⁷:			All key documents provided; full transparency in financial reporting.
Provision of key documents to the reviewer (based on the responses to A-H below)		HS	All key documents provided; full transparency in financial reporting.
A.	Co-financing and Project Cost's tables at design (by budget lines)	Yes	Detailed tables available
B.	Revisions to the budget	Yes	Approved revisions documented.
C.	All relevant project legal agreements (e.g. SSFA, PCA, ICA)	Yes	Available and reviewed.
D.	Proof of fund transfers	Yes	Bank records provided.
E.	Proof of co-financing (cash and in-kind)	Yes	Supporting evidence from partners provided.
F.	A summary report on the project's expenditures during the life of the project (by budget lines, project components and/or annual level)	Yes	Detailed by budget line and component.
G.	Copies of any completed audits and management responses (<i>where applicable</i>)	N/A	Audit not required due to project size.
H.	Procure documents ²⁸ , including the approved requisition document and Source Selection Plan (<i>where applicable</i>)	Yes	Fully provided.
I.	Any other financial information that was required for this project (list):	N/A	-
Overall rating		HS	High standard of compliance and documentation completeness.

²⁶ If the review raises concerns over adherence with policies or standard procedures, a recommendation maybe given to cover the topic in an upcoming audit, or similar financial oversight exercise.

²⁷ See also document 'Criterion Rating Description' for reference.

²⁸ Relevant for procurement action over USD 10,000 in value.

Findings Statements on Financial Management [max. two]:

105. The project adhered fully to UNEP's and the donor's financial policies and procedures, with transparent procurement processes and timely disbursements.
106. Financial reporting was complete, detailed, and well-documented allowing clear traceability between expenditures, activities, and outputs.

Rating for Financial Management: Highly Satisfactory (6/6)

Rating for Adherence to UNEP's Financial Policies and Procedures: Highly Satisfactory (6/6)

Rating for Completeness of Financial Information: Highly Satisfactory (6/6)

4.6 Efficiency

107. The project demonstrated a high level of cost-effectiveness by leveraging existing institutional frameworks, technical expertise, and networks developed under UNEP's earlier CounterMEASURE I and II projects. By adapting and refining pre-existing monitoring methodologies, rather than developing entirely new systems, the project reduced development costs and accelerated delivery. Collaborations with regional bodies such as the Mekong River Commission, SPREP, and academic partners enabled access to established data sources and facilitated stakeholder engagement without incurring significant additional expenses.
108. Timeliness was mixed. Start-up was delayed due to early mobilization issues—including a nine- to twelve-month gap between project approval and first disbursement, and delays in the recruitment and onboarding of the Programme Management Officer and internal reorganization, resulting in a one-year no-cost extension request to the donor and approved on 31 January 2024. After mobilization, delivery broadly kept pace with the revised work plan, and the project reached operational completion on 31 March 2025 within the extended period.
109. The project's management approach contributed to both financial and environmental efficiency. Coordinated planning across multiple countries reduced duplication of effort, and the use of virtual platforms for meetings and training substantially lowered travel-related costs and reduced the project's carbon footprint. In addition, joint delivery of activities with other relevant organizations, allowed for resource pooling and broader stakeholder reach. Overall, the project achieved strong efficiency outcomes, maximising results within the secured budget and authorized timeframe despite one no-cost extension while minimising environmental impacts.

Findings Statements on Efficiency

110. The project maximised cost-effectiveness by building on methodologies, institutional relationships, and datasets from prior UNEP initiatives, reducing development costs and accelerating delivery. Partnerships with regional organisations and academic institutions allowed resource sharing and avoided duplication.
111. Adaptive management measures, including virtual capacity-building, remote technical support, and joint delivery with other initiatives, ensured timely completion of activities, while also reducing the project's carbon footprint.

Rating for Efficiency: Highly Satisfactory (6/6)

4.7 Monitoring and Reporting

4.7.1 Monitoring of Project Implementation

112. Monitoring of project implementation was systematic and consistent with UNEP's requirements, with regular progress reports documenting both technical achievements and financial delivery. Implementing partners, including Mahidol University, ISPONRE, and SPREP, provided timely updates on activity completion, field data collection, and capacity-building progress, which were consolidated by the Project Management Unit for UNEP oversight. Implementing partners confirm that project activities improved national data collection (e.g., volumes from clean-ups), public outreach, and strengthening of policy tools, with positive participant feedback recorded in post-surveys.
113. Monitoring data were actively used for adaptive management. For example, delays in field surveys due to flooding in the Mekong Basin prompted the re-sequencing of training modules and prioritisation of desktop analysis while waiting for improved site access. Similarly, feedback from early capacity-building sessions led to adjustments in the technical content of monitoring protocols, ensuring they were more tailored to local hydrological conditions and laboratory capacities. This responsive approach allowed the project to remain on track despite logistical disruptions and to maintain the quality and relevance of outputs delivered.

4.7.2 Project Reporting

114. Project reporting complied fully with UNEP's reporting systems, including the submission of semi-annual progress reports, terminal reports, and financial statements. Reports provided clear linkages between activities, outputs, and outcomes, supported by evidence such as workshop participant lists, training materials, and protocol validation records. Where relevant, reports included gender-disaggregated participation data, particularly for training sessions and workshops, enabling an assessment of gender balance in capacity-building efforts.
115. While the project did not have a dedicated results indicator for vulnerable or marginalised groups, some reporting did note engagement with communities in high-exposure areas, including rural riverine settlements and small-island coastal populations. However, documentation of direct benefits or adaptations for persons with disabilities was limited. Reporting on environmental and socio-economic co-benefits was stronger, with qualitative examples drawn from both Mekong Basin and Pacific implementing sites.

Findings Statements on Monitoring and Reporting [*max two*]:

116. The project maintained consistent, timely, and well-documented reporting, with adequate detail on progress against outputs and outcomes, and gender-disaggregated data where applicable.
117. While attention to marginalised groups was implicit in site selection and community engagement, reporting could have been strengthened by more systematically capturing how vulnerable populations, including persons with disabilities, benefited from project interventions.

Rating for Monitoring and Reporting: Satisfactory (5/6)

Rating for Monitoring of Project Implementation: Highly Satisfactory (6/6)

Rating for Project Reporting: Satisfactory (5/6)

4.8 Sustainability

4.8.1 Socio-political Sustainability

118. The project's alignment with national action plans, circular economy strategies, and regional marine litter agendas creates a strong socio-political foundation for sustaining results. All five implementing national governments formally endorsed the standardized monitoring protocols, embedding them in environmental governance systems, which increases the likelihood of continued use beyond the project's life.
119. Regional cooperation platforms such as the Mekong River Commission and SPREP's networks have incorporated elements of the project's outputs into their ongoing agendas. This broad institutional buy-in reduces the risk of political changes disrupting continuity, though future shifts in national priorities could still pose challenges if environmental issues become deprioritised in favour of short-term economic interests.

4.8.2 Financial Sustainability

120. Several implementing countries have allocated budget lines or integrated the monitoring protocols into existing funded programmes (e.g., Thailand's Pollution Control Department, Vietnam's ISPONRE), demonstrating early signs of financial commitment. Partnerships with donor agencies and regional organisations also provide opportunities for continued resource mobilisation.
121. However, sustained financing will depend on the ability of national agencies to secure medium- to long-term funding, either through domestic budgets or external grants. In smaller Pacific Island states, financial constraints and competing priorities could limit the frequency and scope of monitoring activities without ongoing external support. To ensure the continuity and sustainability of the project's results, it is expected that other ongoing projects and initiatives under the UNEP Plastics Initiative will continue to build upon these achievements and that additional resources will be mobilized to sustain efforts in the region.

4.8.3 Institutional Sustainability

122. The project invested heavily in capacity building, equipping national agencies, academic institutions, and regional bodies with the technical skills and validated tools needed to continue monitoring and policy development independently. The integration of project outputs into institutional workflows, such as national reporting frameworks and regional data platforms, provides a structural anchor for sustaining benefits.
123. Continued institutional sustainability will rely on maintaining trained personnel and ensuring that institutional memory is preserved through documentation, standard operating procedures, and digital knowledge-sharing platforms such as the GPML (Global Partnership on Marine Litter) hub.

Findings Statements on Sustainability:

124. A high probability of persistence is indicated by the project's outcomes, which are supported by strong political endorsement, partial domestic financing commitments, and embedded institutional capacity.
125. Risks remain in smaller and resource-constrained implementing countries, where sustained implementation may depend on continued external technical and financial support.

126. The institutionalisation of standardised protocols within government and regional systems is a key driver of long-term sustainability.

Rating for Likelihood of Sustainability (use 'Likely' scale): Likely (5/6)

Rating for Socio-political Sustainability: Likely (5/6)

Rating for Financial Sustainability: Moderately Likely (4/6)

Rating for Financial Sustainability: Likely (5/6)

4.9 Factors Affecting Performance and Cross-Cutting Issues

4.9.1 Quality of Project Management and Supervision

4.9.1.1 UNEP/Implementing Agency:

127. UNEP provided consistent and effective oversight throughout the project's life cycle, ensuring that activities remained aligned with the approved work plan and strategic objectives. The project Managers maintained regular communication with implementing partners through regularly calls, email exchanges, and progress reviews, facilitating timely resolution of operational issues. UNEP's proactive role in linking the project to broader marine litter and climate resilience initiatives under the Chemicals and Pollution Subprogramme enhanced strategic coherence and resource leverage.

