Validated Terminal Review of CounterMEASURE II

(Contributing to the UNEP Project: *Protecting the Marine Environment from Land-Based Pollution through Coordinated and Strengthened Global Action* PIMS ID: 02049)

From the People of Japan



UNEP REGIONAL OFFICE FOR ASIA AND THE PACIFIC

June 2022

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Front cover: Sample collection of microplastic in Lao PDR in Heuy Mark Hiao, Nalong village

Photo taken by Souvanna Phengsisomboun (National University of Laos)

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 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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The reviewer would like to express his gratitude to all persons met and who contributed to this review, as listed in Annex II.

The review team would like to thank the project team and in particular Ms. Alexandra Regner-Burke, Mr. Mushtaq Memon, Ms Duangjai Pattanarude, and Mr. Ahmed Khan for their contribution and collaboration throughout the review process. Sincere appreciation is also expressed to the members of the Project Advisory Group, who took time to provide comments to the draft report.

The review consultant hopes that the findings, conclusions, and recommendations will contribute to the successful finalisation of the current project, formulation of new projects and to the continuous improvement of similar projects in other countries and regions.

BRIEF EXTERNAL CONSULTANT BIOGRAPHY

Matteo Borzoni has 18 years of work experience including 12 yeas conducing judicially planned and executive evaluations in the field of agriculture, rural development, natural resources management and renewable energy in Asia, Africa, Americas, Europe, and the Middle East. He has conducted more than 20 evaluations of complex projects and programme for the EU, USAID, bilateral cooperation agencies, the United Nations System, and other international organizations. He currently works as an independent consultant. In the past, he worked as a research fellow at the Sant'Anna School of Advanced Studies researching environmental management and renewable energy topics. He holds a PhD in ecological economics a MSc in Rural Development and BSc in Tropical and Sub-Tropical Agriculture.

ABOUT THE REVIEW

Joint Review: No

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Review Type: Terminal Review

Brief Description: This report is a management-led Terminal Review of a UNEP project implemented between 2020 and 2022. The review sought to assess project performance (in terms of relevance, effectiveness, and efficiency), and determine outcomes and impacts (actual and potential) stemming from the project, including their sustainability. The review has two primary purposes: (i) to provide evidence of results to meet accountability requirements, and (ii) to promote learning, feedback, and knowledge sharing through results and lessons learned among UNEP and the relevant implementing partners of the project participating countries.

Key words: Land-based marine pollution, plastic pollution, river pollution, waste management, knowledge management, knowledge generation and management, policy development support.

Primary data collection period: March- April 2022

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LIST OF ACRONYMS

AIT	Asian Institute of Technology
APO	Associate Programme Officer
CCTV	Closed circuit television
CM2	CounterMEASURE II
CMS	Convention of Migratory Species
COBSEA	Coordinating Body of the Seas of East Asia
CSIRO	Commonwealth Scientific and Industrial Research Organization
CTA	Chief Technical Adviser
EPR	Extended producer responsibility
GIZ	Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit
GPML	Global Partnership on Marine Litter
HQ	Headquarter
IBPA	Indicator-based performance assessment
IHR	Indian Himalayan Region
IMI	Integrated Mountain Initiative
IP	Implementing partner
IUCN	International Union for Conservation of Nature and Natural Resource
KI	Key informant
M&E	Monitoring and evaluation
MRC	Mekong River Commission
MTS	Medium-term strategy
NIUA	National Institute of Urban Affairs
OICT	Office of Information and Communications Technology
PAG	Project Advisory Group
PCA	Programme cooperation agreement
PoW	Programme of work
PMU	Project management unit
RRF	Results Resources Framework
ROAP	Regional Office for Asia and the Pacific
SAG	Science Advisory Group
SSFA	Small scale funding agreement
SQ	Strategic question
SWM	Solid waste management
SUP	Single use plastic
TERI	The Energy and Resources Institute
ToC	Theory of Change
ToR	Terms of Reference
TR	Terminal review
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
UNEA	United Nations Environment Assembly
UNEP	United Nations Environment Programme

PROJECT IDENTIFICATION TABLE

Table 1. Project Identification Table

UNEP PIMS ID:	02049		
Implementing Partners	Geoinformatics Center, Asian Institute of Technology Pirika Association Mekong River Commission National Productivity Council Chintan Environmental Research and Action Group The Energy and Resources Institute Earth Matters Foundation Integrated Mountain Initiative India Water Foundation Wetland International National Institute of Urban Affairs University of Portsmouth Mae Fah Luang University International Union for the Conservation of Nature (IUCN) The French National Research Institute for Sustainable Development (IRD) Convention on the Conservation of Migratory Species of Wild Animals (CMS Secretariat) Office of Information and Communications Technology		
Relevant SDG(s):	Goal 11. make cities and human settlements inclusive safe resilient and sustainable Goal 12. Ensure sustainable consumption and production patterns Goal 14. Conserve and sustainably use the oceans, seas and marine resources for sustainable development Goal 17: Strengthen the means of implementation and revitalize the Global Partnership for Sustainable Development		
Sub-programme:	5	Expected Accomplishment(s):	
UNEP approval date:	2 March 2020	Programme of Work Output(s):	522.4
Expected start date:	1 June 2020	Actual start date:	17 June 2020
Planned completion date:	31 March 2022	Actual operational completion date:	31 March 2022
Planned project budget at approval:	USD 5,700,000	Actual total expenditures reported as of 28 Feb. 2022:	USD 4,053,360
Planned Environment Fund allocation:	0	Actual Environment Fund expenditures reported as of [date]:	0
Planned Extra-Budgetary Financing:	USD 5,700,000	Secured Extra-Budgetary Financing:	USD 5,700,000
		Actual Extra-Budgetary Financing expenditures reported as of [date]:	USD 4,053,360
First disbursement:	USD 5,700,000	Planned date of financial closure:	31/03/2023[1]
No. of formal project revisions:	1	Date of last approved project revision:	31 March 2021

[1] Financial closure to be completed within 12 months after the project has ended

No. of Steering Committee meetings:		Date of last/next Steering Committee meeting:	Last: 25 March 2022	Next: n/a
Mid-term Review/ Evaluation *(planned date):*	n/a	Mid-term Review/ Evaluation (actual date):	n/a	
Terminal Review *(planned date):*	March – June 2022	Terminal Review (actual date):	March – June 2022	
Coverage - Country(ies):	India, Sri Lanka, Vietnam, Lao PDR, Thailand, Cambodia	Coverage - Region(s):	Asia	
Dates of previous project phases:	May 2019 – May 2020	Status of future project phases:	n/a	

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Project background

1. It is estimated that 80% of the pollution loads in oceans and coastal waters originate from land-based activities, of which plastic wastes are an important source of pollution. Asian rivers are estimated to be collectively responsible for 86% of the total global input of ocean plastic. In Asia and the Pacific, the lack of adequate waste management policies is a common problem. Also, the mismanaged waste treatment is relatively higher compared to other regions, which causes a significant loss of plastic to the environment. Two major transboundary river basins in Asia, the Ganges, and the Mekong, are among the 10 most plastic-polluted rivers in the world.
2. The Mekong River Basin is home to many of the Convention on Migratory Species-listed species. With 768 freshwater fish species scientifically documented, the Mekong River Basil has also a significant freshwater fish diversity.
3. The CounterMEASURE II project was led by the United Nations Environment Programme Regional Office for Asia and the Pacific to promote science-based and evidence-driven action to reduce and prevent the influx of plastic into Asian rivers. It contributes to the UNEP Project: *Protecting the Marine Environment from Land-Based Pollution through Coordinated and Strengthened Global Action* (PIMS ID 02049). The project builds on the outcome of a first phase, which was implemented between May 2019 and May 2020. More specifically, CounterMEASURE II aimed to deepen the scientific knowledge and expand the work done under the first phase for the Mekong and Ganges rivers, including through further outreach and influencing policy changes. It also widened the geographic scope to Sri Lanka and Myanmar and addresses the impact of plastic pollution on migratory species.
4. With a total budget of USD 5.7 million (entirely contributed from the Government of Japan), the project started in June 2020 and was supposed to end in March 2021. Following a 12-month no-cost extension the project ended in March 2022.

This Review

5. 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 among UNEP and main project partners. Therefore, the Review intends to identify lessons of operational relevance for future project formulation and implementation.
6. The Review assessed a pre-determined list of review criteria: 1) Strategic relevance, 2) Quality of the project design, 3) Nature of external context, 4) Effectiveness, 5) Financial management, 6) Efficiency, 7) Sustainability, 8) Factors affecting the project performance and cross-cutting issues. Each criterion was rated on a 6-point scale. In addition, the Review also intends to address three strategic questions:
    - How well has the project utilised local and regional capacity (including the scientific community, as well as innovative technology such as artificial intelligence) for gathering and sharing data on plastic pollution in rivers in the region?
    - How well has the project been able to inform policy discussions at local, national, regional and global levels through inputs on plastic pollution in rivers in Asia and globally?

- What changes were made to adapt to the effects of COVID-19 and how did COVID-19 impact the project?

7. A qualitative design was used, consisting of a document review and key informant interviews.

Key findings and conclusions

8. The project was found to be well aligned with SDG 14 and SDG 14.1 reporting. It is also well grounded in the 2018-2021 Medium-Term Strategy since it is well aligned with the Chemicals, Waste and Air Quality priority area and its sub-programme. The project also has a secondary alignment with the Health and Productive Ecosystems sub-programme. CounterMEASURE II is well linked with the Programme of Work 522.4 (PIMS ID 02049). It is also in line with recent UNEA resolutions on plastic marine litter.

9. Complementarities were found with projects founded by the Government of Norway in India, with a UNDP project in Cambodia and with a project on the plastic value chain funded by the Government of Sweden.

10. Being linked to Programme of Work 522.4, there is not a project document for CounterMEASURE II. A detailed implementation plan was instead developed using lessons learned from the implementation of CounterMEASURE phase I. However, while at the design phase recommendations from CounterMEASURE phase I were properly taken into account, during the preparation phase crucial weakness identified in the terminal review of CounterMEASURE phase I were not addressed. This is the case with the extended recruitment phase.

11. Most important elements of a proper design were included in the implementation plan. Financial resources were adequate, governance arrangements were properly described along with roles and responsibilities, the Results Resources Framework was well designed with proper indicators, baseline figures and targets. A Theory of Change was also included. However, elements that are clearly beyond the direct control of the project (i.e. changes in policies) are wrongly placed among deliverable outputs. Also, the project expected outcome appears too ambitious with respect to the original timeframe (12 months).

12. The international policy environmental is conducive to the development of policies to flight plastic pollution. However, overall, the external context was particularly challenging. This is because of the coup in Myanmar and of the COVID-19 pandemic. No activities were eventually implemented in Myanmar. The COVID-19 pandemic significantly affected the nature of the activities conducted and the pace of output delivery. Trainings and dissemination activities could not be held in person. The project was readapted to these conditions by organizing events online, by cancelling some activities and by requesting a no-cost extension. Still, these adaptations could not completely compensate for in-presence events. Indeed, outreach activities to rural poor communities with limited internet connection were limited. Also, engaging policy makers through on-line events resulted to be very difficult.

13. The greatest part of the project outputs was delivered. The project created a large knowledge base that provide a clear picture on the amount of plastic pollution in four selected cities along the Ganges, in six locations along the Mekong and in selected places along two river basins in Sri Lanka (Kelani and Maha Oya). The project also identified plastic waste stream pathways and mapped hotspots in these countries. Provisions were made to ensure the quality of scientific results by establishing a Science Advisory Group, which reviewed main research reports. In addition, the project made a substantial contribution to understanding the impact of plastic pollution on aquatic, terrestrial and avian protected migratory species in the Asia and Pacific region.

The main project report on this topic received wide media coverage at international and national level.

14. The project made a proper use of local and regional capacities for generating and gathering data on plastic pollution in rivers in the region. To a large extent, the scientists that collaborated with the project were form the region. Where available, local laboratories were used to conduct the necessary analyses for microplastic. In addition, the project made an important contribution to the development of innovative data generation tools by using artificial intelligence.

15. Under Result 2, the project organized a wide range of dissemination activities, thus reaching out to a large audience. However, dissemination activities were constrained by COVID-19 and by the fact that many research products were delivered in the last phase of the project, when remaining time for dissemination was short and when the project team had limited capacity.

16. In order to achieve the project outcome, changes in policies and in business practices are needed. The project was able to inform policies discussions at national level and at global level. Changes in policies that can be attributed to the project could be observed in India in two cases and in a protocol to monitor plastics in the Mekong. However, there is a wide consensus among interviewed informants that much more work was needed to engage policy makers to promote the necessary measures to reduce plastic pollution, and that overall, the engagement of business entities was very limited.

17. Financial resources were found to be managed correctly. However, this review found the overall project efficiency weak. The project team did not have a procurement officer to guide the project management to procure needed services. This was at the origin of important delays in signing contracts. Also, the staff recruitment phase extended over a very long period of time. The recruitment of the project team was completed in February 2021 while the project started in June 2020. Moreover, three members of the project team left during the project implementation without being replaced. Even though all planned resources for grants and transfers to implementing partners were spent, the project had substantial unused financial resources (after financial closure UNEP expects to return around USD 1 million to the donor). The project did several attempts to recruit new staff, but the remaining project duration was too short to attract qualified personnel. This all affected a timely delivery of outputs. The 12-month no-cost extension compensated only partially for the accumulated delays since dissemination activities were considered inadequate for the research products delivered at the end of the project. Also, at the time of this review, the knowledge management platform only included the data generated by CounterMEASURE phase I and reports authored by partners and stakeholders, but it did still not include data generated by CounterMEASURE II. Also, with the exception of the final project forum, the factsheets on waste policies in 10 Asian countries were not disseminated.

18. The project does not have a formalized sustainability plan or exit strategy. However, there are contextual and project implementation aspects that are conducive to maintaining in time the benefits created by the project. No financial dependency was created. In addition, this review found evidence that some trainings and plastic monitoring protocols were institutionalized. In addition, the project contributed to create momentum on the topic of plastic pollution. Indeed, the plastic pollution topic is expected to be on the international political agenda during the next few years, which is conducive to a proper climate for the adoption of commitments for the reduction of plastic pollution. Overall, the sustainability of the project is highly dependent on the political will of the governments of beneficiary countries. Despite these sustainability elements, the lack of a formalized exit strategy is a missed opportunity to promote a

carefully thinking around ways to further institutionalize the achievements of the projects and to address constraining factors to replicate what was done (like limited laboratory capacities in Mekong countries).