128. Adaptive management was a notable strength, with UNEP approving adjustments to activity sequencing in response to delays and limited implementing duration. However, some partners noted that approval processes for minor budget reallocations and activity modifications could be lengthy, occasionally slowing implementation. Overall, UNEP's supervisory role was rated highly for its technical guidance, responsiveness to contextual changes, and facilitation of synergies with related initiatives at the regional and global levels.

4.9.1.2 Partners/Executing Agency:

4.9.2 Stakeholders Participation and Cooperation

129. The implementing partners, Mahidol University, ISPONRE, Ministry of Environment Cambodia, and other technical collaborators, demonstrated strong technical leadership and effective coordination within their respective regions. They ensured that field data collection, capacity-building activities, and protocol validation were executed to a high standard and tailored to local contexts.

130. Timely delivery was generally achieved despite logistical challenges, with partners showing adaptability in re-sequencing activities when field access was delayed. In some cases, internal approval processes within national institutions slightly slowed the pace of implementation, but these were offset by efficient mobilisation of technical teams and local networks.

4.9.3 Responsiveness to Human Rights and Gender Equality

131. Stakeholder participation was broad and inclusive, engaging government agencies, academia, NGOs, and regional organisations in both design and delivery of activities. The project fostered a collaborative environment through multi-country workshops, regional forums, and technical exchanges.

132. Cooperation was strongest in the Mekong Basin countries, where pre-existing partnerships under the CounterMEASURE projects facilitated rapid uptake of protocols. Pacific Island implementing countries required more engagement time to build trust and establish working relationships, but participation rates improved over the course of implementation.
133. The project integrated gender considerations in training participation, with gender-disaggregated data collected for most capacity-building activities. While there was no standalone gender or human rights objective, activities were implemented in line with UN principles of equality and inclusion.
134. Attention to marginalised groups, including rural riverine and small-island communities, was implicit in site selection. However, systematic documentation of benefits to persons with disabilities or other vulnerable populations was limited, representing a gap for future project designs.

4.9.4 Environmental and Social Safeguards

135. The project presented low environmental and social risk, with activities focused on monitoring, capacity building, and knowledge exchange. Safeguards were embedded in UNEP's standard operational procedures and applied during site-based work, including ensuring informed consent for participation in surveys and workshops.
136. No safeguard-related incidents were reported. Environmental impacts from project operations were minimal, and virtual engagement was used where possible to reduce travel-related emissions.

4.9.5 Country Ownership and Driven-ness

137. Country ownership was strong, with all implementing national governments endorsing the project's monitoring protocols and integrating them into national frameworks. The initiative aligned closely with national priorities, enabling sustained commitment beyond the project term.
138. Some countries, such as Thailand and Vietnam, demonstrated high driven-ness by allocating domestic resources and creating institutional mandates for continued implementation. Smaller Pacific Island states showed strong political will but remain more dependent on external technical and financial support.

4.9.6 Communication and Public Awareness

139. The project's communication strategy leveraged regional events, online platforms, and publications to disseminate results and raise awareness among policymakers and technical stakeholders. Case studies and hotspot maps were shared via the GPML and other knowledge hubs.
140. Public-facing communication was less prominent, with outreach efforts primarily targeting technical and policy audiences rather than the general public. Greater emphasis on community-level awareness campaigns could have strengthened behaviour change outcomes alongside technical capacity gains.

Findings Statements on Factors Affecting Performance and Crosscutting:

141. Strong country ownership, inclusive stakeholder engagement, and high-quality technical delivery underpinned the project's overall performance. Gaps in systematic

documentation of benefits to vulnerable populations and limited public-facing outreach present opportunities for improvement in future interventions.

142. Stakeholder participation and cooperation have been broadly constructive across groups, with distinct strengths and practical needs emerging. Civil society organisations report tangible awareness gains from the project's workshops and forums and describe being better equipped to apply basic monitoring protocols in their local contexts. At the same time, they consistently ask for clearer coverage of the health effects of plastic pollution and for simple, affordable field kits and quick-start materials that would enable citizen-science approaches at community level. Several respondents also note that new linkages with local CSOs, recyclers and universities, are beginning to form, suggesting early signs of networking benefits.
143. Business and industry partners primarily engaged through webinars and networking events. They found these formats useful for exchanging knowledge and exploring opportunities but emphasised the need for more explicit avenues for collaboration with UNEP and project partners, e.g. clearly signposted implementing windows, co-financing mechanisms, data-sharing arrangements, and regular updates on upcoming activities and results. They also encouraged more proactive information dissemination to reach relevant firms across the Mekong and Pacific contexts.
144. Implementing partners highlight improved data collection, stronger policy tools and partnerships at national and regional levels, with particularly valuable technical backstopping and convening support in Pacific settings. Participant feedback on trainings and events has been positive, reinforcing the value of continued capacity development. National focal points likewise report capacity gains in technical knowledge, coordination and the use of monitoring frameworks, with early instances of these tools informing national plans and by-laws. However, two constraints persist across contexts: activities are still limited in scale and regularity relative to need, and more deliberate participant selection is required to ensure the "right" actors can attend and apply the learning.

Rating for Factors Affecting Performance and Cross-Cutting Issues: Satisfactory (5/6)

Rating for Quality of Project Management and Supervision: Highly Satisfactory (6/6)

Rating for Stakeholders Participation and Cooperation: Highly Satisfactory (6/6)

Rating for Responsiveness to Human Rights and Gender Equality: N/A

Rating for Environmental and Social Safeguards: N/A

Rating for Country Ownership and Driven-ness: Highly Satisfactory (6/6)

Rating for Communication and Public Awareness: Moderately Satisfactory (4/6)

The project's performance was strengthened by UNEP's effective supervision, technically capable implementing partners, and high levels of stakeholder participation and country ownership. These factors enabled the rapid uptake of standardized monitoring protocols and reinforced regional cooperation mechanisms. However, future interventions could benefit from systematically documenting benefits to vulnerable and marginalised groups, integrating explicit human rights and gender equality objectives, and expanding public-facing awareness campaigns alongside technical engagement. Enhancing early-stage coordination on communication strategies and ensuring dedicated resources for outreach could further amplify the project's long-term impact and community-level adoption.

5 CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

5.1 Conclusions

145. Overall, the project performed at a Highly Satisfactory level, with particularly strong achievements in strategic relevance, capacity building, and cross-regional cooperation. The intervention successfully bridged scientific monitoring with policy action, ensuring that evidence-based tools and protocols were embedded in national and regional frameworks across all five implementing countries. Comparative weaknesses were mainly observed in communication and outreach to the broader public, and in the explicit integration of human rights and gender equality dimensions into the results framework.
146. The main achievements of the project were: (i) development and validation of standardized macro- and microplastic monitoring protocols adapted to local hydrology and laboratory capacities that build upon the achievements of the preceding projects; (ii) substantial strengthening of technical capacity in national agencies, academic institutions, and regional bodies; and (iii) facilitation of structured South–South exchanges between Mekong Basin and Pacific Island countries.
147. The project demonstrated an innovative and scalable approach through its integration of standardized monitoring into national governance systems and its use of cross-regional peer learning to accelerate adoption. By combining scientific rigor with practical policy relevance, it has set a replicable model for other river basin and small-island contexts.
148. The sustainability of the project is rated as Likely, supported by formal government endorsements, integration of monitoring protocols into national action plans, and ongoing collaboration with regional organizations such as the Mekong River Commission and SPREP. However, long-term maintenance will depend on sustained budget allocations, continued stakeholder engagement, and political will to prioritize plastic pollution reduction.
149. No unintended negative effects were identified. In future projects, UNEP should consider embedding more explicit gender and social inclusion indicators in the results framework to ensure that the benefits of improved plastic pollution management are equitably distributed and measurable.
150. The project's contribution to capacity building was substantial, enhancing both technical and institutional competencies at multiple governance levels. Its role in promoting South–South cooperation was significant, creating a platform for sharing innovations and lessons between geographically and economically diverse countries. While gender equality was respected in engagement processes, it was not a primary design driver, and thus represents an area for further strengthening.
151. The project's achievements contribute to the global body of work on marine litter and circular economy transitions, directly supporting SDG 14.1, UNEA resolutions, and the Osaka Blue Ocean Vision. It has advanced the regional discourse on plastic pollution management from ad hoc efforts toward harmonized, data-driven action.

Responses to Key Strategic Questions

152. Regarding strategic question one on alignment to UNEP and donor priorities: The project demonstrated complete alignment, enabling policy uptake and long-term institutional embedding.
153. Regarding strategic question two on effectiveness: The combination of standardized monitoring, strong partner networks, and targeted capacity building ensured full delivery of outputs and a high proportion of outcomes achieved.
154. The table below provides a summary of the ratings and findings discussed in Chapter 4. Overall, the project demonstrates a rating of Highly Satisfactory, reflecting its strong strategic alignment, effective delivery of outputs and outcomes, and high likelihood of sustained impact.

UNEP Evaluation Office Validation of Performance Ratings:

The UNEP Evaluation Office formally quality assesses (see Annex VII) management led Terminal Review reports and validates the performance ratings therein by ensuring that the performance judgments made are consistent with evidence presented in the Review report and in-line with the performance standards set out for independent evaluations.

The Evaluation Office assesses a Terminal Review report in the same way as it assesses the initial draft of a Terminal Evaluation report. It applies the following assumptions in its validation process:

- That what is being assessed is the contents of the report and the extent to which it makes a consistent and justifiable case for the performance ratings it records.
- That the consultant has, within the report, presented all the evidence that was made available to them.
- That the Review has been based on a robust Theory of Change, reconstructed where necessary, which reflects UNEP's definitions at all levels of results.
- That the project team and key stakeholders have already reviewed a draft version of the report and provided substantive comments and made factual corrections to the Review Consultant, who has responded to them. The Evaluation Office assumes, therefore, that it has received the Final (revised) version of the report.

In this instance the Evaluation Office assesses the quality of the Report at the 'Moderately Satisfactory' level and validates the overall project performance rating at the '**Highly Satisfactory**' level.

Table 17: Summary of project findings and ratings²⁹

Criterion	Summary assessment	Rating	Justification for any ratings' changes due to validation (to be completed by the UNEP Evaluation Office – EOU)	EOU Validated Rating
Strategic Relevance	The project was firmly anchored in UNEP's MTS 2022–2025 and Programme of Work, fully aligning with the Chemicals and Pollutions subprogramme, and the Government of Japan's MARINE Initiative. It addressed urgent marine litter and climate resilience needs, with strong complementarity to regional and national frameworks.	HS	The rating is validated.	HS
1. Alignment to UNEP MTS, POW and Strategic Priorities	Full alignment with UNEP's mandate and thematic priorities, delivering on marine litter, climate resilience, and capacity-building goals.	HS	The rating is validated.	HS
2. Alignment to UNEP Donor/Partner strategic priorities	Fully aligned with the Government of Japan's ODA and Osaka Blue Ocean Vision priorities, supporting environmental sustainability, climate adaptation, and water-resource management.	HS	The rating is validated.	HS
3. Relevance to global, regional, sub-regional and national environmental priorities	Fully aligned with SDG 14.1, UNEA Res. 3/7, G20 Osaka Blue Ocean Vision, and national action plans; partial but relevant link to ASEAN Action Plan on Marine Debris.	HS	The rating is validated.	HS
4. Complementarity with existing interventions/ Coherence	Strong synergies with CounterMEASURE I and II, SPREP, and GPML; partial alignment with ASEAN initiatives, avoiding duplication while enhancing basin-wide coherence.	S	The rating is validated.	S
Quality of Project Design	Well-structured design drawing on lessons from previous UNEP projects, with a robust logical framework and realistic outputs; minor limitations in explicitly integrating gender and human rights indicators.	S	The rating is validated.	S

²⁹ 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	Justification for any ratings' changes due to validation (to be completed by the UNEP Evaluation Office – EOU)	EOU Validated Rating
Nature of External Context	Moderately favourable; The delay in the Project Manager's onboarding led to some delays but were effectively mitigated through adaptive management and virtual engagement.	S	The rating is validated. (<i>Nature of External Context is rated on a scale of 'favourability'</i>) <i>Note that the narrative in the left-hand column says 'Moderately Favourable', which is not consistent with the actual rating that is provided.</i>	F
Effectiveness	Outputs were delivered in full, outcomes were achieved or exceeded, and intermediate states are progressing toward the intended impact. Strong evidence of policy uptake in all five implementing countries.	HS	The rating is validated.	HS
1. Availability of outputs	All planned outputs delivered with high technical quality and relevance.	HS	The rating is validated.	HS
2. Achievement of project outcomes	Outcomes fully achieved with significant policy integration and cross-country replication.	HS	The rating is validated.	HS
3. Likelihood of impact (use 'likely' scale)	Evidence and enabling conditions suggest impacts are likely to be realised within the next 5–10 years.	HS	The rating is revised. The reviewer acknowledges (Table 15) that 1) only some intermediate states were achieved, 2) assumptions for the change process from intermediate states to impact only partially hold, and 3) drivers to support transition from intermediate states to impact are partially in place. These conditions meet the requirements of only the 'Likely' rating, not the 'Highly Likely' rating given. Therefore, the rating has been adjusted to 'Likely'.	L
Financial Management	Sound adherence to UNEP and donor procedures; complete financial records provided; expenditures aligned with planned activities.	HS	The rating is validated.	HS
1. Adherence to UNEP's financial policies and procedures	Fully compliant, with no significant deviations.	HS	The rating is validated.	HS
2. Completeness of project financial information	All requested documents provided with sufficient detail for analysis.	HS	The rating is validated.	HS

Criterion	Summary assessment	Rating	Justification for any ratings' changes due to validation (to be completed by the UNEP Evaluation Office – EOU)	EOU Validated Rating
Efficiency	Highly cost-effective, leveraging pre-existing networks, tools, and data. Adaptive management ensured timely delivery, while minimising the carbon footprint.	HS	The rating is revised. The report (Para 107) notes that the project underwent a justified one-year no-cost extension, which does not meet the requirement of the 'Highly Satisfactory' rating. Therefore, the rating has been adjusted to 'Satisfactory'.	S
Monitoring and Reporting	Effective monitoring enabled adaptive management; reporting was timely and complete, though gender-disaggregated data were inconsistently captured.	S	The rating is revised. Based on the correct calculation for aggregating the two sub-categories, the rating is validated at the 'Highly Satisfactory' level. There are no ratings' changes in any sub-criteria under the 'Monitoring and Reporting' criterion.	HS
1. Monitoring of project implementation	Robust monitoring systems with regular progress tracking and feedback loops.	HS	The rating is validated.	HS
2. Project reporting	Timely and comprehensive but could have included more systematic gender and vulnerability data.	S	The rating is validated.	S
Sustainability (use 'likely' scale)	Strong socio-political and institutional support; financial sustainability dependent on continued domestic budget allocations and donor support for scaling.	L	The rating is revised. Based on the correct calculation (i.e. the aggregated score is taken as the lowest of the three sub-categories as they are considered self-limiting), the rating is validated at the 'Moderately Likely' level.	ML
1. Socio-political sustainability	High government commitment to integrating protocols into policy frameworks.	L	The rating is validated.	L
2. Financial sustainability	National budget lines emerging but not yet sufficient for full scaling without external support.	ML	The rating is validated.	ML

Criterion	Summary assessment	Rating	Justification for any ratings' changes due to validation (to be completed by the UNEP Evaluation Office – EOU)	EOU Validated Rating
3. Institutional sustainability	Strong integration of methods into national and regional systems ensures durability.	L	The rating is revised. The report notes (Para 122) that maintaining trained personnel and institutional memories are still potential risks to continued institutional sustainability, although some mechanism was in place to support the institutionalisation of project outcomes. Therefore, the rating has been adjusted to 'Moderately Likely'.	ML
Factors Affecting Performance	Effective project management, strong stakeholder engagement, and high-country ownership were key drivers of success.	S	The rating is validated.	S
1. Quality of project management and supervision	UNEP and partners consistently provided timely guidance, adaptive oversight, and robust risk mitigation. Project delivery benefited from milestone-based payments, stringent partner due diligence, and real-time financial tracking via the Umoja system, ensuring deliverables were met before fund release and budgets adhered to donor requirements. Established UNEP and national networks were leveraged to coordinate activities and navigate external risks such as floods or military exercises without major disruption.	HS	The rating is validated.	HS
2.1 UNEP/Implementing Agency:	UNEP acted as the central implementing agency, ensuring strategic alignment with national frameworks (e.g., Vietnam's National Action Plan on Circular Economy, Thailand's Pollution Control Department protocols). It provided high-level policy engagement, technical backstopping, and coordinated South–South exchanges. UNEP also secured and managed full upfront financing from Japan, enabling flexible yet tightly controlled resource allocation.	HS	The rating is revised. According to the reviewer (Para 127), some stakeholders provided feedback on the need to improve lengthy approval processes, which led to slowed project implementation. Although it might not be attributable to the project's ability, overall, it casts doubt on the 'Highly Satisfactory' rating being provided to this sub-criterion, following the UNEP Criteria Ratings Description Matrix. Therefore, the rating has been adjusted to 'Satisfactory'.	S

Criterion	Summary assessment	Rating	Justification for any ratings' changes due to validation (to be completed by the UNEP Evaluation Office – EOU)	EOU Validated Rating
2.2 Partners/Executing Agency:	Implementing partners, namely Mahidol University (Thailand), ISPONRE (Vietnam), Ministry of Environment (Cambodia), EQPB (Palau)AIT, GEC, SIWI, and RIHN were responsible for technical tool adaptation, training delivery, and national-level capacity building. They tailored standardized sampling protocols to local hydrology and laboratory capacity, conducted six regional workshops and eight national trainings reaching over 1,200 practitioners, and coordinated national consultations. Partners also contributed to risk mitigation through existing networks, adjusted activity schedules in response to local events, and maintained policy relevance through alignment with government mandates.	HS	The rating is validated.	HS
2. Stakeholders' participation and cooperation	Broad and active engagement across government, academia, and civil society.	HS	The rating is validated.	HS
3. Responsiveness to human rights and gender equality	Principles applied in engagement but limited explicit tracking or indicators.	-	The rating needs to be provided, following the UNEP Review Criteria Ratings Description Matrix. The reviewer acknowledges (Para 133) that the project had limited systematic documentation of benefits to persons with disabilities or other vulnerable populations. This does not meet the requirements of the 'Satisfactory' rating or above. Therefore, the rating stands at the 'Moderately Satisfactory' rating.	MS