19. The project had a very low risk of creating gender inequality. The Environment, Social and Economic Sustainability principle and safeguard checklists for gender equity of the relevant PoW did not anticipate any potential negative impact on women. This review confirms that this applies also to CM2. However, at the implementation stage gender aspects were largely ignored since a gender analysis was not conducted and gender disaggregated figures were not collected.
20. In conclusions, based on findings from this review, the project demonstrated a ***moderately satisfactory*** performance (a table of ratings against all review criteria is found in the Conclusions section, below). The project demonstrated strong performance in the areas of strategic relevance and financial management. Areas that would have benefitted from further attention are efficiency, preparation and readiness and gender.

Lessons Learned

21. Lesson 1: UNEPs' common recruitment procedures for project-based staff is not compatible with projects that have a short duration, considerable budget, and ambitious targets. Alternative staff recruitment and retention approaches should be considered (see Section VI.D for alternative proposals).
22. Lesson 2: Projects with a substantial budget and a high number of contracts need a dedicated procurement officer.
23. Lesson 3: Future projects on plastic pollution should properly target the private sector through dedicated actions.

Recommendations

24. Recommendation 1: UNEP should coordinate with the AIT, GMPL and OICT the upload of CM2 generate data on the plastic-free-river platform.
25. Recommendation 2: UNEP should develop a formal exit strategy that includes an institutional component explaining how main project outputs will be maintained or replicated and how follow-up will be provided for the projects results that have the most potential to be integrated in the institutional framework of beneficiary countries.
26. Recommendation 3: The final report should include gender disaggregated figures and explain what actions were taken to promote female participation (if any).
27. Recommendation 4: UNEP should consider organizing dissemination activities in related plastic pollution projects (e.g. the "community resilience and plastic pollution project funded by the government of Japan) using the factsheets analysing policies in Asian countries as well as the knowledge platform.
28. Recommendation 5: UNEP should consider in which new project Lesson Learned 1 should be applied.

I. INTRODUCTION

29. CounterMEASURE II (CM2) was led by the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) Regional Office for Asia and the Pacific (ROAP) to promote science-based and evidence-driven action to reduce and prevent the influx of plastic into Asian rivers, which are among the most plastic-polluted in the world. The project contributed to the UNEP Programme of work (PoW) project 02049/522.4 "Protecting the Marine Environment from Land-Based pollution through strengthened coordination of global action".

30. The project started in June 2020 and was supposed to end in March 2021. In November 2020, the Japanese Government agreed to a no-cost extension until March 2022. The total budget is USD 5.7 million, entirely contributed from the Government of Japan.

31. This document describes the design of the Terminal Review (TR) of CM2. In line with the UNEP Evaluation Policy[2] and the UNEP Programme Manual[3], the TR is undertaken at operational completion of the project to assess project performance in terms of relevance, effectiveness, and efficiency, and to determine the outcomes and impacts (actual and potential) stemming from the project, including their sustainability.

32. The TR has two primary purposes: (I) to provide evidence of results to meet accountability requirements, and (II) to promote operational improvement, learning and knowledge sharing through results and lessons learned among UNEP and main project partners. Therefore, the Review intends to identify lessons of operational relevance for future project formulation and implementation.

33. The primary intended users of this TR are the UNEP Asia-Pacific Regional Sub-Programme Chemicals, Waste and Air Quality, the UNEP ROAP and the management of the UNEP PoW project. Other users are the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Japan (i.e. the donor), relevant ministries in beneficiary countries and the project implementing partners (IPs).

34. The project period to be reviewed is the whole project duration since the actual start date (17 June 2020) until the operational completion date (31 March 2022). The Review covers all the key results, with a total project budget of USD 5.7 million. No previous mid-term review or evaluation took place for CM2.

[2] https://www.unenvironment.org/about-un-environment/evaluation-office/policies-and-strategies
[3] https://wecollaborate.unep.org

II. REVIEW METHODS

35. The TR was conducted coherently in line with UNEP's Evaluation Policy[2] and UNEP's programme manual[3] and assessed a pre-determined list of review criteria, which are in line with the criteria suggested by the OECD-DAC network on Development Evaluation. As defined in the terms of reference the review criteria are: 1) Strategic relevance, 2) Quality of the project design, 3) Nature of external context, 4) Effectiveness, 5) Financial management, 6) Efficiency, 7) Sustainability, 8) Factors affecting the project performance and cross-cutting issues. Each criterion was rated on a 6-point scale.

36. Coherently, with the methodological approach proposed in the inception report, the TR indents to address the above-mentioned review criteria. In addition, the TR also addresses three strategic questions (SQ), which were proposed in the ToR[4]. The three SQs are:

    - SQ1: How well has the project utilised local and regional capacity (including the scientific community, as well as innovative technology such as artificial intelligence) for gathering and sharing data on plastic pollution in rivers in the region?
    - SQ2: How well has the project been able to inform policy discussions at local, national, regional and global levels through inputs on plastic pollution in rivers in Asia and globally?
    - SQ3: What changes were made to adapt to the effects of COVID-19 and how did COVID-19 impact the project?

    The project involved a wide range of very different partners. However, there was not a single category of stakeholders that was exposed to whole set of activities. So, a survey was not deemed appropriate. The TR employed a qualitative design consisting of a document review and key informant (KI) interviews.

Key informant interviews

37. The Review used a purposeful sampling approach[5] to identify KI candidates. Although the selection of KIs was informed by the UNEP ROAP, the Review also applied other criteria, including the KIs' relative positions of authority within their organization, the degree to which they were beneficiaries of CM2 support, and the value of the responses they were likely to provide to the review effort.

38. KI interviews protocols consisted of interview topics and questions derived from the review criteria and SQs, as well as from the document review, and discussions with UNEP ROAP. All KI interviews were conducted remotely.

39. A total of 42 KI interviews (including one-on-one and a two-person group interviews)[6] were conducted with 45 individuals. The KIs for this review are disaggregated in Table 1 by respondents' group and gender.

4 The ToR proposed four SQs, however only three SQs were retained in the agreed inception report.

5 Purposeful sampling is a nonprobability sampling technique that relies on the researcher's judgment to select the analysis units. It is widely used in qualitative research for the identification and selection of information-rich cases. This involves identifying and selecting individuals or groups of individuals that are especially knowledgeable about or experienced in a phenomenon of interest.

6 Group interviews included two or more respondents but followed the KI interviews protocols.

Table 1: Key informants by group and gender

Key informants' groups	Female	Male	Total
Project management unit	1	3	4
UNEP ROAP	3	1	4
Ganges focal area	4	5	9
Mekong focal area	3	7	10
Sri Lanka focal area	0	3	3
Migratory species focal area	2	1	3
Policy support and advocacy focal area	1	1	2
Communication and knowledge management focal area	1	2	3
Project advisory group	3	1	4
Science advisory group	0	2	2
Donor	0	1	1
TOTAL	18	27	45

Data analysis process and data triangulation

40. The reviewer took notes during the KI interviews. During analysis information collected were disaggregated by geographic areas, where possible.

41. The TR used analytical triangulation approaches to develop findings and come up with conclusions. Triangulation enabled the TR to cross-verify and cross-validate findings to determine the program's overall effectiveness. In particular, the TR used methodological triangulation to develop parallel protocols with the same or similar questions across KI interviews and the desk review. This enabled greater data triangulation because each method and interview addressed subsets of the same review criterion and SQs, so that findings were validated or refuted by other techniques (findings that were refuted by other techniques were not retained). Methodological triangulation also enabled the TR to strengthen the potential linkages and accuracy of the data.

Data analysis methods

42. The Review employed several qualitative analysis methods to identify key findings from the collected data, draw conclusions and make recommendations on sustaining CM2s positive results. Methods of analysis included the following:

43. Content Analysis – The TR conducted content analysis through intensive review of the collected KI interviews to identify and highlight notable examples of CM2 successes (or lack thereof) that contributed to (or inhibited) CM2 contributions to the identified outcome. The findings collected through interviews were triangulated with those of the desk project documents review.

44. Contribution Analysis – Contribution analysis is an approach for assessing and inferring causality in program evaluations. It was conducted using KI interviews data, focusing on questions that asked respondents about the changes they had observed since the beginning of their engagement with CM2.

45. Comparative Analysis – The TR also conducted comparisons of CM2 results across regions to assess convergence or divergence in perspectives.

Biases and other limitations

46. During data collection and analysis, the Review was aware of several limitations and bias risks. The TR was especially keen on mitigating the below-listed risks.

47. Limited number of respondents from government institutions. The review made numerous attempts to contact representatives of government institutions that were involved by the project. However, it was not possible to organize interviews with key stakeholders, which include the Agra Municipal Corporation, the Pollution Control Board of the state of Bihar, with the Ministry of Natural Resources and Environment in Thailand, in Vietnam and in Lao PDR. So, the perception of the CM2 from government institutions could not be inferred from interviewing representatives. As a mitigation measure the type and number of relevant government documents (plans, strategies, declarations, etc) that are formally endorsed by governments was used to assess capacity of the project to influence governments and to provide deliverables that are of use for governments.

48. Selection bias. In the context of this review, there was the risk of collecting perceptions only of those who benefitted from a project and consequently report only positive aspects. It is an inherent risk when implementers help to facilitate contact with project stakeholders. The TR mitigated this risk be selecting respondents from a wide range of categories of stakeholders.

III. THE PROJECT

A. Context

49. Most of the world's population lives in coastal areas or close to water bodies such as rivers and lakes. With the urban population expected to quadruple by 2037, and with more than 2.5 billion people still lacking access to adequate sanitation systems worldwide, marine environments are under growing pressure.

50. It is widely recognized that achieving internationally agreed development goals will not be possible if the health of coastal and marine environments is not safeguarded. Despite the economic and social significance of the coasts and oceans, land-based sources of pollution are major threats to the ecological health of the oceans and coastal waters. Pollution has a major impact on the contribution of oceans and coastal waters to food security, as well as on their capacity to sustain economic prosperity of many national economies. Overall, it is estimated that 80% of the pollution loads in oceans and coastal waters originate from land-based activities, of which plastic wastes are an important source of pollution.

51. Asian rivers are estimated to be collectively responsible for 86% of the total global input of ocean plastic. In Asia and the Pacific, the lack of adequate waste management policies is a common problem. Also, the mismanaged waste treatment is relatively higher compared to other regions, which causes a significant loss of plastic to the environment. Two major transboundary river basins in Asia, the Ganges and the Mekong, are among the 10 most plastic-polluted rivers in the world.

52. The Mekong River Basin is home to many of the Convention on Migratory Species-listed species. With 768 freshwater fish species scientifically documented, the Mekong River Basil has also a significant freshwater fish diversity.

53. Given the emerging concern on marine plastic issues, various countries in Asia and the Pacific have developed policies to reduce plastic pollution. However, scientific, and systematic data collection and analysis of plastic pollution are still under development in Asia and the Pacific. Due to the lack of scientific evidence, countermeasures towards plastic pollution are rather an ad-hoc approach and the lack of evidence-based policy is likely to result in limited outcomes.

54. The CounterMEASURE II project aimed to promote science-based and evidence-driven action to reduce and prevent the influx of plastic into Asian rivers. The project builds on the outcome of a first phase (USD 1.1 million) which was implemented between May 2019 and May 2020 and named "Promotion of Countermeasures Against Marine Plastic Litter in Southeast Asia and India". More specifically, CounterMEASURE II aimed to deepen the scientific knowledge and expand the work for the Mekong and Ganges rivers, including through further outreach and influencing policy changes. It also widened the geographic scope to Sri Lanka and addressed the impact of plastic pollution on migratory species. The original intervention area also covered Myanmar. However, following the coup in Myanmar in February 2021 no project activities took place in this country (the budget intended for activities in this country was reallocated to expand the activities in other focal areas).

B. Objectives and components

55. The project **impact** is the "reduction of plastic waste in rivers".

56. The project **outcome** is "Government, business entities and stakeholders' uptake innovative tools, policies, best technologies and innovative financial mechanisms to encourage good practice and behavioral change to reduce marine pollution."

57. The project **output** was originally formulated as "Scientific knowledge on plastic pollution in the Ganges, Mekong and selected Sri Lanka and Myanmar rivers generated, shared and disseminated at local, national, regional and global level to inform policy and decision-making processes".

58. Three **key results** are expected to contribute towards the project output as follows:

    - Result 1: Knowledge on plastic pollution in the Mekong, Ganges and selected Sri Lanka rivers generated to inform policy and decision-making processes.
    - Result 2: Knowledge on plastic pollution in the Mekong, Ganges and selected rivers in Sri Lanka and Myanmar is managed, shared, and disseminated.
    - Result 3: National, regional, and global policies, alliances and financial mechanisms are informed and influenced by the science on plastic pollution in rivers through best practices demonstrated from the Mekong and Ganges rivers examples.

C. Stakeholders

59. CounterMEASURE II was a wide-ranging program with an ambitious scope, and it involved a multitude of actors. Main categories of stakeholders are reported below.

60. UNEP hosts the United Nations Environment Assembly (UNEA), which is the governed body of UNEP. UNEP has a critical role in facilitating and supporting the resolutions of UNEA. For instance, as part of the recently adopted Resolution 14 of UNEA 5.2, to establish an intergovernmental binding instrument to end plastic pollution, UNEP will support an ad-hoc open-ended working group and the intergovernmental committee. As per previous UNEA resolutions (see below) UNEP has also a fundamental role to support member states to address plastic pollution problems. UNEP, with its Regional Office for Asia and the Pacific, was implementing agency of CM2.

61. Public sector stakeholders are policy level decision-makers and technical level personnel primarily in ministries with responsibility for environment and water resources management. They also include management personnel in municipal solid waste management services. Public sector stakeholders are the lead influencers in driving national reforms on improved practice for the control of plastic wastes. Their main interest are the translation of tools, methods and approaches into policy and institutional reform toward enhanced national enabling environments to implement actions to control the influx of plastic litter into rivers. Public sector stakeholders are critical in providing feedback on suitability of measures through project implementation.

62. Private sector stakeholders include plastic manufacturers, waste disposal operators, retailers, commodity suppliers, industrial and commercial enterprises, hospitality enterprises, and recreational service operators. In good enabling environments, these stakeholders can contribute to showcasing best practices, developing cost-effective, innovative products and technologies, sharing of experiences, and contributing to national demonstration sites. At the design stage of the project the private sector was supposed to contribute to capacity building and knowledge exchange. In principle the private sector could also drive technology development and innovation, thus playing a pivotal role in redesigning products and processes, enhancing recycling, creating new

markets and upscaling successful approaches to avoid, control or reduce marine pollution.

63. Researchers and academia at national, regional and international levels are critical stakeholders in expanding the evidence base on the state of environment and trends to inform decision making. They are essential to knowledge dissemination and capacity building, as well as for improving our understanding of the impacts of plastic pollution on the environment and identify emerging issues. Different research institutions were contracted by CM2 and implementing partners (IP).

64. Non-governmental organizations (NGOs) in the fields of environment, research, and advocacy are important drivers for change in government policies on pollution. They also play a role in driving behaviors in respect to more sustainable consumption and production patterns. It is through engagements with these stakeholders that strengthened advocacy, empowerment and capacity building were expected to be enhanced. These stakeholders were expected to provide inputs to technical and policy positions, tools, methods and approaches. Citizens were also engaged, both as target audience for outreach, and as potential contributors to data through citizen-science approaches.

D. Project implementation structure and partners

65. A project management unit (PMU) was put in place to support the implementation of the CounterMEASURE II project. The team comprised of a chief technical adviser (CTA), a project manager, an associate programme officer (APO), an administrative assistant and a finance management officer (the latter paid 50% of time by the project). The team was completed on 1st February 2021 with the arrival of the project manager.

66. The implementation of the project was originally organized around eight focal areas. However, following the suspension of the project activities in Myanmar, the total number of focal areas is seven. The original focal areas set in the implementation plan are the following (the focal area lead is in parenthesis):

    - Mekong (Mekong coordinator)
    - Ganges (UNEP India)
    - Migratory Species (CMS)
    - Sri Lanka (APO)
    - Myanmar (APO)
    - Policy support and advocacy (CTA)
    - Knowledge management (APO)
    - Regional/Global outreach & communication (Communication officer).

67. A Project Advisory Group (PAG) and Science Advisory Group (SAG) were established, with their respective members confirmed in March 2021. The PAG provided strategic advice and direction on effectiveness of the project, coherence and synergies with other initiatives, knowledge management, strategic policy advocacy, and strategic partnerships. Members included representatives of four Divisions in UNEP. The SAG provided scientific insight to guide the delivery of products by reviewing methodologies and tools, providing technical advice on new technologies and on the interpretation of new scientific developments. SAG members were from universities and research centres across Asia, Europe and the USA.

E. Changes in design during implementation

68. Main changes in the project design during the implementation were a 12-month no-cost extension and the suspension of the activities in Myanmar. More precisely, in November 2020, the Government of Japan agreed to a no-cost extension of the project until March 2022 to allow for delays due to COVID-19 and additional partnership and advocacy activities identified for 2021 and 2022. The activities planned for Myanmar were suspended and reprogrammed following the coup. In March 2021 a revised project implementation plan was approved to reflect the new timeline and activities.

69. Throughout the project, there were significant changes in the composition of the project management unit. The CTA in charge of policy support and advocacy left the project team in October 2021. The APO in charge of Sri Lanka and knowledge management left the project in May 2021 and the communication officer left in July 2021. Their functions were taken on by consultants and by the project management officer (Section V.E. elaborates more on project staff turnover and related consequences).

F. Project financing

70. The budget planned for the project was USD 5.7 million, all of it from the Government of Japan. All funding for the project was secured. The majority of expenses were planned via direct transfer and grants to IPs (41%). The second most important sources of planned expenditures were personnel costs (38%).

Table 2: Project funding source

Funding source **All figures as USD**	**Planned funding**	**% of planned funding**	**Secured funding[7]**	**% of secured funding**
Cash				
Funds from the Environment Fund	0	0	0	0
Funds from the Regular Budget	0	0	0	0
Extra-budgetary funding (Gov. of Japan):	5,700,000	100%	5,700,000	100%
Sub-total: Cash contributions	*5,700,000*	*100%*	5,700,000	100%
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
Sub-total: In-kind contributions				
Co-financing*				
Co-financing cash contribution	0	0	0	0
Co-financing in-kind contribution	0	0	0	0
Sub-total: Co-financing contributions	*0*	*0*	*0*	*0*
Total	*5,700,000*	*100%*	5,700,000	100%

71. UNEP agreed with the donor to report expenditures by focal area. In addition, a new project budget was agreed as part of the revised implementation plan, thus including a

[7] Secured funding refers to received funds and does not include funding commitments not yet realised.

reallocation of planned expenses initially planned for the Myanmar focal area to t other focal areas.

72. The most recent expenditure breakdown provided to the TR dates 31 December 2021 (that is, three months before the operational project end)[8]. Table 3 (in Section V) compares planned expenditures as presented in first implementation report by focal area with actual expenditures as of 31 December 2021.

[8] Formal financial reporting is due by September 2022

IV. THEORY OF CHANGE AT REVIEW

73. A theory of change (ToC) is included in the project implementation plan. It reflects the assumed casual linkages between the three project results, the output, the outcome and the project desired impact.

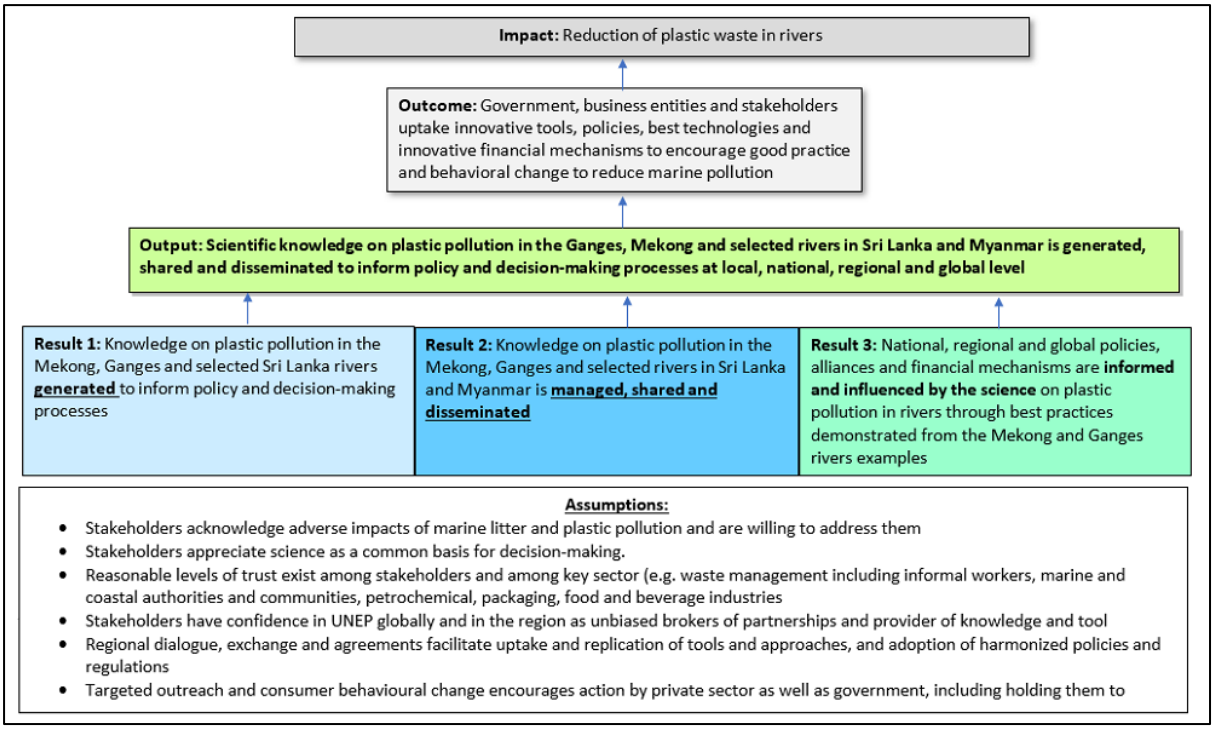
74. CM2 is grounded on the belief that changes in governments' policies and in companies and other stakeholder behavior come from a robust new knowledge on plastic pollution. Therefore, CM2 is strongly focused on knowledge generation through new studies and research and has an important component to disseminate the new knowledge generated.

75. At the lower hierarchy of the ToC are the three project results: 1) knowledge is generated, 2) knowledge is managed, shared, and disseminated, 3) policies, alliances and financial mechanisms are informed and influenced by science. The first two results can be safely assumed to be directly caused by the project. The third result (policies, alliances, and financial mechanisms informed and influenced by science) is more an expected effect of the project rather than a direct project output. So, the third result may have been more properly located at a higher level of the hierarchy of the ToC. Moreover, the current formulation of the project output (scientific knowledge on plastic pollution is the Ganges, Mekong and selected rivers in Sri Lanka and Myanmar is generated, shared and disseminated to inform policies and decision-making processes) looks more a repetition of the three results at the lower lever than an output.

76. A single casual pathway is presented for all categories of stakeholders. An element that emerged during the review is that governments, business entities, NGOs require different and dedicated actions in order to promote changes. In this regard, the ToC also includes six assumptions, which also address changes in behaviors of stakeholders. Again, assumed changes are not distinguished for different categories of stakeholders. A more convincing ToC could have included different casual pathways for different categories of stakeholders and one or two additional levels in the hierarchy of changes, thus distinguishing between immediate outcome and intermediate outcome.

77. One crucial element for the success of the project is that governments and policy makers make use of knowledge generated and disseminated by the project to inform and enforce policies. The project did promote advocacy activities with governments to promote changes in policies. However, a desired reaction of government policies to the knowledge provided goes beyond the direct control of the project. A change in government policies as a result of the knowledge generated and disseminated is a crucial assumption that has not been included in the list of assumptions reported in the ToC.

Figure 1: CounterMEASURE II Theory of Change as included in the implementation plan



V. REVIEW FINDINGS

A. Strategic Relevance

Alignment to UNEP's UNEP Medium Term Strategy[9] (MTS), Programme of Work (POW) and Strategic Priorities

78. The data generated by the project have shown that an important part of marine plastic pollution comes from rivers. By supporting beneficiary countries to reduce plastic pollution in rivers the project contributes to SGD 14[10] and more specifically SDG 14.1 target reporting[11].

79. The project is well grounded in the 2018-2021 Medium-term strategy (MTS), which provides a long-term perspective through outcomes mapped to 2030. More specifically, the project is well aligned with the Chemicals, Waste and Air Quality priority area and its sub-programme.

80. To realize the 2030 Vision several conditions must be met, including a sound management of chemicals and waste, which should be integrated into national and sector-based legislation, policies, plans and strategies. As clearly specified in the MTS, UNEP needs to ensure national and sector-based laws, standards, policies and plans on chemicals, waste management and air quality are fully based on best available science and technology. The project, with its three main components, contributes to generating science-based knowledge on river plastic pollution to be disseminated and used to inform policies and action plans. The project also has a secondary alignment with the Healthy and Productive Ecosystems sub-programme. This is because in the context of aquatic ecosystems, the pollution of freshwater and marine ecosystems, if not properly addressed, will increasingly affect biodiversity and the provision of food and water. Overall, the project addresses the following MTS environmental priorities of the Asia and Pacific Region: manage chemicals and waste, support integrated approaches to environment and health, and support science-policy linkages.

81. CM2 is clearly linked with the Progamme of Work (PoW) project 522.4 ("Protecting the Marine Environment from Land-Based pollution through strengthened coordination of global action") since the definition of the outcome of CM2 coincides with the definition of one of three outcomes of PoW project 522.4. As specified in the CM2 Implementation plan, CM2 contributes to the following Expected Accomplishment in the PoW: "Policies and legal institutional and fiscal strategies and mechanisms for waste prevention and sound management developed or implemented in countries within the framework of relevant multilateral environmental agreements".

82. CM2 and PoW 552.4 are grounded in United Nations Environment Assembly (UNEA) resolution directives that target land-based pollution. Of highest relevance is Resolution 14 from UNEA 5 approved on 2 March 2022 and titled "End Plastic Pollution: Towards and international legally binding instrument". With this resolution, the Assembly agreed to set up an internationally legally binding agreement by 2024 to address the full lifecycle of plastic. In addition, UNEP will have to convene an intergovernmental negotiating committee. CM2 has provided relevant information and data to enable

[9] UNEP's Medium-Term Strategy (MTS) is a document that guides UNEP's programme planning over a four-year period. It identifies UNEP's thematic priorities, known as Sub-programmes, and sets out the desired outcomes, known as Expected Accomplishments (EAs), of the Sub-programmes. https://www.unenvironment.org/about-un-environment/evaluation-office/our-evaluation-approach/un-environment-documents.
[10] Conserve and sustainably use the oceans, seas, and marine resources for sustainable development.
[11] By 2025, prevent and significantly reduce marine pollution of all kinds, in particular from land-based activities, including marine debris and nutrient pollution.

countries to better negotiate the binding instrument. This resolution was proceeded by other relevant resolutions such as UNEA 1/6 ("Marine Plastic Debris and Microplastics"), UNEA 2/11 ("Marine Plastic Litter and Microplastic"), UNEA 3/7 ("Marine Litter and Microplastic"), UNEA 4/6 ("Marine litter and Microplastic") , UNEA 4/7 ("Environmentally Sound Management of Waste") and UNEA 4/9 ("Addressing Single-Use Plastic Products Pollution").

Alignment to Donor/GEF/Partners Strategic Priorities

83. The project is also well aligned with the strategic priorities of the donor, which is the government of Japan. Under the leadership of Japan, the Osaka Blue Ocean Vision, which aims to reduce pollution by marine plastic litter to zero by 2050 through a comprehensive life-cycle approach, was first shared by the G20 leaders at the G20 Osaka Summit in 2019.

84. At the time of this TR, even though plastic pollution is still considered important by the government of Japan, climate change was reported to have outranked plastic pollution as a priority of the government. So, the government of Japan has decided that a third phase will not be funded after CM2. However, the government of Japan has recently financed a new project aimed at addressing both plastic pollution and the effects of climate change for riverine communities in Thailand and Vietnam, thus showing that plastic pollution is still a priority area of intervention.