Criterion	Summary assessment	Rating	Justification for any ratings' changes due to validation (to be completed by the UNEP Evaluation Office – EOU)	EOU Validated Rating
4. Environmental and social safeguards	No adverse impacts: safeguards appropriately applied.	-	The rating needs to be provided, following the UNEP Review Criteria Ratings Description Matrix. The report does not provide enough evidence to substantiate the rating, but it notes (Para 134 & 135) that the project entailed low environmental and social risk, and safeguard-related incidents did not take place. (See also Annex IV) Therefore, the rating is presumed to stand at the 'Satisfactory' level, although there was a strong need for the reviewer to collect the required evidence to provide a justified rating.	S
5. Country ownership and driven-ness	High-level endorsement and integration into national action plans.	HS	The rating is revised. The report notes (Para 137) that country ownership varies by countries/regions; Thailand and Vietnam have a higher level of ownership and driven-ness, while smaller Pacific Island states do not. This does not meet the requirement of the 'Highly Satisfactory' rating. Therefore, the rating has been adjusted to 'Satisfactory'.	S
6. Communication and public awareness	Effective within technical networks; scope for broader community outreach.	MS	The rating is validated.	MS
Overall Project Performance Rating	The project achieved its intended outcomes with high strategic alignment, efficient use of resources, and strong prospects for sustainability, earning a Highly Satisfactory overall rating.	HS	The overall project performance rating is validated.	HS

5.2 Lessons Learned

Lesson Learned #1:	It was imperative to establish an early consensus on a compact, regionally harmonised monitoring protocol in order to produce comparable evidence and ensure that tools were truly beneficial.
Context/comment:	Across five implementing countries, inconsistent baselines and fragmented data-collection protocols hindered the accurate mapping of riverine plastic hotspots. In the Mekong and Pacific Islands, partners relied on disparate methodologies such as some manual surveys, others drone or AI tools, making cross-country comparison challenging. Standardizing indicators and leveraging emerging technologies (e.g. AI-assisted image analysis, drone surveillance) proved critical to fill data gaps and build a unified evidence base. This lesson underscores the need, in any multi-country plastic-pollution effort, to invest early in harmonized monitoring frameworks and shared digital repositories.
Cross-reference(s) to relevant paragraphs	"Lessons learned and the way forward," Section 1: Data Collection and Standardization Challenges

Lesson Learned #2:	The management of plastic pollution only gained momentum when policy instruments, financing mechanisms, and institutional responsibilities were aligned end-to-end, with the explicit recognition of the contributions of the informal and community sectors.
Context/comment:	Weak or uneven policy frameworks, especially around Extended Producer Responsibility (EPR), and siloed governance arrangements limited the project's ability to translate monitoring data into sustained action. While ad hoc workshops equipped stakeholders with technical know-how, enduring impact required integrated policy design across production, consumption and waste sectors. Moreover, gender and community equity considerations were not systematically woven into regulatory reforms or stakeholder dialogues, reducing the inclusivity of interventions. Future initiatives should pair technical protocols with lifecycle-oriented regulations, disaggregated data collection and gender-sensitive engagement to ensure policies are both evidence-based and socially equitable.
Cross-reference(s) to relevant paragraphs	"Lessons learned and the way forward," Section 2: Policy and Governance Gaps

Lesson Learned #3:	Institutionalising South–South exchange as an ongoing program, as opposed to conducting one-time seminars, resulted in substantial adoption.
Context/comment:	Regular technical exchanges and case-study webinars accelerated uptake of best practices, such as Japan’s source-to-sea methodology, in both Mekong and Pacific contexts. However, divergent national priorities and weak institutional linkages sometimes impeded systematic knowledge sharing. Effective regional partnerships require formalized collaboration platforms with clear mandates, sustained financing and dedicated capacity-building hubs. Embedding these mechanisms in existing regional agreements (e.g. ASEAN Marine Debris Action Plan) can help overcome political and technical barriers to transboundary plastic-pollution management.
Cross-reference(s) to relevant paragraphs	“Lessons learned and the way forward,” Section 3: Knowledge Sharing and Regional Engagement

5.3 Recommendations

Recommendation #1:	Develop and implement a gender-responsive and human rights–inclusive monitoring framework for plastic pollution management projects, ensuring the systematic collection of sex-disaggregated and vulnerability data at both output and outcome levels.
Challenge/problem to be addressed by the recommendation:	While the project applied UN principles of inclusivity during stakeholder engagement, gender-disaggregated data and the specific tracking of benefits for marginalised or vulnerable groups were inconsistently captured (paras. 116, 118, 135). This limits the ability to assess equitable benefit distribution and design targeted capacity-building interventions in future projects.
Cross-reference(s) to relevant paragraphs	116, 118, 135
Priority Level:	High
Type of Recommendation	Monitoring and reporting enhancement.
Responsibility:	UNEP Industry and Economy Division in collaboration with national focal points and implementing partners.
Proposed implementation time-frame:	Within 12 months of project inception for future or follow-on initiatives.

Recommendation #2:	Explore options to strengthen collaboration and resource mobilization at the regional level to support the continued application of the standardised plastic pollution monitoring protocols beyond implementing sites.
Challenge/problem to be addressed by the recommendation:	Although socio-political and institutional sustainability are strong, financial sustainability is moderately likely due to reliance on external funding (paras. 125, 126, 127, 129, 146, 150). Without secured domestic budget lines and structured regional coordination, replication and scaling may stall.
Cross-reference(s) to relevant paragraphs	125, 126, 127, 129, 146, 150
Priority Level:	High
Type of Recommendation	Sustainability and institutionalisation.
Responsibility:	UNEP Industry and Economy Division, national environment ministries, Mekong River Commission, and SPREP.
Proposed implementation time-frame:	Secure commitments within 18 months post-project closure.

Recommendation #3:	Develop a comprehensive mapping and coordination mechanism for regional and national plastic pollution initiatives to identify synergies, avoid duplication, and optimise resource use.
Challenge/problem to be addressed by the recommendation:	While the project demonstrated strong complementarity with UNEP and partner initiatives, there was no dedicated inventory of concurrent interventions (para. 81, 84, 142, 146). This gap limits the ability to systematically coordinate and leverage shared resources, risking parallel activities and reduced efficiency.
Cross-reference(s) to relevant paragraphs	81, 84, 142, 146
Priority Level:	Medium
Type of Recommendation	Strategic planning and coordination.
Responsibility:	UNEP Industry and Economy Division in partnership with ASEAN, MRC, SPREP, and other regional coordination bodies.
Proposed implementation time-frame:	Within 12 months of project start in any follow-on phase.

Recommendation #4:	Integrate a targeted communication and public awareness strategy into future project designs, ensuring multi-lingual and culturally adapted materials for riverine and coastal communities.
Challenge/problem to be addressed by the recommendation:	The project effectively engaged technical stakeholders but lacked a structured communication framework tailored to local communities and the general public (para. 140, 141). Strengthening public awareness can amplify behavioural change, local ownership, and policy support.
Cross-reference(s) to relevant paragraphs	140, 141.
Priority Level:	Medium
Type of Recommendation	Outreach and engagement.
Responsibility:	UNEP Communication Division, national communication teams, and local NGOs.
Proposed implementation timeframe:	Design and launch within the first 6 months of project implementation.

ANNEX I. REVIEW FRAMEWORK

Review criteria	Review questions	Review sub-questions
1. Strategic Relevance	To what extent is the project aligned with the strategic priorities of UNEP (including its Medium-Term Strategy and Programme of Work), the policies and needs of donor(s), national and subnational priorities of implementing countries, and the interests of targeted beneficiaries and key stakeholders?	- To what extent is the project aligned with the identified needs and priorities of stakeholders at the regional, national, and subnational levels in the participating countries? - To what extent does the project demonstrate complementarity with existing interventions and institutional initiatives addressing plastic pollution and climate resilience at the time of its design and inception? - To what extent is the project relevant to poverty-related objectives, particularly in terms of supporting vulnerable communities whose livelihoods are affected by plastic pollution and environmental degradation?
2. Effectiveness	To what extent have results been realized?	- To what extent has the planned output been delivered in accordance with the project design and work plan across participating countries and thematic areas? - To what extent have the intended outcomes been achieved, particularly with respect to changes in stakeholder behaviour, institutional capacity, and uptake of project tools or practices? - To what extent is the project likely to contribute to the intended long-term impact, considering progress to date and the presence of enabling conditions or barriers? - To what extent has the project applied a human rights-based and gender equality approach in delivering results, and what tangible outcomes have been observed in this regard?
3. Financial Management	What has been the quality of the financial management system in place and its implementation?	- To what extent has the project adhered to UNEP's financial policies, procedures, and reporting requirements in the planning, disbursement, and use of funds? - To what extent has the financial information provided during implementation been complete, timely, and accurate, including budget revisions, expenditure reporting, and co-financing data? - To what extent has there been effective communication and coordination between the project's financial personnel and technical/project management staff to ensure sound financial oversight and decision-making?
4. Efficiency	To what extent have project activities been efficient in reaching of output level results?	- To what extent has the project demonstrated cost-effectiveness in the use of financial, technical, and human resources for achieving its intended output? - To what extent were project activities implemented in a timely manner, with appropriate sequencing and scheduling to support smooth delivery of results? - To what extent were human resources, including staff, consultants, and implementing partners, deployed effectively and managed efficiently to support project implementation?
5. Monitoring and reporting	What has been the quality of project monitoring and reporting?	- To what extent was the monitoring system appropriately designed, adequately resourced, and aligned with the project's results framework and Theory of Change? - To what extent was project implementation effectively monitored, with timely collection and use of relevant data to inform decision-making and track progress against indicators? - To what extent has project reporting (e.g. progress reports, financial reports, final report) been accurate, complete, and timely, and did it reflect actual performance and challenges encountered during implementation?
6. Sustainability	To what extent are the results achieved by the project likely to be maintained without additional support?	- Socio-political sustainability - Financial sustainability - Institutional sustainability
7. Factors and Processes Affecting Project Performance	- To what extent was the project's design and institutional setup adequately prepared to enable timely and effective implementation, with clearly defined roles, risk mitigation measures, and operational arrangements in place at the outset? - To what extent did UNEP and its implementing partners provide effective oversight, coordination, and adaptive management throughout the duration of the project?	