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

85. Plastic pollution in Asian rivers has been highlighted in several studies to account for an estimated 86% of the global input of plastics into oceans[12]. Two major transboundary river basins in Asia, the Ganges, and the Mekong, are among the ten most plastic-polluted rivers in the world. The Mekong River Basin is home to many of the Convention on Migratory Species-listed species and its freshwater fish diversity is notable, with 768 freshwater fish species scientifically documented[13]. Promoting science-based and evidence-driven action, to reduce and prevent the influx of plastic into Asian rivers is therefore essential.

86. The project contributes to the implementation of the Coordinating Body on the Seas of East Asia (COBSEA) Regional Action Plan on Marine Litter, focusing on land-based sources of marine litter. Indeed, the adoption of the COBSEA Regional Action Plan in 2019 provided a regional framework to guide concerted action to reduce and prevent marine litter, strengthen monitoring and assessment, improve knowledge management, and build the science-policy link, which are all topics covered by CM2.

Complementarity with Existing Interventions/Coherence

87. Complementarity with other UNEP interventions was facilitated by the establishment of a Project Advisory Group (PAG), which consisted of representatives from the UNEP Ecosystem Division, the UNEP Economy Division, the UNEP Science Division, and from the UNEP Communications Division and UNEP ROAP. According to the Terms of Reference (ToR) of the PAG, the role of the advisory group is to provide strategic advice and direction for the implementation and effectiveness of the project. The meetings of the PAG were reported by interviewed members to be an opportunity for information sharing for advising on the coherence and synergies with other related and

[12]L. C. M. Lebreton, J. Van Der Zwet, J. Damsteeg, B. Slat, A. Andrady, and J. Reisser, "River plastic emissions to the world's oceans", Nature Communications, vol. 8, pp. 1–10, 2017.
https://www.nature.com/articles/ncomms15611
[13]Brun, N.R., van Hage, P., Hunting, E.R. et al.,"Polystyrene nanoplastics disrupt glucose metabolism and cortisol levels with a possible link to behavioural changes in larval zebrafish",CommunBiol 2, 382 (2019). https://doi.org/10.1038/s42003-019-0629-6

complementary plastic pollution and river management platforms and other relevant plastic litter pollution reduction initiatives.

88. The project is complementary with the Norway Marine Litter Initiative, which uses the knowledge generated by CM2 to inform policy support initiatives for the government of India. In addition, the project is synergic with a UNDP-implemented project named "Combatting Marine Plastic Litter in Cambodia" and funded by the government of Japan. Again, the information generated by CM2 is used for the implementation of the UNDP project, which is facilitated by the fact that the local IP is the same. The project is also synergic with another project named "SEA Circular" (funded by the government of Sweden and implemented by UNEP) on the plastic value chain and marine plastic pollution.

Rating for Strategic Relevance:	**Highly satisfactory**

B. Quality of Project Design

89. As CounterMEASURE II is part of the global project PoW 522.4, it does not have a project document as such. However, it has a detailed Implementation Plan. It was developed using the lessons learned of CounterMEASURE I, which further identified the need for a concrete implementation plan that informed the project planning, monitoring, and governance set-up of the project, to strive for coherent results and expert advice in the form of a PAG and Science Advisory Group (SAG). Indeed, the CM2 implementation plan makes adequate provision for the establishment of a PAG and a SAG.

90. The project design includes a well-developed Results Resources Framework (RRF), with proper baseline and target figures. Allocated financial resources were reported to be adequate. Learning, communication and outreach were strongly embedded in the project design.

91. Risks are included in a dedicated annex of the implementation plan. They address a wide range of potential risks and are coupled with a credible mitigation strategy. However, a crucial risk was not included, that is, the scientific knowledge generated, managed and disseminated by the project is not used by governments to reduce plastic leakage and marine litter.

92. Complementary with the donor strategic priorities, regional, sub-regional and national environmental priorities is not addressed in the implementation plan.

93. A comprehensive theory of change (ToC) is included in the project Implementation Plan. It reflects the assumed casual linkages between the three project results, the output, the outcome and the project impact.

94. A crucial project outcome is changes in government policies and practices of business entities. This expected outcome results to be excessively ambitious with respect to the envisaged duration at the design. Indeed, changes in government policies and practices of business entities require much more time than the project duration envisaged at the design stage (12 months).

95. The governance and supervision arrangements are properly described in the implementation plan, which clearly specifies focal areas leaders. However, roles and responsibilities of external parties are not mentioned. The terminal review of CounterMEASURE I provided recommendations that, to a large extent, were used to inform the design of the implementation plan of CM2. More precisely, the recommended development of a project monitoring framework was fully taken into account, along with other recommendations such as the development of a theory

change (ToC), the use of cloud storage and information technology tools to foster team collaboration and the incorporation of COVID-19 in the implementation plan to minimize disease transmission. One important recommendation of the TE of CounterMEASURE I was not properly taken into account. The recruitment of the project team was found to be extended over a too long period of time in the CounterMEASURE I TE, thus resulting in the slow start-up of activities. This happened again in CM2 (see Section F).

96. The exit strategy, replication and potential scale-up and socio-political and institutional sustainability aspects were not explicitly dealt with in the project implementation plan. Even though these aspects were addressed in broad terms in the project document of PoW 522.4. they are not specific enough to provide a credible sustainability strategy for CM2.

Rating for Project Design: **Moderately satisfactory**

C. Nature of the External Context

97. Overall, the external aspect that is more likely to affect the capacity of the project to achieve the expected outcome and impact is the political will of beneficiary countries' governments to address marine and riverine plastic pollution. Indeed, the project outcome definition makes explicit reference to the uptake of policies by governments. At global level, the recent approval of Resolution 14 of UNEA 5 was reported by UNEP interviewed staff to represent a very important step to promote policy changes to fight plastic pollution and to develop relevant action plans.

98. However, the external context proved to be extremely challenging. More precisely, during the project period the COVID-19 pandemic outbreak took place and a coup occurred in Myanmar.

99. As a consequence of the coup in Myanmar the project did not implement activities in this country and the initially allocated budget for the Myanmar focal area was reallocated to expand the activities in other focal areas. A detailed analysis of the effects of COVID-19 pandemic on the project is included below since it is the topic of one of the strategic questions.

SQ: What changes were made to adapt to the effects of COVID-19 and how did COVID-19 impact the project?

100. COVID-19 represented a major constrain for the project implementation. In particular, the COVID-19 pandemic strongly limited movements among countries and within countries. During the implementation period beneficiary countries were strongly affected by COVID-19. Several IP and government counterpart staff fell sick.

101. Moreover, stringent lockdown measures were applied. This all delayed the project implementation schedule. Some activities were cancelled like the study tour for journalists. The project mitigated the effects of COVID-19 by requesting a 12-month no-cost extension (which was granted) and by organizing online workshops and trainings and avoiding in presence events. A second no-cost extension would have probably been needed in order to further disseminate the scientific outputs that were delivered during the last months of the project, to coordinate the uploading of CM2 generated data on the knowledge management platform and to further advocate for policy changes.

102. Some project expected results were reported to be negatively affected by the new online remote system. This is the case of policy makers' engagement. UNEP staff

reported that while one or two-day in presence workshops are adequate tools to involve policy makers, their effective engagement is much more difficult when online events are organized, since in this case policy makers can easily be distracted by more pressing issues. Moreover, interviewed UNEP communication staff reported that an excessive reliance of online outreach systems excluded a great part of riverine rural communities' members from awareness raising campaigns, since the use of internet is limited in poor rural areas.

Rating for Nature of the external context: Unfavourable

D. Effectiveness

Availability of Outputs

103. The analysis on the availability of outputs is organized around the three project results.

104. **For Result 1,** the analysis of the workplan, of quarterly reports and of the interviews conducted confirms that the great majority of the targeted project results were delivered.

105. More precisely, for the Mekong River microplastic testing was conducted in the selected six locations in the dry and in the wet season (in Chiang Rai, Ubon Ratchathani, Tone Sap, Phonom Penh, Vientiane and Can Tho). Samples were collected by contracted local partners under the guidance of Pirika and they were analysed in Japan. A datasheet was compiled with collected data. Most frequent detected micro-plastics were associated to specific plastic products. Interviews were conducted by Pirika with plastic companies and restaurants with the assistance of the project local partners. These enabled the project to identify the plastic products that have higher leakage risks.

106. The choice of analysing samples in Japan was due to different reasons: ensuring comparability of results and an appropriate quality control of the analysis and the fact that countries were reported not to have the needed laboratory capacities. In Vietnam the collected samples were also analysed in the country.

107. Macroplastic analysis was conducted for six different locations in the lower Mekong. Mobile applications were developed to collect data on plastic location and were integrated in a GIS system. Overall, data were collected at 1,576 sampling sites (842 in the dry season and 742 in the wet season). Also, 2,200 plastic leakage hotspots were mapped through the mobile application developed. Cameras with a closed-circuit television (CCTV) were installed in Chiang Rai in Thailand on the riverbanks of Mekong to analyse floating objects. A similar system was used on a car to develop litter heatmaps at city scale in Ubon Rathchatahani (in Thailand). It was then replicated in Can Tho in Vietnam and in two cities in Sri Lanka (in Hanwella and in Mawanawella). An open-source machine learning module was developed to pilot plastic pollution monitoring through the recognition of plastic litter heatmaps. The machine learning module was further developed with the support of 900 students, thus making the module more robust. All this gave rise to a collaboration with the Google sustainability team and a Google's algorithm was eventually used to train the image recognition module.

108. In India, as per implementation plan, the activities conducted were focused on four main cities along the Ganges River: Agra, Haridwar, Prayagraj, Patna. In each city, data were collected to develop different studies. These include a micro-plastic assessment, a macro-plastic assessment and a study to identify plastic waste stream pathways and map hotspots. These three studies were conducted both in the dry season and in the

wet season. That way it was possible to understand the source of primary and secondary microplastic leakage and transport in riverine systems, the composition of plastic debris of polimers and the source of plastic waste. As for the Mekong river, the identification of hotspots was done with a citizen-science approach, since volunteers contributed to collecting images of litter hotspots.

109. In India an additional activity had a specific focus on wetlands. In collaboration with Wetland International South Asia, a study on the state of knowledge of macroplastic pollution for wetlands was conducted through a meta-analysis. Also, a protocol for a rapid assessment of plastic pollution in wetlands was developed. The protocol was tested once. However, the interviewed sectoral experts reported that more tests would be needed for the protocol.

110. The third geographic area covered by the project was Sri Lanka, where the IP was the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN). In Sri Lanka two river basins (Kelani and Maha Oya) on the west coast were selected for the collection of samples for the microplastic and microplastic analyses. Samples were also collected from the oceanfront western coast. As for Mekong countries a mobile application were used to map hotspots. CCTV were installed on a car for image recognition. IUCN also signed agreements with private companies to develop and test a river plastic collector to be used in wide spaces and coastal estuaries. In addition, a boat and a kayak to manually collect plastic were adapted and tested in an urban setting. However, in April 2022, after the formal project operational closure, the activities in Sri Lanka were not yet concluded and IUCN had requested an extension of the contract.

111. Under Result 1 an important group of outputs covered the migratory species. The secretariat on the Convention on the Conservation of Migratory Species (CMS) contracted the National Oceanographic Center (NOC) to develop a study on the impact of plastic pollution on aquatic, terrestrial and avian migratory species protected by the Convention in the Asia and Pacific region. The report was released in September 2021 and the publication was unanimously reported to represent a significant first step to understand the impacts of plastic pollution on CMS-listed species for the target areas. The report received widespread media coverage (BBC, AFP, The Japan Times, South China Morning Post, The Independent, France24, Mongabay, Hindustan Times, CGTN and several lesser-known outlets). It was also presented at an UNEA side event organized by the government of Germany[14]. Another main output was a plastic risk assessment (risk of ingestion, risk of entanglement in abandoned, derelict and lost fishing gears) for selected CMS-listed migratory species within the Mekong and Ganges River basins. The report was launched in March 2022 through a press release and was also presented at a side event during UNEA 5.2.

112. In addition, in the area of migratory species, the project was supposed to develop two studies: one for the Ganges river and one for the Mekong river. The former is a comprehensive full report on the state of knowledge on the impact of plastic pollution on freshwater, terrestrial and avian migratory species developed by UNEP country office, which CMS assessed to be of very good quality (and that was officially delivered in February 2022). For the Mekong River the project did not deliver a full standalone report. A seven-page chapter was introduced in the MRC regional report on the status and trends of plastic pollution in the Lower Mekong Basin and it included a concise literature review and data collected from a few interviews with fishermen and fish vendors.

[14] Nature for Human and Ecosystems Health Flagship: Marine Litter and Plastic Pollution - Towards a global agreement: Steps of a participatory approach for new global agreement on marine litter and plastic pollution

113. **For Result 2,** in the Mekong beneficiary countries, a perception survey was conducted. In addition, trainings and workshops on plastic waste management were organized for local governments. A training was also organized to disseminate the guide on how to develop solid waste management plans for ports and piers (see below).

114. In India, a perception survey was conducted in Agra and in Patna to understand practices and awareness towards plastic, to analyse willingness, barriers, and motivations to move away from plastic and to get perceptions on needed regulations and capacity building for plastic waste management.

115. In collaboration with the National Institute of Urban Affairs (NIUA) four training modules were developed on plastic leakage (waste minimization initiatives, plastic leakage assessment toolkits, landfill availability and operations and landfill remediations). In total 58 persons from different relevant organizations participated in the trainings in February 2022. The trainings are now formally institutionalized among NIUA training modules.

116. Other trainings on waste minimization were organized in Patna and in Agra in January and February 2022 for members of civil society organizations (CSO), urban local bodies, informal pickers and for representatives of the tourism and hospitality sector. In total, 232 people participated in these trainings. An appreciation letter signed by Agra Municipal Corporation shows that the trainings were highly appreciated, and that the Corporation is considering institutionalizing the trainings.

117. Also, the project collaborated with GIZ to develop guidelines on the management of waste at large scale public events. The guidelines are reported in quarterly report to be used by the Haridwar Municipal Corporation.