Review criteria	Review questions	Review sub-questions
and Cross-Cutting Issues	iii. To what extent did the project facilitate inclusive, sustained, and constructive participation and cooperation among key stakeholders, including government entities, civil society, academic institutions, and private sector actors? iv. To what extent did the project identify, incorporate, and respond to relevant human rights and gender equity considerations in its design and implementation processes? v. To what extent did the project identify, assess, and mitigate potential environmental and social risks in accordance with UNEP's safeguard policies and standards? vi. To what extent did the project demonstrate alignment with national priorities, and to what degree did it promote country ownership, leadership, and institutional commitment throughout its implementation? vii. To what extent did the project establish and implement effective communication and public outreach strategies to disseminate results, raise awareness, and engage relevant audiences?	
Strategic issues	Strategic questions	
1. Coherence. Collaboration, complementarity	To what extent, and in what ways, was the work of the project complementary or coherent with other UNEP work, or Sub-programme or elsewhere in UNEP's Programme of Work?	
2. Added value	What added value did the work of the evaluand bring to UNEP's work in this thematic area and how is it visible, including in relation to poverty?	
3. Contribution to the host project, PCP / Sub-programme	To what extent has the project contributed to the host project and sub-programme of which it is a part?	
4. Leverage gained	To what extent, and in what ways, did the work under the project enable UNEP to drive efficiency and effectiveness at any level above that of the evaluand itself, at the level of the outcomes, intermediate states and/or long-lasting impact of projects, at the level of the POW Direct Outcomes?	
5. Governance	What has been the usefulness of the governance setup of the project?	
6. Monitoring	How well was the Monitoring Plan of the evaluand contributing to that of the host PRC-approved project, PCP or sub-programme?	
7. Reporting	How are the activities and achievements of the evaluand reflected in the reporting of the host PRC-approved project, PCP or Subprogramme?	

ANNEX II. STAKEHOLDERS CONSULTED DURING THE REVIEW

Stakeholders consulted during the review *[No names should be included]*

Organisation	Position	Role in the project	Gender
UNEP	Financial Management Officer	Administration	M
UNEP	Programme Management Officer	Project Manager responsible for output 3 and overall project	F
UNEP	Regional Sub-programme Coordinator	Project manager responsible for output 1 and 2	M

ANNEX III. KEY DOCUMENTS CONSULTED

Project planning and reporting documents

- Promotion of Community Resilience Against Plastic Pollution and Climate Change in the Mekong River Basin - MULTI-YEAR WORK PLAN
- Sub-Project Document: Promotion of Community Resilience Against Plastic Pollution and Climate Change in the Mekong River Basin
- Regional Office Asia and The Pacific (ROAP)-Routine Slip for ROAP Senior Management Approval to Process, New Sub-Projects
- Project Description: Promotion of Community Resilience Against Plastic Pollution and Climate Change in the Mekong River Basin
- Promotion of Community Resilience Against Plastic Pollution and Climate Change in the Mekong River Basin Project Proposal
- Chemical and Waste Management Programme: Project application special programme eight round of application 2024, Strengthening Institutional Capacity Across the Plastic Value Chain to reduce plastic and chemical pollution – MONRE
- Draft Project Proposal: The Establishment of Community-based Plastic Waste Management in Tonle Sap Lake - an effective approach to address the Plastic Pollution in Cambodia's Water System
- Draft Project Proposal: Fostering Entrepreneurship in circular economy: potential growth of the Recycling Sector
- Draft Project Proposal: PROMOTING BEHAVIOR CHANGE FOR A CIRCULAR ECONOMY IN PLASTICS
- Draft Project Proposal: Monitoring and Assessment of Plastic Pollution in Tonle Sap Lake
- REPORT ON DIALOGUES WITH RELEVANT STAKEHOLDERS IN CAMBODIA: Project "Strengthening Plastic Pollution Management in Asia and the Pacific-Cambodia"
- Survey Exploring Solutions for Plastic Pollution: A Survey of Stakeholders and Experts in Cambodia
- Post-Workshop Report: Cost of Inaction and Action for Plastic Pollution, 1st February 2024 Hybrid Workshop at The Sukosol Hotel Bangkok
- Regional Knowledge-Sharing Meeting on Plastic Pollution in the Asia - Pacific region - 7 March 2024 | 09:00 – 17:00 (ICT) Bangkok, Thailand
- Post-Workshop Report: Multistakeholder Knowledge-Sharing Meeting on Plastic Pollution – 8 March 2024 (8:30-17:00 Bangkok Time) Bangkok, Thailand/ Hybrid at Centara Life Hotel Phra Nakhon, M Ball Room
- Post-Workshop Report: Plastic Pollution Monitoring in the Pacific Islands at The Raweekanlaya Bangkok – 8 March 2024
- Post-Workshop Report: Importance of Regional Monitoring and Assessment of Plastic Pollution - Enhancing National Capacity for Regional Actions – 11 July 2024 Hybrid Workshop at The Sukosol Hotel, Bangkok
- Post-Workshop Report: Empowering Youth - Interactive Workshop for Innovative Solutions in Monitoring, Evaluating, and Managing Plastic Pollution – 20 August 2024 In-person Workshop Milton Bender Auditorium, Asian Institute of Technology, Pathum Thani

- Report “Japan Study Programme on transformation towards a circular economy for plastics – 23-27 September 2024, Osaka Japan by GEC Environmental Centre Foundation
- Forum on Mitigating Plastic Pollution from Runoff 29 October – 1st November 2024 at Centara Life Hotel Phra Nakhon, Bangkok, Thailand | Hybrid
- SIWI Project Concept Note – Capacity Development for Preventing Plastic Pollution from Source to Sea in the Asia-Pacific Region
- Summary Report Workshop: National Capacity Building for Plastic Pollution in the Pacific Island Countries
- Post Workshop Report “the Ocean SDGs Conference for EXPO 2025” 28 September 2024 Hybrid Workshop, the Kyoto Satoyama SDGs Lab (Kotos), Japan, <https://www.kotos-kyoto.jp/>
- Post-Event Report “Gomi-Zero EXPO 2025 in Kyoto” 14-15, February 2025, Hybrid Seminar and Workshop, QUESTION, Kyoto, Japan, <https://question.kyoto-shinkin.co.jp/> and the Kyoto Satoyama SDGs Lab (Kotosu), Japan <https://www.kotos-kyoto.jp/>
- Post-Conference Report “Closing Conference: Strengthening Plastic Pollution Management in Asian and the Pacific at Amari Watergate Bangkok, Bangkok, Thailand Hybrid Workshop 5-6 March 2024
- A Roadmap for Improvement of Plastic Monitoring Tools and Protocols in Thailand – Plastic Waste Management Team
- Identifying and Addressing in the Riverine Plastic Monitoring in Thailand – Plastic Waste Management Team
- The Stocktaking of Tools and Protocols for Monitoring Plastic Pollution in Lower Mekong River Basin – Plastic Waste Management Team
- Thailand National Competency Database on Plastic Waste Management
- (FINAL DRAFT) Technical Report on Best Practices, Policies, and Business Cases on Circular Economy for Plastic in Japan

ANNEX IV. 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.) ³⁰	No, high-risk ESS issues identified. The project was categorised as low environmental and social risk. Potential minor ESS considerations related to stakeholder engagement inclusivity (SS 1.7 – Participation of Marginalised/Vulnerable Groups) and occupational safety for field monitoring activities (SS 3.1 – Worker Health and Safety).
For any ESS issues identified at project design, were <u>mitigation strategies</u> developed (Y/N)? (If yes, briefly describe)	Yes, Mitigation was embedded through UNEP's standard operational safeguards: ensuring gender-responsive stakeholder engagement, adherence to local safety protocols during field sampling, and use of existing government/academic teams trained in safe fieldwork practices.
Were any <u>gaps</u> in ESS issues identified at the review inception phase (Y/N)? (If yes, briefly describe)	No, No additional ESS risks were identified during the inception phase. The review confirmed that the low-risk categorisation remained valid.

ESS MONITORING AT PROJECT IMPLEMENTATION	
Is there evidence that the potential emergence of ESS issues was actively <u>monitored</u> during project implementation (Y/N)? ³¹ (If yes, briefly describe)	Yes, Activity reports and partner updates indicated ongoing adherence to UNEP safeguards. Stakeholder participation was monitored to ensure gender balance and representation from marginalised groups where feasible.
Is there a justification for the absence of ESS monitoring (Y/N)? (If yes, briefly describe) ³²	The project tracked participation rates in workshops (gender-disaggregated), ensured that field monitoring activities complied with local safety requirements, and maintained open communication channels with national focal points to address any emerging issues.

MANAGEMENT RESPONSIVENESS DURING PROJECT IMPLEMENTATION	
Identify the ESS issues/events <u>triggered</u> ³³ by the project. ³⁴	None – No unanticipated ESS issues were triggered during implementation.
Describe <u>consequences</u> of ESS issues/events during project implementation.	Not applicable – No negative ESS consequences observed.
Describe the management response and identify supporting documentation. ^{35, 36}	Not applicable – No corrective actions required; safeguards compliance maintained throughout.
Were negative ESS effects offset by management response (Y/N)? (If yes, briefly describe)	N/A – No negative ESS effects occurred.

³⁰ Select from the list of Environmental and Social Safeguards Risks in Table 1 of the template (tool 14, Safeguards Assessment Template).

³¹ **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.

³² For instance, during COVID, access to the field may have been restricted

³³ '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.

³⁴ Select from the list of Environmental and Social Safeguards Risks in Table 1 of the template (tool 14, Safeguards Assessment Template).

³⁵ 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.

³⁶ E.g., GEF Project Implementation Report (PIR), Progress Report, Minutes, etc.

ANNEX V. IMPLEMENTATION PLAN OF RECOMMENDATIONS

Project Title and Reference No.:	Strengthening Plastic Pollution Management in Asia and the Pacific (Mekong River Basin), SB-021354
Contact Person (TM/PM):	Hiroko Matsuo, Programme Management Officer

RECOMMENDATIONS	PLANS			
	ACCEPTED (YES/ NO/ PARTIALLY)	WHAT WILL BE DONE?	EXPECTED COMPLETION DATE	RESPONSIBLE OFFICER/ UNIT/ DIVISION/ AGENCY
#1: Develop and implement a gender-responsive and human rights–inclusive monitoring framework for plastic pollution management projects, ensuring the systematic collection of sex-disaggregated and vulnerability data at both output and outcome levels	Yes	UNEP will ensure that a gender-responsive and human rights–inclusive monitoring framework will be incorporated in the ongoing and next phase of the plastic-related projects, and human right-based approach is considered in new projects under the UNEP Plastics Initiative.	Ongoing	Industry and Economy Division, Regional Office for Asia and the Pacific
#2: Explore options to strengthen collaboration and resource mobilization at the regional level to support the continued application of the standardised plastic pollution monitoring protocols beyond implementing sites	Yes	UNEP will explore opportunities to engage with stakeholders, partners and relevant networks in the region to identify potential synergies that can support the continued application of standardized plastic pollution monitoring protocols, by utilising the regional events such as SEA of Solutions 2025 in December 2025 to continue the momentum in addressing plastic pollution in the region. Engagement with stakeholders and partners in the region will be continued through other	2025 Ongoing	Industry and Economy Division, Regional Office for Asia and the Pacific

RECOMMENDATIONS	PLANS			
	ACCEPTED (YES/ NO/ PARTIALLY)	WHAT WILL BE DONE?	EXPECTED COMPLETION DATE	REPOSIBLE OFFICER/ UNIT/ DIVISION/ AGENCY
		projects under the UNEP Plastics Initiative to integrate plastic pollution monitoring into the activities, depending on the needs in the region and countries.		
#3: Develop a comprehensive mapping and coordination mechanism for regional and national plastic pollution initiatives to identify synergies, avoid duplication, and optimise resource use.	Yes	Through other ongoing projects under the UNEP Plastics Initiative, additional support will be provided to effectively strengthen regional and national capacities to address plastic pollution by identifying synergies, avoiding duplication, optimizing resource use, and setting priorities across projects. The SEA of Solutions 2025 will be held in December 2025 as a regional platform for sharing innovative solutions and knowledge and identifying synergies to find solutions to end plastic pollution by leveraging partnerships across the Asia-Pacific.	Ongoing 2025	Industry and Economy Division, Regional Office for Asia and the Pacific
#4: Integrate a targeted communication and public awareness strategy into future project designs, ensuring multi-lingual and culturally adapted materials for riverine and coastal communities.	Yes	A targeted communication and awareness-raising strategy and implementation measures that take into account language considerations to better engage local communities will be incorporated in the ongoing and future projects under the UNEP Plastics Initiative, including the current project implemented in Thailand, Fiji, and Palau, as well as the upcoming project in Malaysia starting in April 2026.	Ongoing	Industry and Economy Division, Regional Office for Asia and the Pacific

ANNEX VI. BRIEF CV OF THE REVIEWER

Name	Worrawan Jirathanapiwat
Profession	External Consultant
Nationality	Thai
Country experience	- Asia: Thailand, Japan, Sri Lanka, Vietnam, Cambodia, India, Singapore, Malaysia, Myanmar, Indonesia, Philippines, Nepal, UAE - Europe: United Kingdom, Germany, Austria, Sweden, Finland - Americas: Costa Rica, USA - Africa: South Africa
Education	PhD Candidate, Family Medicine Department, McGill University

Short biography

Worrawan Jirathanapiwat is an accomplished evaluator and researcher with more than 15 years of experience across Southeast Asia. Her expertise lies in applying OECD DAC criteria and theory-based evaluation to assess the effectiveness, impact, and sustainability of development programs. She has led evaluations for major international organizations including Save the Children, Plan International, GIZ, Terre des Hommes, and UNICEF, focusing on projects related to climate change adaptation, sustainable agriculture, environmental conservation, peacebuilding, and social inclusion. Her leadership includes directing multi-country evaluations such as the Sustainable Rice Platform Comparative Study in India and Vietnam and the CINTALAM baseline assessment in Southern Thailand, which strengthened youth-led climate action and resilience. She has also worked on conservation-focused evaluations like Our River Our Life in Southeast Asia, integrating ecological perspectives with child rights. Beyond evaluation, Worrawan has contributed to research on low-carbon cities, migration in the Mekong Basin, and environmental rights law, ensuring that community voices and participatory approaches shape policy and program recommendations. With advanced degrees in International Human Rights Law, International Peace Studies, and Social Program Evaluation, she bridges rigorous analytical methods with a deep commitment to environmental sustainability and inclusive development.

Key specialties and capabilities cover:

- Design and implementation of evaluation frameworks using OECD DAC criteria and theory-based evaluation
- Leadership of multi-country and multi-sector evaluations on environment, climate change, and social inclusion
- Expertise in climate action, sustainable agriculture, environmental conservation, and resilience building
- Strong skills in qualitative and quantitative research, participatory approaches, and stakeholder engagement
- Capacity building and training on M&E tools, risk management, and organizational development
- Integrating child rights, gender equality, and disability inclusion into evaluation and research processes

Selected assignments and experiences:

- Team Leader (Evaluation) – *Sustainable Rice Platform Comparative Study (India and Vietnam, GIZ)*: assessed transition to sustainable farming and environmental impacts.
- Team Leader (Evaluation) – *Thai Rice NAMA Project (Thailand, GIZ)*: evaluated technology adoption for climate-smart agriculture.

- Team Leader (Baseline Assessment) – *CINTALAM Project (Southern Thailand, Save the Children)*: youth-led climate action and resilience building.
- Internal Evaluator – *Our River Our Life (Southeast Asia, Terre des Hommes Germany)*: applied ecological child rights lens to conservation initiatives.
- Lead Evaluator – *We Belong #Status Project (Thailand, Plan International)*: assessed project impact on stateless and ethnic youth.
- Evaluator/Advisor – projects on disability inclusion, health literacy, peacebuilding, and COVID-19 recovery with UNICEF, ActionAid, Malteser International, and others.
- Research Leader/Contributor – studies on low-carbon and climate-resilient cities, migration in the Mekong Basin, and environmental rights law.

ANNEX VII. QUALITY ASSESSMENT OF THE REVIEW REPORT

Review Title: “Strengthening Plastic Pollution Management in Asia and the Pacific (Mekong River Basin)”

Consultant: Ms. Worrawan Jirathanapiwat

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

Report Quality Criteria	UNEP Evaluation Office Comments	Final Report Rating
Section A: Executive Summary	Assessment	
1. Does the <i>Executive Summary</i> 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 review object - review objectives, scope and methodology - the overall project review rating - a summary of main review findings, including key features of performance (strengths and weaknesses) - summary responses to key strategic review questions - summary of main conclusions, lessons learned and recommendations	<u>Coverage/omissions:</u> Almost all necessary elements are covered, except for summary responses to key strategic review questions. <u>Strengths/weaknesses:</u> The Executive Summary serves well as a concise presentation of review findings. Major aspects of the project’s performance are generally well presented, which enables readers to understand the gist of the review report. The section covers both achievements and drawbacks, although the weaknesses of the project are only thinly analyzed throughout the entire report. Gender and human rights dimensions are only briefly mentioned in Para 6, in contrast to other findings that are well described in the Executive Summary. Another potential weakness of this section is that similar strengths and weaknesses of the project are repeatedly described throughout the Executive Summary, which is redundant. Instead, inserting a summary of more analytical findings on key review criteria, including summary responses to key strategic review questions, would have enhanced the quality of the Executive Summary. Except for these minor shortcomings, the Executive Summary is well-crafted, acting as a standalone overview of the review product.	5
Section B: The Project	Assessment	
2. Does the report clearly describe the <i>key parameters, scale and complexity of the evaluand</i>? 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)	<u>Coverage/omissions:</u> Most essential information is covered, except for dates of project approval and whether the project has been evaluated in the past. <u>Strengths/weaknesses:</u> The ‘Introduction’ section is generally well presented with a proper description of most required information. It serves as a good introduction to the report and successfully situates the evaluand in the institutional context. A minor caveat is that the project underwent a one no-cost extension, but it is not mentioned in this section at	5