118. Outreach activities were the other main group of outputs under Result 2. Coherently with the general strategy described in the communication plan the project implemented a wide range of outreach activities. This included a CM2 website that had 130,000 access during the last 12 months of the project. In addition to project publications and project materials the website also includes 13 stories on different topis (including articles, videos, short films) in English, Hindi and Japanese. Also, a monthly newsletter was developed since November 2021 and was sent to approximately 1,580 persons. The litter collection events organized in 2020 in Agra, Patna, Prayagray in September 2020 for the word Cleanup Day represent another outreach activity conducted by the project.

119. A global social media campaign (named Face the Plastic Truth) was launched in January 2022 as a sub-campaign of UNEP's global Clean Seas Campaign on UNEP's global Facebook and Instagram accounts. Key messages highlighted the importance of facts about plastic pollution in rivers, some of the key impacts on migratory species, as well as information on some of the key plastic items polluting waterways in Asia and potential alternatives. The Face Plastic Truth Campaign had a wide outreach. However, as sub-campaign of a UNEP global campaign managed by UNEP HQ, CM2 posts had to compete for the same social media channels of the global campaign.

120. In addition to the global campaign, the "Better Than Plastic" was launched in India in December. It had more than 2 million views. The campaign was also promoted via radio and the project quarterly report estimates that it had 900,000 listenerships. In addition, in India, 14 articles were completed, of which 12 were published online on plastic pollution and related impacts on rivers. The total readership across all platforms (Mongabay, social media, newsletters, print and digital media, CounterMEASURE website, UN News) is reported in project quarterly reports to be approximately 12

million. The project communication campaign also developed different short films[15] that were disseminated through the CM2's website and in the final project forum[16]. The CMS report on the impact of plastic pollution on migratory species was widely disseminated though various means and presented in high level dialogue panels like the UNEP's SEA of Solutions 2021[17] and UNEA 5.2.

121. The project also organized a five-day online workshop in India for early career journalists, environmental professionals and social media influencers on issues related to plastic pollution with the purpose of developing an in-depth understanding of plastic waste management so that participants improve their skills to write and publish proper essays, blogspots, and videos.

122. Despite all the achievements in reaching out to a wide audience the project had important delays in the implementation of dissemination activities. Main causes were the lack of a fully dedicated project information officer and the COVID-19 restrictions. One of the consequences was that the planned study tour for journalists did not take place. This was considered an important dissemination activity, which proved to be instrumental to disseminate the project results and raise awareness on plastic pollution during CounterMEASURE phase I.

123. Overall, the dissemination activities conducted in the Mekong countries were reported to be limited. This is because the great majority of the knowledge products provided under Result 1 were delivered in February or March 2022, leaving little time for proper dissemination. During this period, the project management unit further faced limited capacities since the public information officer left in July 2021 and the position remained vacant until the project end (the functions of the project information officer were covered by the rest of the project team).

124. Under Result 2, another important area of work was knowledge management. Main activities include the citizen -science events (for on-site data collection and machine learning modules developed with students' assistance) and a knowledge management platform that was developed with the support of the UN Office of Information and Communications Technology (OICT). The development of the platform experienced significant delays and at the time of this TR is still did not include the data generated by CM2. Indeed, it only included data generated by CounterMEASURE phase I and reports developed by various partners and stakeholders but CM2 data were not still uploaded in the platform.

125. **For Result 3** Outputs were on the development of policy support and advocacy. Activities were conducted targeting international forums and national institutions.

126. Main activities with an international scope were the development of a technical paper on the use of COVID-19 inducted plastic waste, the development of factsheets analysing policies in 10 Asian countries on plastic governance and waste policy, and the development of a partnership with Google on plastic leakage detection in Asian rivers using heatmap recognition technology. In addition, the project contributed to informing the second and the third G20 reports on Actions against Marine Plastic Litter to describe actions taken against marine plastic litter.

127. The implementation plan also mentions that the focal area lead for policy and advocacy support is a project chief technical advisor (CTA). A dedicated CTA was employed by the project team until October 2021, when the CTA left the project team

[15] Titles are: Lifeline Ganga; Silent Flows the Yamuna, Save our Oceans, Reducing River Plastic Litter Through Science, Policy and Citizen Action

[16] The forum was titled "Forum on Plastic Free Rivers in Asia" and was held on 8-10 March 2022.

[17] 16-18 November 2021

for a new position within UNEP. The lack of a fully dedicated CTA after the incumbent left was reported to have affected the scope of activities in the policy support and advocacy area with respect to what was planned in the implementation plan. One main global level institution that the project targeted was UNEA. CMS presented the two reports on migratory species at UNEA side events (see above). However, while UNEA participants could still use CM2 results for their discussions, no informative sessions at the forum of Asia Pacific Ministers and Environmental Authorities took place (as planned in the implementation plan). Also, the University of Portsmouth was contracted to conduct a policy review of 10 Asian countries on plastic governance and waste. However, no presentation of main results took place at UNEA, as envisaged in the project workplan. Overall, with the exclusion of the project final forum, dissemination was not organized for the 10 factsheets and relevant follow-up activities did not take place. Other activities sketched in the workplan that did not take place are the engagement of a dialogue with CEOs on marine plastic litter, the organization of a side event at the World Economic Forum, as well as the development of a virtual dialogue with other stakeholders like the Food Industry Asia or the World Instant Noodle Association. In this regard, with the exclusion of Google, different UNEP respondents acknowledged that the private sector engagement was limited.

128. Policy support and advocacy were also conducted in India, in Sri Lanka and in Mekong riverine countries. In India, the project contracted the Integrated Mountain Initiative (IMI) to conduct a stakeholder mapping in the Indian Himalayan Region (IHR) with a specific focus on the Ganges basin in Uttarakhand. IMI also drafted a policy framework for plastic waste management for IHR with the ultimate purpose of providing policy recommendations. The work was concluded with a high-level summit of mountain legislators in November 2021 with a final formal declaration to support the central government's call to eradicate single use plastics (SUPs) in the IHR by urging state governments, union territory administrations, district councils, traditional institutions and other civil society bodies for a sustained cooperation to combat plastic pollution. The declaration also advocates for extended producer responsibility (EPR). The IMI also drafted a specific policy brief for plastic waste management in Uttarakhand.

129. In partnership with TERI, the project supported the development of the action plan for eradicating SUPs in the state of Bihar. The appreciation letter provided by the state of Bihar Pollution and Control Board shows that the support provided was essential for the development of the action plan. Indeed, Bihar Pollution and Control Board requested the development of the action plan rather than a policy brief as initially proposed to the four involved cities. TERI also conducted stakeholders' consultations and developed an approach paper providing recommendations for a national action to tackle marine and riverine plastic pollution. Additional outputs provided by TERI include the development of three policy briefs on the state of plastic waste for the cities of Prayagraj, Haridiwar and Agra. In India the project supported the development of protocols for macroplastic assessments in wetlands. UNEP India had discussions with government of India and with the state governments of Delhi and Uttar Pradesh on these protocols since they were reported to be interested in piloting them. At the time of this TR discussions were still ongoing about the integration of the protocol in the management plans of the wetlands of national importance.

130. In Sri Lanka IUCN's contract was more focused on knowledge generation rather than on policy support. However, the project supported the national waste management action plan by developing a communication strategy for the plan.

131. For the Mekong riverine countries, a report on plastic pollution in the Lower Mekong River Basin was developed by the MRC Secretariat. Draft versions were shared for consultations. The final version was finalized in March 2022. The report highlighted a general lack of plastic monitoring capacity and recommended the development of

monitoring protocols. In this regard, a detailed methodology was developed for the MRC Riverine plastic monitoring and it includes three monitoring protocols: i) for micro-plastic in rivers, ii) for macroplastic, iii) for microplastic in freshwater fauna. The protocols were shared in national consultation workshops and in a regional workshop that followed the tests in the dry season. They were also supposed to be tested in the wet season, but this did not happen.

132. As detailed in the implementation plan, the project was supposed to develop solid waste management (SWM) plans for selected ports and piers. Indeed, one of the findings of CounterMEASURE phase I was that ports and piers are an important source of plastic pollution. Following internal discussions, the project decided to draft a guide on how to develop SWM plans rather than actual SWM plans. This is because the development of the SWM plans is not part of the Mekong River Commission (MRC)'s mandate (the institution in charge of the activity). Rather, it is a task of line ministries of member countries. The guide on the development of SWM plan was delivered one month before of the project. Trainings with national relevant authorities were held in September 2021. However, interviewed respondents could not report on the actual use of the guide to develop SWM plans.

Achievement of Project Outcomes

133. The Theory of Change (ToC) included in the implementation plan reports the following definition of the project outcome: "government, business entities, and stakeholders' uptake innovative tools, policies best technologies and innovative financial mechanisms to encourage good practices and behavioural change to reduce marine pollution". Coherently with the definition of the outcome the RRF includes indicators for number of policies, number of governments, number of business entities and best practices to reduce plastic leakage into rivers. The targets set for indicators of the outcome were formally achieved. Even though for policies it is difficult to attribute changes to a single project, CM2 did cause some policy changes that can certainly be attributed to the project. This the case of the action plan for eradicating SUPs in the state of Bihar or the Declaration passed by legislators in northern states of India acknowledging urgent need for policies and legislation against SUP and in favour of EPR. Also, the development of protocols (and their formal adoption) to monitor plastic pollution in the Mekong can be certainly attributed to the project.

134. Results of studies were presented during workshops (mostly online) that where often attended by line ministries. However, several respondents from UNEP and IP reported that the policy development work was underestimated and that more work could have been done to engage policy makers. Reported constraints for more effective policy work were the short duration of the project and the fact that COVID-19 forced the project to engage policy makers mainly through online events.

135. In order to promote policy development in India the project targeted different administration levels including cities, states and the central government. Overall, the project appears to have made more contributions towards changes in policy in India than Mekong riverine countries. This is because the main IP in Mekong riverine countries was the MRC, which is a regional consultative body, whose mandate does not cover the development of policies at country level. Indeed, excluding protocols for plastic waste assessments, changes in policies or plans that can be attributed to the project were not reported for Mekong countries.

136. Regarding the involvement of business entities, with the exclusion of Google and two firms in Sri Lanka that designed the prototypes of plastic waste collectors, the involvement of companies by the project was very limited.

SQ: How well has the project been able to inform policy discussions at local, national, regional and global levels through inputs on plastic pollution in rivers in Asia and globally?

137. The project disseminated the studies and the scientific results obtained in different global, regional and national forums. These include UNEA 5.2, SEA of Solutions, the Global Partnership on Marine Litter (GPML), and the contribution to the G20 reports on actions against Marine Plastic Litter, among others. Scientific articles were also published in academic journals, thus contributing to debates among scientists. An example of how well a project output was used to inform discussions at global level was the CMS study on the impact of plastic pollution on aquatic, terrestrial and avian migratory species protected by the Convention in the Asia and Pacific region. The report contributed to fill a knowledge gap that was highlighted by the 13th Conference of Parties to the Convention on Migratory Species held in India in February 2020. The report was finalized by the project in September 2021 leaving enough time for a proper dissemination. Indeed, the report received a wide media coverage and was very well disseminated, thus potentially contributing to informing relevant policy discussions. Conversely, the time left for dissemination was much shorter for studies that were delivered during the last two or three months of the project life (these include the studies on micro and macro plastic, the hotspot identification, the factsheets analysing waste policies in 10 Asian countries). This is also because during the last few months of the project capacities were constrained by the fact that different members of the PMU left the project team.

138. Result 3 specifically aimed at informing policy discussions. The project delivered a wide range of outputs. A clear policy change was provoked by the action plan on the for eradicating SUPs in the state of Bihar since the plan was formally approved. Also, the declaration of the North India legislator is a clear indicator of the capacity of the project to influence the policy debate. However, at the time of this TR the other policy outputs delivered by the project did not directly cause a policy change.

Achievement of Likelihood of Impact

139. The studies conducted by the project were reported to have provided extremely valuable data. Indeed, the project made it possible to quantify the amount of plastic pollution in target rivers and clearly identified leakage points in the target cities.

140. The studies and data generated by the project are expected to be used by countries in the intergovernmental negotiating committee to properly negotiate the international legally binding instrument on plastic that was recently agreed at UNEA 5.2. Indeed, such binding instrument is expected to drive the development of national and international policies with concrete impacts on plastic pollution.

141. The definition of the impact included in the ToC is “reduction of plastic waste in rivers”. This is an extremely ambitious target that can only be achieved through a coordinated policy effort rather than the results of a single project. Also, the fact that the engagement of business entities and the policy support development promoted by the project were quite limited casts doubts on the capacity of the project to make a significant impact on the quantity of plastic waste leaked into rivers.

Rating for Effectiveness:	**Moderately satisfactory**

E. Financial Management

142. All interviewed IPs reported that cash advances were received on time from UNEP. No delays were reported for disbursements.

143. Interim expenditures reports were regularly annexed to quarterly reports, thus showing that an analysis of actual expenditures against budget and workplan was regularly done.

144. As per UNEP 's standards, expenditures were reported by UMOJA budget classes. An analysis of actual expenditures was also done by focal area (which was agreed with the donor). This TR requested actual expenditures, which were provided by to 31 December 2021 (i.e. three months before the operational project end) and by UMOJA budget classes up 28 February 2022 (one month before the project end).

145. Communication between the project technical management and the related administrative and financial positions were reported to be smooth and conducive to a proper project implementation. The financial project officer was seconded from the Regional Office Finance and Administration Unit and was supposed to work part-time for the project. The officer was reported to work extensively for CM2 even beyond its part-time formal agreement, which shows UNEP's commitment to a proper financial management of this project. Overall, both the interviewed project management officer and the finance officer showed strong awareness of the project progress with regards to disbursements.