Report Quality Criteria	UNEP Evaluation Office Comments	Final Report Rating
- 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	all (no reference to other sections of the report was made, either). Information is not necessarily properly fed into an appropriate section. For example, results analyses are incorporated together with an explanation of the original results framework, which should have been done in the 'Effectiveness' section. Also, the project's alignment with UNEP corporate strategies is mentioned in the 'Intervention Context' sub-section, not the 'Institutional Context'.	
Section C: Review Methods and Theory of Change	Assessment	
3. Does the report present a clear, comprehensive and adequate description of the <i>review methodology</i>? Consider how well it presents the following elements, and their adequacy based on the scope of the review: - statement of the purpose of the review and the key intended audience for the review 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 (<i>including in a table broken down by gender</i>) - 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)	<u>Coverage/omissions:</u> The section includes most required information, except for data verification. <u>Strengths/weaknesses:</u> The section is well elaborated with most required information, which enables readers to easily understand an overview of review approaches. Especially, data collection methods, review limitations, and their mitigation measures are well elaborated. Sampling strategies are mentioned, but the narrative explanation (para 49) is not aligned with the description in the sampling table (Table 6). A clearer description of sampling (e.g., '15 individuals were interviewed out of 50, who were engaged in the project') would have enhanced clarity of sampling strategies. A list of stakeholders that were interviewed (Annex II) includes only 3 individuals, which is not consistent with the sampling strategies mentioned in the main body of the report. It is noted that a purposive sampling method is well used to cover stakeholders with diverse backgrounds (i.e., civil society, private sectors), but there is no specific mention of the gender dimensions of the review. The sampling table (Table 6) does not include gender disaggregation, either.	4

Report Quality Criteria	UNEP Evaluation Office Comments	Final Report Rating
- data verification methods (e.g. triangulation) - data analysis methods (e.g. scoring, thematic analysis) - review limitations and mitigation measures (e.g. how these were addressed by the reviewer) - consideration for ethics and human rights issues, including how anonymity and confidentiality were protected		
4. Does the report describe an assessment and reformulation of the <i>Theory of Change</i>, and present an adequate articulation of the TOC causal pathways that were used to assess project performance (<i>narratively and diagrammatically</i>)? Consider how well the report presents: - whether the project design included a TOC - how the <i>TOC at Review</i>³⁷ was designed (e.g. who was involved, etc) - confirmation/reconstruction of results in accordance with UNEP definitions (<i>including reformulation table, which may have initially been presented in the Inception Report and should appear in the Main Review report.</i>) - articulation of causal pathways - identification of drivers and assumptions - identification of key actors in the change process	<u>Coverage/omissions:</u> Most required information is added in this section, except for key actors in the change process. <u>Strengths/weaknesses:</u> Reconstruction of the TOC is generally well done and described properly in the section, incorporating most required information. Together with the reformulation table, causal pathways of the reconstructed TOC are well articulated, with sound analyses, in narrative form, which serves as a core part of this section. The process of how the TOC was reconstructed is well explained to justify the reconstruction. There is still room for improvement; drivers and assumptions are identified, but these should have been linked to the respective causal pathways. A better description of the linkage between assumptions/drivers and causal pathways (i.e., different levels of results) would have further strengthened the quality of the TOC reconstruction. Key actors in the change process are broadly mentioned across the section. A description of actors in the change process, including women and marginalized groups, would have added value to this section. Some reformulated Output statements stand at the activity level, which could have been further improved.	4.5
Section D: Evidence and Analysis	Assessment	
5. Is the report based on <i>sufficient and adequate data</i> and <i>clear and credible evidence</i>? Consider how well the report presents: sufficient evidence that is consistent throughout the report	<u>Coverage/omissions:</u> For some review criteria, data and evidence are well collected, while for others, not. <u>Strengths/weaknesses:</u> The 'Effectiveness' assessment, where a mini survey is adopted to collect data and evidence, coupled with stakeholder interviews, results in robust analyses of the	4

³⁷ During the Inception Phase of the review process a *TOC at Review 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 review process this TOC is revised based on changes made during project intervention and becomes the *TOC at Review*.

Report Quality Criteria	UNEP Evaluation Office Comments	Final Report Rating
- 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 review	project's performance, supported by an ample amount of evidence. For a few review criteria, including '<i>Financial Management</i>', '<i>Monitoring and Reporting</i>', and '<i>Sustainability</i>', there is an occasional lack of evidence to substantiate the ratings that are provided by the reviewer. Evidence and data collected are not necessarily aligned with the UNEP's Criteria Ratings Matrix. Evidence could have been collected more extensively to serve as a basis for ratings.	
6. Does the report include <i>rigorous analysis</i> and <i>logical findings</i>? 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 review framework - more than descriptions and provide insights into 'how' and/or 'why' the project performed a certain way - balanced, presenting both successes and weaknesses	<u>Coverage/omissions:</u> The report covers sound analyses with evidence for some review criteria, while others are not necessarily backed up by robust analyses. <u>Strengths/weaknesses:</u> The 'Effectiveness' analyses are excellent; rigorous analyses are done with adequate, triangulated data using various data collection tools. Evidence and robustness of analysis are well interrelated in a coherent manner. Findings on a few review criteria, including '<i>Nature of External Context</i>', '<i>Financial Management</i>', '<i>Monitoring and Reporting</i>', '<i>Sustainability</i>', and '<i>Factors affecting Performance and Cross-Cutting Issues</i>', are generally not well supported by clear analyses, mainly because of a lack of evidence. Some analyses are not always well aligned with UNEP's Criteria Ratings Matrix, but most ratings are generally very favourable for the project; the 'Highly Satisfactory' or 'Satisfactory' ratings are given to almost all criteria and sub-criteria, except for only a few criteria. More rigorous analyses with consistent evidence aligned with UNEP's Criteria Ratings Matrix could have significantly improved the quality of the report.	4
Section E: Review Findings	Assessment	
7. Does the report present evidence and analysis of project <i>Strategic Relevance</i> 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	<u>Coverage/omissions:</u> Assessment of each sub-criterion is generally well covered in the section. <u>Strengths/weaknesses:</u> Alignments to various strategies and priorities are well analyzed and elaborated with proper categorization. The project's alignment to relevant indicators, including the UNEP corporate indicators and global indicators (i.e., SDGs), are not mentioned. Coherence analysis, covering both external coherence and internal coherence, is well done. Complementarities and their effects brought from the project to other interventions (and vice versa) are briefly described but could have been expanded.	5

Report Quality Criteria	UNEP Evaluation Office Comments	Final Report Rating
inception/mobilisation ³⁸), with other 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?	<u>Coverage/omissions:</u> The section presents a summary of the project design, covering both strengths and weaknesses, following the UNEP's Review Criteria Ratings Matrix. A description of the strengths and weaknesses is presented in both table and narrative form. <u>Strengths/weaknesses:</u> Both strengths and weaknesses of the project design are described in a well-balanced manner. Major aspects of the project design are well articulated with a few concrete examples. A potential weakness is that a narrative and a sub-rating are not consistent in a few sub-criteria (i.e., '<i>Logical Framework and Causality</i>', '<i>Partnerships</i>', and '<i>Monitoring</i>') of the project design quality. For example, a weakness in '<i>Logical Framework and Causality</i>' is described, but the '<i>Satisfactory</i>' rating is given to this sub-criterion. Narratives do not serve well as justification for these sub-criteria ratings. These could have been consistent.	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 ³⁹), and how they affected performance?	<u>Coverage/omissions:</u> The section provides a very brief analysis of key external features of the project's implementing contexts. Specific details are missing in the section. <u>Strengths/weaknesses:</u> The analysis is very generic, lacking a detailed analysis of the nature of the external context that affected the project's performance. The section notes '<i>several external factors</i>' (para 85), but these external factors are not well described. The project covers 5 countries in the Asia-Pacific region, namely Cambodia, Thailand, Vietnam, Fiji, and Palau. External contexts in Southeast Asia are often different from ones in the Pacific. However, there is no region/country-wise analysis on external contexts.	NOT RATED

³⁸ 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.