Table 3: Expenditures by focal areas

Focal area	Estimated cost as presented the design	costs/expenditures at 31 Dec. 2021	Expenditure ratio (actual/planned)
Mekong	897,000	963,100	107%
Ganges	703,000	619,516	88%
Migratory Species	240,000	220,720	92%
Sri Lanka	455,000	406,000	89%
Myanmar	151,000	0	0%
Policy	338,000	109,000	32%
Knowledge management	445,000	150,413	34%
Communication	330,000	259,400	79%
Sub-total focal areas	3,559,000	2,728,149	77%
PMU	1,362,305	539,833	40%
M&E	73,000	29,300	40%
Total Activity Budget	4,994,305	3,297,282	66%
PSC	649,260	428,272	66%
Total Activity including PSC and excluding UN levy	5,643,565	3,725,554	66%

Table 4: Financial management ratings

Financial management components:		Rating	Evidence/ Comments
1. Adherence to UNEP's policies and procedures:		**HS**	
Any evidence that indicates shortcomings in the project's adherence[18] to UNEP or donor policies, procedures or rules		No	
2. Completeness of project financial information[19]:			
Provision of key documents to the reviewer (based on the responses to A-H below)		**HS**	
A.	Co-financing and Project Cost's tables at design (by budget lines)	Yes	Project costs at design are available by activity, by focal area and by UMOJA class
B.	Revisions to the budget	Yes	In the second implementation report project costs were organized as in the first implementation report (i.e. by activity, by focal area and by budget line)
C.	All relevant project legal agreements (e.g. SSFA, PCA, ICA)	Yes	Yes
D.	Proof of fund transfers	Yes	The project had 17 contracts. Providing a proof of funds transfer of each of them was considered impractical for the finance office. The financial office provided a sample of proofs for 4 contracts, which were selected by the reviewer.
E.	Proof of co-financing (cash and in-kind)	N/A	
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	Interim financial reports (including expenses by UMOJA class) were annexed to the quarterly financial reports and included in the annual report.
G.	Copies of any completed audits and management responses *(where applicable)*	N/A	
H.	Any other financial information that was required for this project (list):	N/A	
3. Communication between finance and project management staff		**HU**	
Project Manager and/or Task Manager's level of awareness of the project's financial status.		HS	
Fund Management Officer's knowledge of project progress/status when disbursements are done.		HS	
Level of addressing and resolving financial management issues among Fund Management Officer and Project Manager/Task Manager.		HU	

[18] 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.

[19] See also document 'Criterion Rating Description' for reference

Contact/communication between by Fund Management Officer, Project Manager/Task Manager during the preparation of financial and progress reports.	HU	
Project Manager, Task Manager and Fund Management Officer responsiveness to financial requests during the review process	S	
Overall rating	HS	

Rating for Financial Management: Highly satisfactory

F. Efficiency

146. The last project quarterly report includes a financial statement covering the period from the project start to 28 February 2022. The financial statement is qualified as "interim" and it does not include all project expenditures (indeed, the project operational life extents over one additional month). However, it does include relevant information to provide efficiency considerations. The interim financial statement reports an unspent total budget of USD 1,589,646. Interviewed UNEP staff reported that UNEP will return approximately USD 1 million to the donor, which is equivalent to 18% of the project budget. A comparison of the budget annexed to the implementation report revised in March 2021 and the interim financial statements budget line reveals the budget lines where the project underspent. More precisely, at the end of February 2022, the project spent 43% less than then planned budget for staff, consultants and other personnel costs. The total amount of unspent budget of staff/consultants and related costs was USD 808,704, which is the highest value among all unspent budget figures. The second most important unspent budget line were the contractual services, for which the project had an unspent budget of USD 525,577 (i.e. 92% of the original budget line). Also travel costs are much less than envisaged in the budget (at the end of the project there was an unspent budget for travel of USD 344,576). The project spent all available budget for transfers and grants to IPs.

147. The main reason for staff costs underspending was the prolonged recruitment process and the fact that several project team members left without being replaced. More precisely, the project management officer was recruited in February 2021 (eight months after the project started) and left a few weeks before the project end; The CTA covering the policy and advocacy left for another position within UNEP in October 2021; the APO in charge of the knowledge management area left in May 2021 for another position; the project information officer was employed from August 2020 to July 2021.

148. The main reported reason for the extended recruitment process was compliance with UNEP's recruitment procedures. One of the consequences of the extended recruitment process was that activities started relatively late. In this regard, the first contract for an IP started on 23 December 2021, which is six months after the project start.

149. The project management unit did different attempts to replace the staff that left the project but the remaining employment contract duration (until the project end) was too short to attract qualified personnel. So, the functions covered by the staff that left were covered by the remaining project team and by consultants.

150. For contractual services the main cost was the development of the digital platform, for which related expenses still had to be included in the financial statements. Also, some activities were not implemented because of COVID-19 restrictions (in presence seminars and the study tour for journalists). For the knowledge management platform, the project was supposed to procure related ICT services from a company. However,

on one side this kind of procurement procedure should have been managed by UNEP HQ and would have required a very long period of time. On the other side the project management unit did not have a dedicated procurement officer, which could have probably speed up procurement processes. The PMU ended up contracting OICT through a service level agreement (SLA).

151. Underspending for travels was caused by COVID-19 travel restrictions. Indeed, the great part of meetings, trainings and workshops was conducted online, which caused substantial savings.

152. The fact that the project spent all available budget for transfers and grants to IPs suggests that the great majority of the activities were implemented. However, at the time of this TR, CM2 generated data were not yet uploaded in the knowledge management platform and the protocols for monitoring plastic pollution in the Mekong revering countries were tested only in the dry season, and not in the wet season (in this regard, the MRC reported planning the testing of the protocols with their own resources in the next wet season). Moreover, the timing of different delivered products is questionable since different research activities were completed during the finale project stage and were not adequately disseminated (since remaining time for dissemination was short and the project team had very limited capacity to properly organize dissemination). As a result, the potential influencing capacity of the products delivered the last two or three months was limited (see analysis on the effectiveness criterion).

153. A cost breakdown by focal area was provided to this TR. It covers the period from the project start until 31 December 2021, which is three months before the operational project end. At that time the Mekong, Ganges, Migratory species and Sri Lanka focal areas had spent or committed at least 88% of the available budget. The focal areas with the lower rate of committed or spent resources were knowledge management (31%) and policy (30%). The communication focal area had an execution rate of 76%.

154. The project was granted a 12-month no-cost extension. Given that the project has a substantial unspent budget and that some activities still need to be continued or strengthened (e.g. policy support, dissemination and outreach, completion of the activities in Sri Lanka, testing of protocols in the wet season in Mekong, coordinating data uploading to the knowledge management platform) an additional no-cost extension was internally considered. However, it was not formally requested. In this regard, the interviewed donor's representative reported that the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MOFA) regulations for Supplementary Budget would not have allowed a further extension.

Rating for Efficiency: Unsatisfactory

SQ: How well has the project utilized local and regional capacity (including the scientific community, as well as innovative technology (such as AI) for gathering and sharing data on plastic pollution in rivers in the region?

155. The project made an extensive use of a large community of scientists, who were involved trough contracts with universities and research centres or individually as members of the science advisory group (SAG). The project had 17 agreements with institutions for a total value of USD 2.4 million. One of the contracts was with the CMS, which had had two small scale funding agreements (SSFA): one with NOC and another with the Commonwealth for Scientific and Industrial Research Organization (CSIRO), thus making 19 agreements. Of the 19 agreements, 13 agreements were with

institutions located in the six beneficiary countries (representing 58% of the total value of the agreements), one was with Pirika, a Japanese organization, three were with Europe-based organizations, one was the CSIRO, which is based in Australia, and the last one is the CMS. The percentage of the total value of all agreements signed with organizations in the region (including Japan) was 70, while the percentage of agreements signed with institutions based in the six beneficiary countries 58.

156. The SAG provided the project team with scientific insights on plastic pollution in rivers, reviewed the scientific reports delivered by IPs and provided technical advice on new technologies. The original SAG had 11 members affiliated with different research organizations. Of these, seven had an active participation in meetings and in reviewing project deliverables, while the remaining four members were not active participants. Of the seven active members four were affiliated to institutions located in the region (two in India, one in Japan and one in China).

157. The project also made use of new technologies like artificial intelligence (AI) for image recognition, which was possible thanks to the work of the scientists of the Asian Institute of Technology (AIT) and of partnership with Google. In addition, the machine learning modules developed by the AIT were further improved by students. This TR finds that the use of AI in data collection on plastic litter is an important innovation that the project brought to the science and practitioners' community.

158. Regarding the use of laboratory capacities, the microplastic analysis for the samples collected in Mekong riverine countries was conducted in Japan. Reported reasons was a lack of laboratory capacity in beneficiary countries and ensuring comparability of results. However, the French National Institute for Sustainable Development (a project IP) conduced microplastic analyses in Ho Chi Minh, which shows that Vietnam had a laboratory that could conduct the required analysis. The microplastic analysis of the samples collected in India and in Sri Lanka was conducted in laboratories of the countries where the samples were collected.

G. Monitoring and Reporting

Monitoring Design and Budgeting

159. The last section of the project implementation plan makes provisions for monitoring and evaluation and references the annexed RRF. Indeed, a results resources framework was annexed and it included SMART indicators, baseline figures and targets. Dedicated M&E budget lines were included in the overall project budget. Frequency of reporting was specified. In addition, the implementation plan assigns responsibilities since it specified that the project management officer has to prepare quarterly progress reports including results against indicators set in the RRF.

160. However, a guide detailing data collection method for each indicator was no developed. Also, disaggregation of by sex was not considered at the design stage. Monitoring of Project Implementation and project reporting

161. A comprehensive first annual report was developed in March 2021. Since the following quarter the PMU drafted a quarterly report. Despite not being a contractual requirement, the quarterly reports were shared with the donor. They included updated figures of the indicator-based performance assessments (IBPAs), which report figures against each indicator of the RRF. Project monitoring data were shared during PAG meetings.

162. For outputs and results, this TR finds that information included quarterly reports and in the annexed IBPAs was instrumental to facilitate a proper monitoring and that also served accountability purposes. However, the included information for monitoring the achievement of the project outcome is not completely relevant. More precisely, for the

outcome the RRF had four indicators. Three of them are relevant and properly measured. These are: Indicator 1) "Number of policies developed by governments for reducing plastic waste leakage in rivers" Indicator 2) "Number of governments that have introduced innovative policies". Indicator 4) "Number of best practices policies to reduce plastic leakage into rivers introduced by businesses".

163. Indicator 3 of the outcome is defined as "number of business entities that demonstrate best practices to reduce plastic leakage into rivers". This indicator is well defined, but the information reported is irrelevant since it includes number of scientific articles, a publication and discussions with companies but it does not include changes in best practices of companies.

164. Only for one indicator sex disaggregation was possible (Number of participants trained on methodologies and tools report that they are effectively apply the training in their work) but gender disaggregated figures were not provided.

Rating for Monitoring and Reporting:	**Satisfactory**

H. Sustainability

165. CM2 does not have a formalized, defined sustainability plan or exit strategy. However, there are contextual and project implementation aspects that are related to ensuring sustainability.

Socio-political Sustainability

166. Key informants reported that the project strongly contributed to build momentum to develop legally building instruments in the target countries. The plastic pollution topic is widely thought to be a central topic during the next ten years. In this regard, the recently approved Resolution 14 at UNEA 5.2. will give rise to an important debate to which the data generated by the project will contribute to. The fact that India was one of the proponents of the mentioned resolution is a clear indicator of the political commitment of this country, as well as the reported strong engagement that Sri Lanka had during related discussions UNEA 5.2.

Financial and institutional sustainability

167. Other aspects that are as likely to contribute to sustainability is the institutionalization of some key project outputs like the training modules developed with NIUA, the action plan for eradicating SUPs in India and the plastic assessment protocols in Mekong countries. Interviewed NIUA staff reported that other city administrations requested the same trainings provided by the project and that relevant MoUs have already been signed. For Mekong countries the MRC regularly assesses water quality using 19 different parameters and is now planning to add an additional parameter on plastic. However, for the microplastic assessment the lack of laboratory capacities in Mekong riverine countries will be a serious constraint for the replicability of the assessments.

168. Some follow-up interventions are expected to be provided by other related projects. These include a UAS 1 million-project funded by the government of Japan in Vietnam and Thailand on community resilience, plastic pollution and climate change and an USD 8 million-project funded by the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) in Sri Lanka that has an important recycling component and that will use and possibly expand the hotspot analysis conducted by CM2.

169. The project involved government institutions at various levels to disseminate the results of the research conducted. Line ministries were invited through webinars and workshops. Although the project did not create financial dependency, the sustainability

prospects of the project hinges on governments' political willingness and financial commitments to address plastic pollution problems. In this regard, different respondents from UNEP acknowledged that more engagement of policy markers is needed and that overall, the policy support work to be conducted by the project was probably underestimated, especially in Mekong countries, where the work in the area of policy support development was limited by the fact that the MRC (i.e. the main institutional counterpart) does not cover the development of policies at country level.

Rating for Sustainability:	**Moderately likely**

I. Factors Affecting Performance and Cross-Cutting Issues

Preparation and Readiness

170. A first implementation plan was developed just after the project started, which included a detailed workplan[20] . However, a procurement plan was not developed neither during the start-up phase nor in a later phase.

171. Staff mobilization extended over almost six months. The project officially started in June 2020, but the project manager was recruited only in February 2021. Such an extended period for recruitment reduced the remaining time for the implementation of activities. In this regard, UNEP staff reported that a six-month recruitment period is generally needed to comply with UNEP recruitment procedures.

172. All partners' capacities were assessed before contracting. However, legal agreements were not signed in a timely manner. While the contract with the CMS and the MRC were signed in 2020 and the contracts with Pirika (for microplastic analysis), with AIT (for macroplastic analysis and hotspot mapping in Mekong) and the National Productivity Council in India (for microplastic and macroplastic analysis, for hotspot mapping and selected outreach activities) were signed at the end of January or the beginning of February 2021, all remaining 12 contracts with IPs were signed after July 2021.

173. The contract with the service provider for the knowledge platform was signed relatively late (in October 2021). This was also due fact that the PMU could not rely on a dedicated procurement officer, who would have properly guided the project management in the use of procurement procedures.

174. As explained in the following section, the project advisory group (PAG) was established with similar functions to those a steering committee. The first meeting of the PAG was held at the end of April 2021, which is eight months after the project started.

Quality of Project Management and Supervision

175. The project did not have a steering committee. However, a project advisory group (PAG) was established with representatives from different UNEP divisions. The PAG met regularly to provide strategic advice to the project, especially on potential partnerships and on the coherence and synergies with other related interventions in Asia and globally.

[20] A second implementation plan was developed in March 2021, when the project manager was recruited, and a no-cost extension was agreed.

176. Overall, project staff showed good capacities for the project requirements. However, procurement was an area for which adequate capacities were missing. This was at the origin of delays in procuring some project services. Moreover, the PMU did not have a dedicate monitoring officer. So, monitoring and reporting functions tasks were covered by the project management officer (as specified in the implementation plan). While monitoring reports were overall of good quality, the lack of dedicated monitoring officer caused a significant additional burden of work for the project management officer.

177. Regular coordination meetings were organized. Overall, exchanges between the PMU, UNEP and IPs were reported to be conducive to a smooth implementation.

Stakeholders Participation and Cooperation

178. Main categories of stakeholders are governments at city, state and central level, the scientific community and business entities.

179. The project showed strong efforts to promote ownership among line ministries, and lower-level administrations. In India the project engaged government administrations at all levels (i.e., cities, states and central government), while in Mekong countries (which have more centralized government structures) line ministries were the main targets. However, interviewed UNEP staff and IPs unanimously reported that more work was needed to engage policy makers.

180. The scientific community was highly involved throughout the activities conducted under Result 1. Indeed, the project had nine different grants with research institutions and universities. Scientists were also involved through the SAG to provide technical advice to the project and to review research reports. In addition, the scientific community was also involved in some outreach activities.

181. Regarding the private sector involvement, in India (in Agra), a training was organized for the tourism and hospitality sector with 11 participants. However, overall, with the exclusion of Google and two companies in Sri Lanka that designed the prototypes for plastic waste collection, the involvement of the private sector was very limited.

Responsiveness to Human Rights and Gender Equality

182. An analysis of gender perspectives on marine pollution was included in PoW 552.4. Also, a gender marker score was not assigned to CM2, but PoW 552.4 had a score 2a (i.e. gender well mainstreamed). In this regard, the PoW 552.4 project document rated the project as low risk (for impact, probability and significance) for gender equity. The Environment, Social and Economic Sustainability principle and safeguard checklists for gender equity did not anticipate any potential negative impact on women caused by the project.

183. While the PoW 552.4 project document properly took into account gender aspects, the CM2 implementation plan and all other CM2 documents did not take into account gender equity. A gender analysis was not planned for and was not conducted. Gender disaggregated data were not collected for the only indicator of the RRF for which sex disaggregation was possible. Despite these shortcomings, given the nature of the activities conducted, this TR finds that the project could not cause any potential negative impact on women.

Environmental and Social Safeguards

184. As for the gender analysis an environmental and social screening was conducted for PoW 552.4 but not for CM2. In PoW 552.4 all potential safeguard standards triggered by the project were marked as low risk for impact, probability, and significance.

185. Risks ratings were not reviewed once CM2 project started and a specific management plan for addressing safeguarding was not developed for this project. Also, the annual report and the quarterly reports do not include safeguarding (neither do they report that no safeguarding issues arose). As for gender, despite these shortcomings, given the nature of the activities conducted, this TF finds that that no environmental and social safeguard issues could be caused by the project.

186. Although the project management did not intentionally pursued actions to minimize the environmental footprint, the restrictions caused by COVID-19 pandemic strongly limited travels, and consequently the environmental footprint of the project. Indeed, the project had a USD 344,000 unspent budget for travels.

Communication and Public Awareness

187. The project deployed a wide range communication and public awareness tools and means. Indeed, outputs delivered under Result 2 were specifically intended at sharing the results of the knowledge generated under Result 1. Section E above includes details on the number of people reached, which is very high.

188. However, there were also missed opportunities, which were caused by the lack a fully staffed project team during the last few months of the project, the accumulated delay in delivery some activities and the short duration of the project with respect to the project budget and stated outcome. As mentioned, the project public information officer and the APO in charge of knowledge management left long before the project ended (eight and ten months, respectively). The factsheets on waste policies for 10 Asian countries did not receive adequate dissemination and follow-up. Overall, interviewed UNEP staff reported that there was not time to adequately disseminate the scientific products delivered at the end of the project.

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

VI. CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

A. Conclusions

189. With its focus on fighting marine and riverine plastic pollution in areas where transboundary rivers are among the most polluted in the world, the project is high relevant to national, sub-regional, regional, and global issues. The project is also well aligned with UNEP's strategic priorities, the MTS and PoW and recent UNEA resolutions on plastic marine litter. By establishing a PAG CM2 provisions were made to ensure complementarity and synergy with other UNEP's interventions. Complementary was also found for interventions funded by other donors in the same sector.

190. The project design drew on the lessons learned from CounterMEASURE phase I, thus taking into account main recommendations provided by the terminal review of phase I. Most important elements of a proper design were included in the implementation plan. Financial resources were adequate, governance arrangements were properly described, the RRF was well designed with proper indicators, baseline figures and targets. A ToC was also included. However, it is really terse, the described casual pathway does not include intermediate statements and does not distinguish pathways for different categories of stakeholders. Moreover, elements that are clearly beyond the direct control of the project (i.e. changes in policies) are wrongly placed among deliverable results. Also, the project expected outcome appears too ambitious with respect to the original timeframe. In addition, the project design does not include a convincing an exit strategy or sustainability considerations.

191. The project delivered the great majority of the outputs. All planned research products were delivered. The review provided by SAG shows that the project took the necessary measures to ensure the quality of delivered research outputs. The project also organized a wide range of dissemination activities, thus reaching out to a large audience. However, dissemination activities were constrained by COVID-19 (that limited interactions to online events) and by the fact that many research products were delivered in the last phase of the project, when the remaining time for dissemination was short and when the project team had limited capacity. The private sector was a crucial stakeholder to be targeted to promote changes in practices, but the engagement of business entities was very limited.

192. The project was able to inform policies discussions at national level and at global level. Changes in policies that can be attributed to the project could be observed in India in two cases and for a protocol to monitor plastics in Mekong. However, there was a wide consensus among interviewed informants that much more work was needed to engage policy makers to promote the necessary measures to reduce plastic pollution.

193. The project made a proper use of local and reginal capacities for generating and gathering data on plastic pollution in rivers in the region. To a large extent, the scientists that collaborated with the project were form the region. Where available, local laboratories were used to conduct the necessary analyses. Also, the scientific results provided by projects are expected to enable countries to better negotiate the binding instrument on plastic pollution that was agreed during UNEA 5. In addition, the project made an important contribution to the development of innovative data generation tools by using artificial intelligence.

194. Financial resources were found to be managed correctly. The project properly adhered to UNEP's standards for financial management. However, this TR finds the overall efficiency weak. This is because of a prolonged recruitment time for project staff, which delayed the implementation of activities and the fact the crucial project staff left without being replaced. At the end of the project there were substantial unused financial

resources. Moreover, the PMU did not include a procurement officer, who could guide the project in organizing smooth and fast procurements of needed services. Therefore, many research products were delivered at the end of the operational project life. Also, the knowledge management platform was procured very late. Consequently, the set of data that it includes is not complete.

195. No financial dependency was created. In addition, this review found evidence that some trainings and protocols were institutionalized. The project did contribute to create momentum on the topic of plastic pollution. Indeed, the plastic pollution topic is expected to be on the international political agenda during the next few years, which is conducive to a proper climate for the promotion of commitments towards the reduction of plastic pollution. Overall, the sustainability of the project is highly dependent on the political will on the governments of beneficiary countries. The lack of a formalized exit strategy is a missed opportunity to promote a carefully thinking around ways to further institutionalize the achievement of the projects and address constraining factors to replicate what was done (e.g. the limited laboratory capacities in Mekong countries).

196. The COVID-19 pandemic significantly affected the nature of the activities conducted and the pace of output delivery. More precisely, field data collection activities were delayed. Trainings and dissemination activities could not be held in person. The project was readapted to these conditions my organizing events online, by cancelling some activities and by re-questing a no-cost extension. Still, these adaptations could not completely compensate for in-presence events. Indeed, outreach activities to rural poor communities with limited internet connection were limited. Also, engaging policy makers through on-line events resulted to be very difficult.

197. The project had a very low risk of creating gender inequality. The Environment, Social and Economic Sustainability principle and safeguard checklists for gender equity of the relevant PoW did not anticipate any potential negative impact on women. This review confirms that this applies also to CM2. However, at the implementation stage gender aspects were largely ignored since a gender analysis was not conducted and gender disaggregated figures were not collected.

B. Summary of project findings and ratings

198. The table below provides a summary of the ratings and finding discussed in Chapter V. Overall, the project demonstrates a rating of 'Moderately satisfactory'.

UNEP Evaluation Office Validation of Performance Ratings:

The UNEP Evaluation Office formally quality assesses (see Annex VIII) 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 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 confirms that the Report provides sufficient evidence and analysis to support the performance ratings listed below and the overall project performance rating at the **'Moderately Satisfactory'** level.

Table 5: Summary of project findings and ratings

Criterion	Rating	Justification for any ratings' changes due to validation *(to be completed by the UNEP Evaluation Office – EOU)*	EOU Validated Rating *(to be completed by the UNEP Evaluation Office – EOU)*
Strategic Relevance	**Highly Satisfactory**	Terminal Review rating validated	**Highly Satisfactory**
1. Alignment to UNEP MTS, POW and strategic priorities	Highly satisfactory	Terminal Review rating validated	Highly Satisfactory

Criterion	Rating	Justification for any ratings' changes due to validation *(to be completed by the UNEP Evaluation Office – EOU)*	EOU Validated Rating *(to be completed by the UNEP Evaluation Office – EOU)*
2. Alignment to Donor/Partner strategic priorities	Satisfactory	Terminal Review rating validated	Satisfactory
3. Relevance to global, regional, sub-regional and national environmental priorities	Highly satisfactory	Terminal Review rating validated	Highly Satisfactory
4. Complementarity with relevant existing interventions/coherence	Highly satisfactory	Terminal Review rating validated	Highly Satisfactory
Quality of Project Design	Moderately satisfactory	The shortcomings described in this section lead to a lower rating than that awarded, especially given that the project was approved relatively recently in 2020.	**Unsatisfactory**
Nature of External Context	**Unfavourable**	Terminal Review rating validated	**Unfavourable**
Effectiveness	**Moderately satisfactory**	*This aggregation is affected by adjusted ratings for some of the sub-categories*	**Moderately Unsatisfactory**
1. Availability of outputs	Moderately satisfactory	Terminal Review rating validated	Moderately Satisfactory
2. Achievement of project outcomes	Moderately satisfactory	Section lacks evidence (e.g. para 133 assertion of attribution) and required stronger evidence of progress along causal pathways and the way in which the uptake of outputs, along with assumptions and drivers, led to the achievement of outcomes (e.g. a clear overview of plans with targets etc). Para 74 and Para 152, when combined, undermine the finding of MS performance in the achievement of outcomes.	Moderately Unsatisfactory
3. Likelihood of impact	Moderately likely	The arguments presented in this section, culminating in para 141 with the finding that doubt is cast on the 'capacity of the project to make a significant impact on the quantity of plastic waste leaked into rivers, does not support the rating.	Moderately Unlikely
Financial Management	**Highly satisfactory**	Terminal Review rating validated	**Highly Satisfactory**

Criterion	Rating	Justification for any ratings' changes due to validation *(to be completed by the UNEP Evaluation Office – EOU)*	EOU Validated Rating *(to be completed by the UNEP Evaluation Office – EOU)*
1. Adherence to UNEP's financial policies and procedures	Highly satisfactory	The Evaluation Office notes the substantial underspend as at Dec 2021 (44%) and finds that the project team did not analyse expenditure against the budget and workplan, and make appropriate revisions or practise adaptive management, regularly enough to warrant a Highly Satisfactory rating.	Satisfactory
2. Completeness of project financial information	Highly satisfactory	Terminal Review rating validated	Highly Satisfactory
3. Communication between finance and project management staff	Highly satisfactory	Terminal Review rating validated	Highly Satisfactory
Efficiency	**Unsatisfactory**	The Evaluation Office finds that some positive factors were not considered by the Review Consultant such as the time saving dimensions of AI and the 'extensive use of a large community of scientists who were involved through contracts with universities and research centres or individually as members of the science advisory group (SAF)'	**Moderately Unsatisfactory**
Monitoring and Reporting	**Satisfactory**	Terminal Review rating validated	**Satisfactory**
1. Monitoring design and budgeting	Satisfactory	Terminal Review rating validated	Satisfactory
2. Monitoring of project implementation	Moderately satisfactory	Terminal Review rating validated	Moderately satisfactory
3. Project reporting	Moderately satisfactory	Terminal Review rating validated	Moderately satisfactory
Sustainability	**Moderately likely**	Terminal Review rating validated	**Moderately Likely**
1. Socio-political sustainability	Likely	Terminal Review rating validated	Likely
2. Financial sustainability	Highly likely	Terminal Review rating validated	Highly Likely
3. Institutional sustainability	Moderately likely	Terminal Review rating validated	Moderately Likely

Criterion	Rating	Justification for any ratings' changes due to validation *(to be completed by the UNEP Evaluation Office – EOU)*	EOU Validated Rating *(to be completed by the UNEP Evaluation Office – EOU)*
Factors Affecting Performance	**Moderately unsatisfactory**	*This aggregation is affected by adjusted ratings for some of the sub-categories*	**Moderately Satisfactory**
1. Preparation and readiness	Unsatisfactory	Terminal Review rating validated	Unsatisfactory
2. Quality of project management and supervision	Moderately satisfactory	Terminal Review rating validated	Moderately Satisfactory
2.1 UNEP/Implementing Agency:	n/a		
2.2 Partners/Executing Agency:	n/a		
3. Stakeholders' participation and cooperation	Moderately satisfactory	Terminal Review rating validated	Moderately Satisfactory
4. Responsiveness to human rights and gender equality	Unsatisfactory	Terminal Review rating validated	Unsatisfactory
5. Environmental and social safeguards	n/a	No safeguards screening was done and no monitoring was carried out.	Moderately Unsatisfactory
6. Country ownership and driven-ness	n/a	The evidence provided throughout the report supports a view that there is country ownership of the work.	Satisfactory
7. Communication and public awareness	Moderately satisfactory	Terminal Review rating validated	Moderately Satisfactory
Overall Project Performance Rating	**Moderately satisfactory**	Terminal Review rating validated	**Moderately Satisfactory**

C. Lessons learned

Lesson Learned #1:	UNEPs' regular recruitment procedures for project-based staff is not compatible with projects that have a short duration (e.g. 12-24 months), considerable budget (approximately USD 5 million) and ambitious targets. Alternative staff recruitment and retention approaches should be considered. These include one or more of the following proposals: • Use of vetted rosters to fast-track recruitment of the project management unit instead of the standard vacancy announcement procedure based on project staff positions. • Use of UNEP regular (already employed) staff with the required technical skills to start the implementation of the project until the project management unit is fully onboard. • Consider opening new long-term management positions for staff that move from project to project, while drawing on external and internal technical expertise (as done by other UN agencies).
Context/comment:	The project duration was initially 12 months, so a recruitment process lasting 6 months does not leave enough time for project implementation. Even after the project was extended to 21 months, once staff left, it resulted impossible to attract personnel with the remaining skills and qualifications.