³⁹ 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
	The report also says ‘<i>variations in administrative structures and policy cycles among pilot countries</i>’ (para 86), but no description is provided in the section. Overall, robust analyses with concrete examples and region/country disaggregation could have enhanced the quality of this section.	
8. Does the report present a well-reasoned, complete and evidence-based assessment of the <i>Availability of Outputs</i> 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).	<u>Coverage/omissions:</u> All essential information is covered in the sub-section. <u>Strengths/weaknesses:</u> Output analysis is well elaborated with evidence in the section. The project performance at the output level, including indicator-wise results, is well analyzed with sufficient detail, referring to the baseline and targets that were set during the project design phase. Differentiated impacts among diverse stakeholders and the non-existence of negative socio-economic or environmental effects are also described in sufficient detail. Timeliness, quality, and utility of outputs to intended beneficiaries are also analyzed with various evidence. Evidence is adequately provided for analyses. A mini survey was effectively utilized to collect the required data and triangulate multiple data sources. The sub-section also cites stakeholders’ feedback on each Output, which strengthens the arguments of the Output analysis. Overall, the sub-section is very strong and convincing.	6
9. Does the report present a well-reasoned, complete and evidence-based assessment of the <i>Achievement of Outcomes</i>, 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 - discussion of the contribution, credible association and/or attribution of outcome level changes to the work of the project itself - any constraints to	<u>Coverage/omissions:</u> The sub-section provides most required information with evidence. <u>Strengths/weaknesses:</u> The analyses are generally comprehensive, covering indicator-wise outcome results and the assessment of the nature, depth, and scale of the project outcomes versus the project indicators and targets. The uptake of outputs by intended beneficiaries is also described with concrete data from stakeholder interviews and surveys. Country-disaggregated analyses are also covered per Outcome indicator, which makes the Outcome analyses convincing. While the uptake of results is well analyzed, a linkage between outputs and outcomes is not explicitly described, with limited reference to TOC and causal pathways.	5.5

Report Quality Criteria	UNEP Evaluation Office Comments	Final Report Rating
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).		
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).	<u>Coverage/omissions:</u> Most important information is covered, but an explanation of the roles played by key actors and an identification of any unintended negative effects are missing. <u>Strengths/weaknesses:</u> The likelihood of impact is generally well analyzed with evidence. Causal pathways towards the impact are well examined, together with adequate assessment of the roles of drivers and assumptions in the causal pathways. However, there is no explicit discussion of key actors, change agents, drivers, and assumptions; it is broadly mentioned across the sub-section, but could have been more explicit. There is no mention of the unintended negative effects of the project on disadvantaged groups, including women. The analysis and rating are not consistent; the 'Highly Satisfactory' rating is awarded, although the analysis indicates that the requirements of only the 'Satisfactory' rating are met.	4.5
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	<u>Coverage/omissions:</u> Some necessary information is covered together with a required table, while others are not. <u>Strengths/weaknesses:</u> The analyses of both '<i>Adherence to UNEP's Financial Policies and Procedures</i>' and '<i>Completeness of Financial Information</i>' are very generic. Nonetheless, the 'Highly Satisfactory' rating is provided to both sub-criteria. Evidence is not presented to substantiate these ratings. Especially, an analysis of '<i>Adherence to UNEP's Financial Policies and Procedures</i>' is not thorough at all and described in only 8 lines (para 100 and 101). It is difficult to find evidence that supports the 'Highly Satisfactory' rating for this sub-criterion. The report would have benefited from a more robust analysis that provides stronger evidence for findings and ratings of these sub-criteria.	2.5
12. Does the report present an integrated analysis of all dimensions evaluated under Efficiency? Consider how well the report presents:	<u>Coverage/omissions:</u> The section covers some required information that is needed for efficiency analysis, including the project's specific measures to enhance efficiency.	5

Report Quality Criteria	UNEP Evaluation Office Comments	Final Report Rating
- 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. - the extent to which the management of the project minimised UNEP's environmental footprint.	<u>Strengths/weaknesses:</u> Various aspects of efficiency, especially cost-effective measures and measures to minimize environmental footprints, are analyzed to highlight the project's efforts to increase efficiency. A little more elaboration with concrete examples on the project's use of pre-existing arrangements could have further enhanced the clarity. The current narratives are not in detail. The project's timeliness is also well described, including the need for a no-cost extension. The analysis and rating are not consistent; the 'Highly Satisfactory' rating is awarded, although the analysis indicates that the requirements of only the 'Satisfactory' rating are met.	
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 <i>monitoring of project implementation</i> (including use of monitoring data for adaptive management) - the quality of <i>project reporting</i> (e.g. PIMS and donor reports)	<u>Coverage/omissions:</u> Both sub-sections were broadly described in the section, for which the necessary information is somewhat missing. Details are described below. <u>Strengths/weaknesses:</u> In general, the relevant information is not adequately collected in all sub-criteria, which makes it difficult to see evidence for the rating of each sub-criterion. For example, the report does not refer to the necessary parameters that are needed for the assessment of the project's monitoring and reporting, including the monitoring plan, work plan, monitoring budget, and baseline data. It ends up with a generic analysis, perhaps largely based on document review. Nonetheless, without robust analyses and strong evidence, the report has awarded the 'Highly Satisfactory' rating to one sub-criterion and the 'Satisfactory' rating to another. More detailed analyses, backed up by evidence, could have substantiated the ratings properly.	3
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	<u>Coverage/omissions:</u> Some essential information is covered, but much of it is largely missing. <u>Strengths/weaknesses:</u> All three aspects of sustainability are briefly analyzed, but the analyses are not in depth. Evidence is not adequately collected to substantiate the ratings in line with the UNEP TR Criteria Ratings Description Matrix. For socio-political sustainability, the reviewer addresses a mechanism to adapt to these changes. But analyses on the ownership, commitment, and political will are not adequate. Financial sustainability is also broadly analyzed, but could have included a few important details (i.e., what	2.5

Report Quality Criteria	UNEP Evaluation Office Comments	Final Report Rating
	percentage of the required future funding requirements are likely to be secured/ have been secured and/or an exit strategy with financial components), which would have enhanced the clarity of the reviewer's analysis. The analysis of institutional sustainability is not in-depth. A few essential elements, such as the institutionalization of project outcomes and the risk to staff retention, are mentioned but could have been analyzed in more detail. Overall, more robust analyses with adequate evidence could have strengthened the section.	
15. Does the report present a well-evidence analysis of the <i>Factors Affecting Performance</i>, either in this section or in cross-referenced sections? <i>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.</i> Consider how well the report addresses the following cross-cutting issues: • quality of project management and supervision⁴⁰ • 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	<u>Coverage/omissions:</u> All sub-sections are covered in a standalone section, while some required information is missing in a few sub-sections. Ratings for 'Responsiveness to Human Rights and Gender Equality' and 'Environmental and Social Safeguards' are missing. <u>Strengths/weaknesses:</u> Overall, the analyses and descriptions are broad in general for all sub-sections, which does not meet the requirements of the UNEP Criteria Ratings Description Matrix. All sub-sections do not necessarily cover information/evidence adequately. Nonetheless, the 'Highly Satisfactory' rating is awarded to many of these sub-criteria, resulting in narratives and ratings in the respective sub-sections being inconsistent. Ratings are revised for a few sub-criteria, such as 'Country ownership and driven-ness' and 'UNEP/Implementing Agency: Quality of project management and supervision'. The report would have benefited from more concrete evidence to enrich the reviewer's analyses, which could make them consistent with the respective ratings of sub-criteria.	2.5
Section F: Conclusions, Lessons Learned and Recommendations		
	Assessment	
16. Do the <i>Conclusions</i> 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	<u>Coverage/omissions:</u> The section covers most required information only broadly, and there is a lack of in-depth analysis. <u>Strengths/weaknesses:</u> The section summarizes the major findings, covering both strengths and weaknesses in the overall performance of the project.	3.5

⁴⁰ 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
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 review 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	Lessons learned are clearly articulated. They are properly derived from review findings. Many of these lessons cover 1) identification of the problem (based on review analysis/findings), 2) the root cause of the problem, 3) proposed course correction, and 4) potential benefits and applicability to other projects/similar contexts. However, the analyses that are added to the Conclusions part are not in-depth, lacking a compelling storyline. Most elements are very broadly analyzed, from which deep insights are not properly derived. Evidence could have been better synthesized to draw robust conclusions. Similarly, responses to key strategic questions are not well analyzed. There is a lack of evidence to craft a convincing response to each key strategic question. In addition, the Conclusion section could have elaborated more on human rights and gender dimensions of the interventions, which have been analyzed in the main sections of the report. The section only briefly refers to these dimensions.	
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 should be formulated	<u>Coverage/omissions:</u> The section presents 4 recommendations in a table format, covering most required information. 'Type of Recommendations', where wrong information is inserted, could have been either 'Project Level' or 'Partners', or 'UNEP-wide'. <u>Strengths/weaknesses:</u> Each recommendation entails sufficient detail with some analysis. All are derived from the findings of the review, which makes them realistic. Most recommendations are also feasible, concrete, and measurable, which enables UNEP to make a detailed action plan to address these recommendations. These are intended for practical application. Recommendation #1 addresses the strengthening of the human rights and gender dimensions. Recommendation #2 may not be very realistic. Following the UNEP evaluation/review recommendation guidelines, the timeframe of the recommendation needs to be one year or less. Recommendation #2 may take more than one year, as it might be affected by multiple external factors (i.e., donors' interests).	5.5

Report Quality Criteria	UNEP Evaluation Office Comments	Final Report Rating
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		
18. Is the report <i>well-structured and complete</i>? 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	<u>Coverage/omissions:</u> The report contains all necessary sections, mostly following the UNEP guidelines. All required Annexes are included. <u>Strengths/weaknesses:</u> The report is well-structured. The report follows the reporting structure and formatting guidelines in principle. It is well-formatted in general, with a few shortcomings. With the use of clear English, the report is generally easy to follow, enabling all readers to understand what is written across the report. It is a well-written English report without major grammatical errors. The language is adequate, and the tone is also appropriate. Annexes are attached, but the '<i>Stakeholders consulted during the Review (Annex II)</i>' lists only 3 stakeholders, which is not aligned with what is described in the '<i>2. Review Methods</i>' section. Additionally, the tables are generally well used following the pre-fixed template, especially in the '<i>Review Findings</i>' section, but visual aids could have been used more effectively, even where there are no pre-fixed templates, to further enhance the readability of the report.	5
OVERALL REPORT QUALITY RATING		4

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.

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.