Lesson Learned #2:	Projects with substantial budget and a high number of contracts need a dedicated procurement officer.
Context/comment:	The project had a high number of contracts. With few exceptions contracts were signed late, which constrained time for implementation. The reason was that the project management team could not count on a dedicated procurement officer who could speed guide (and speed up) the procumbent process.

Lesson Learned #3:	Future projects on plastic pollution should properly target the private sector through dedicated actions.
Context/comment:	Business entities provide important opportunities for interventions to reduce plastic pollution. However, their engagement was limited in CM2, since no specific engagement strategies for the private sector were devised.

D. Recommendations

Recommendation #1:	UNEP should coordinate with the AIT, GMPL and OICT the upload of CM2 generate data on the plastic-free-river platform.
Challenge/problem to be addressed by the recommendation:	The plastic-free-river platform includes data from CounterMEASURE phase I and reports and articles from partners and stakeholders. However, data generated by CM2 are still with the AIT.
Priority Level:	Medium
Type of Recommendation	Project and partners
Responsibility:	CM2 & Chemicals & Pollution Regional Sub-Programme Coordinator (acting project manager)
Proposed implementation time-frame:	June 2022

199. Cross-reference(s) to rationale and supporting discussions:

- Section VI.A, paragraph 192

Recommendation #2:	UNEP should develop a formal exit strategy that include an institutional component explaining how main project outputs will be maintained or replicated and how follow-up will be provided for the projects results that have most potential to be integrated in the institutional framework of beneficiary countries. The exit strategy should include specific provisions for the knowledge platform and for the replication of microplastic assessments in Mekong (which need laboratory analyses).
Challenge/problem to be addressed by the recommendation:	The project has not a formalized exit strategy. So, there is a risk that certain project outputs will not be maintained after the project end. The limited laboratory capacities of Mekong countries are a constraint for the replication of the microplastic assessment and the implementation of the microplastic monitoring protocols. Also, at the time of the TR, discussions with governments were still ongoing about the institutionalization of certain products (e.g., macroplastic assessments in wetlands in India, guide for waste management for ports and piers).
Priority Level:	Important
Type of Recommendation	Project
Responsibility:	UNEP Chemicals & Pollution Regional Sub-Programme Coordinator (acting project manager)

Proposed implementation timeframe:	To be completed by the end of July 2022

200. Cross-reference(s) to rationale and supporting discussions:

- Section VI.A, paragraph 189

Recommendation #3:	The final report should include gender disaggregated figures and explain what actions were taken to promote female participation (if any).
Challenge/problem to be addressed by the recommendation:	The project was gender blind, since a gender analysis was not conducted, and gender disaggregated figures were not collected.
Priority Level:	Low
Type of Recommendation	Project
Responsibility:	CM2 & Chemicals & Pollution Regional Sub-Programme Coordinator (acting project manager)
Proposed implementation time-frame:	June 2022

201. Cross-reference(s) to rationale and supporting discussions:

- Section VI.A, paragraph 196

Recommendation #4:	UNEP should consider organizing dissemination activities in related plastic pollution projects (e.g. the "community resilience and plastic pollution project funded by the government of Japan) for the factsheets analysing policies in Asian countries and for the knowledge platform.
Challenge/problem to be addressed by the recommendation:	The factsheets on Asian countries and the knowledge platform were not adequately disseminated since they were delivered at the end of the project when the project management team had limited capacity
Priority Level:	Low
Type of Recommendation	Project
Responsibility:	UNEP ROAP Director
Proposed implementation time-frame:	July – December 2022

202. Cross-reference(s) to rationale and supporting discussions:

- Section VI.A, paragraph 190
- Section V.I. paragraph 187

Recommendation #5:	UNEP should assess in which new project lesson learned #1 could be applied in new projects.
Challenge/problem to be addressed by the recommendation:	The extended recruitment phase for project -based staff was incompatible with the limited duration of the project
Priority Level:	Low
Type of Recommendation	Project
Responsibility:	UNEP ROAP Director
Proposed implementation timeframe:	July – December 2022

203. Cross-reference(s) to rationale and supporting discussions:

- Section VI.A, paragraph 192

ANNEX 1. RESPONSE TO STAKEHOLDER COMMENTS

Table 6: Response to stakeholder comments received but not (fully) accepted by the reviewers, where appropriate

Page Ref	Stakeholder comment	Reviewer Response

ANNEX II. PEOPLE CONSULTED DURING THE REVIEW

Table 7: People consulted during the Review

Organisation	Name	Position	Gender
UNEP - PMU	Norwin Schafferer	UNEP Project Management Officer(Project Manager)	M
UNEP - PMU	Duangjai Pattanarudee	Administrative Assistant	F
UNEP - ROAP	Alexandra Regner-Burke	Programme Management Advisor	F
UNEP - PMU	Mushtaq Memon	current Project Manager CM2 & Chemicals & Pollution Regional Sub-Programme Coordinator	M
UNEP – PMU	Mako Tsukiji	Mekong Coordinator	M
UNEP – PMU	Subhi Dhupar	Plastic Pollution Consultant	F
UNEP – PMU	Atima Mankotia	Advocacy & Communication Consultant Ganges	F
UNEP - PMU	Taro Mitamura	Communications Consultant	M
UNEP – PMU	Diego Costas Fernandez	Knowledge Management Consultant	M
UNEP – PMU	Reuben Gergan	Plastic Pollution & Biodiversity Consultant	M
UNEP ROAP	Dechen Tsering	Regional Director, UNEP Regional Office for Asia & the Pacific	F
UNEP ROAP	Mohammed Elharati	Head of Finance ROAP	M
UNEP ROAP	Isabelle Louis	Deputy Director, UNEP ROAP	F
UNEP ROAP	Makiko Yashiro	Nature Action Regional Sub-programme Coordinator	F
UNEP – PMU	Divya Datt	Programme Management Officer, UNEP India Office	F
UNEP	Kakuko Nagatani-Yoshida	Global Coordinator, Chemicals, Waste & Pollution	F
UNEP - PAG	Heidi Savelli-Soderberg	Programme Management Officer, Ecosystems Division	F
UNEP – PAG	Feng Wang	Programme Management Officer, Economy Division	M
UNEP – PAG	Joana Akrofi	Programme Management Officer, Science Division	F
UNEP - PAG	Andrina Beaumond	Coordinator of the Clean Seas campaign, Communications Division	F
University Oldenburg	Oliver Zielinski	SAG member and full professor	M
Wageningen University	Tim van Emmerik	SAG member and Assistant professor	M
Asian Institute of Technology	Dr. Kavinda Gunasekara	Associate director of the Geoinformatics Center	M
Pirika	Mr. Fujio Kojima	Executive Director	M
MRC secretariat	Dr. So Nam	Chief environment management officer	M
Mae Fah Luang University	Dr. Panate Manomaivibool	Head of the Research Group Circular Economy for Waste-free Thailans	M
University of Portsmouth	Professor Stephen Fletcher	Professor of Ocean Policy and Economy	M
IUCN Sri Lanka	Ananda Mallawatantri	Country representative	M
French Research Institute for Sustainable Development	Emilie STRADY	Researcher	F
CMS	Clara Nobbe	Head, Terrestrial Species Team	F
Ubon Ratchathani University	Pawena Limpiteeprakan	Academic Lecturer (College of Medicine and Public Health)	F
Royal University of Phnom Penh	Vin Spoann	Head of Department (Economic Development)	M
National University of Laos	Souvanna Phengsisomboun	Lecturer and researcher (Faculty of Environmental Sciences)	F
Can Tho University	Vo Quang Minh	Head of Department of Land Resources (DLR)	M

Organisation	Name	Position	Gender
Cambodia National Mekong Committee Secretariat	Sok Khom	National focal point	M
National Productivity Council	Sh. Khanendra D.Bhardwaj	Regional Director & Head	M
Wetlands International South Asia	Dr Ritesh Kumar	Director	M
National Institute of Urban Learning	Vaishnavi Shankar	Lead - Training & Capacity Building, Climate Centre for Cities	F
TERI	Dr Suneel Pandey	Director, Environment & Waste Management Division	M
IMI	P.D. Rai	President of IMI and ex member of the parliament in India	M
Embassy of Japan in Thailand	Mr. Toru TERAI	First Secretary and Alternate Permanent Representative to ESCAP	M
Ministry of Environment and Wildlife Resources	Mr. Senarath Mahinda Werahera	Acting Director, Environment Pollution Control and Chemical Management,	M
Ministry of Environment and Wildlife Resources	Dr Manoj	Technical coordinator of Sukarimu Ganga	M
National Productivity Council	Shukla Pal Maitra	Director and deputy team leader	F
MRC Secretariat	Kongmeng Ly	Water Quality Specialist	M

ANNEX III. KEY DOCUMENTS CONSULTED

Project planning and reporting documents

- Programme of Work Project No 522.4, Project document
- Programme of Work Project No 522.4, Project revision 1
- Proposed programme of work and budge for the biennium 2020-2021
- CounterMEASURE II annual report
- CounterMEASURE II quarterly progress report April-June 2021
- CounterMEASURE II quarterly progress report July-September 2021
- CounterMEASURE II quarterly progress report October – December 2021
- CounterMEASURE II Indicator Based Performance Assessment Jan-March 2022
- CounterMEASURE II Implementation plan revised as of March 2021
- CounterMEASURE II Implementation plan approved July 2020
- Operation plan for the communication focal area
- Operation plan for the Mekong focal area
- Operation plan for the Ganges focal area
- Operation plan for the migratory species focal area
- Operation plan for Sri Lanka focal area
- Operation plan for knowledge management focal area
- Operation plan for the policy support and advocacy focal area
- CMS monthly updates
- CounterMEASURE II policy strategy
- 1st PAG minutes meetings (27 April 2021)
- 2nd PAG minutes meetings (21 July 2021)
- 3rd PAG minutes meetings (20 Oct. 20219
- 4th PAG minutes meetings (2 Feb. 2022)
- 5th PAG minutes meetings (25 March 20229
- TOR of the PAG
- 1st SAG minutes meetings (24 June 2021)
- 2nd SAG minutes meetings (22 Sept. 2021)
- 4th SAG minutes meetings (23 March 2022)
- TOR of the SAG
- Donor Meeting summaries
- Government of Japan contribution letter (2019)
- Request and approval Gov. Japan of no -cost extension from April 2021 to March 2022

Project outputs – Mekong focal area

- Microplastic analysis progress and final report in Mekong
- Report on the microplastic survey in Mekong
- Report on the findings on the mapping of plastic leakage hotspot in Mekong
- Perception survey report in Mekong
- Regional report on plastic waste in Mekong
- National report on plastic waste in Cambodia, Lao, Thailand, and Vietnam
- Solid waste management plan at ports and piers in Mekong
- Google collaboration proposal

Project outputs – Ganges focal area

- Microplastic report in Ganges
- Macroplastic assessment report in Ganges
- Plastic leakage plastic report in Ganges
- Meta-analysis on the microplastic pollution in freshwater environment
- Guidelines for management of waste at public events
- Chintan training reports in Agra and Patna
- Stakeholder mapping in the Ganges river basin
- Policy framework paper for plastic waste management in the Indian Himalayan region
- Draft framework paper and recommendations on national action plan for tacking marine and riverine plastic pollution in India
- Policy dialogue and consultation report drafted by TERI

Project outputs – Migratory species

- State of knowledge report on the impact of plastic pollution on freshwater, terrestrial and avian migratory spieces in the Ganges River basin
- Impact of plastic pollution on freshwater aquatic, terrestrial, and avian migratory species in the Asia and Pacific Region
- Risk assessment of plastic pollution to migratory species in the Mekong and Ganges River basins: a methodology and risk analysis

Project outputs - Communication

- Outreach material developed for the Ganges River basin
- CounterMEASURE II Communications strategy
- QUO Bangkok video
- 1000 Heads concept

Project outputs - Knowledge Management

- Knowledge management draft concept
- OICT Report on the Support Provided to CounterMEASURE II Partners on Data Sharing
- https://plasticfreerivers.un.org/

Project outputs - Policy

- COVID-19 and plastic plight

- G20 report on actions against marine plastic litter

Previous reviews/evaluations

- CounterMEASURE I final report
- CounterMEASURE I Terminal review

ANNEX VI. BRIEF CV OF THE REVIEWER

Name

Profession	Independent consultant
Nationality	
Country experience	• Europe: Italy, Spain, Bosnia & Herzegovina • Africa: Angola, Botswana, Burkina Faso, Cameroon, Cote D'Ivoire, Congo (RC), Ethiopia, Guinea, Kenya, Mozambique, Namibia, Niger, Rwanda, Sao Tomé e Principe, Senegal, Sierra Leone, Tanzania • Americas: Domincan Rep. Guatemala, Honduras, Lebanon, Nicaragua, Salvador, Sri Lanka, Timor-Leste • Asia: Azerbaijan, Georgia,
Education	• PhD in Ecological Economics • MSc in Rural Development • BSc (5-year degree programme) in Tropical and Sub-tropical agriculture

Short biography

Matteo Borzoni has 18 years of work experience including 12 yeas conducing judicially planned and executive evaluations in the field of agriculture, rural development, natural resources management and renewable energy in Asia, Africa, Americas, Europe and the Middle East. He has conducted more than 20 evaluations of complex projects and programme for the EU, USAID, bilateral cooperation agencies, the United Nations System and other international organizations. He currently works as an independent consultant. In the past, he worked as a research fellow at the Sant'Anna School of Advanced Studies researching environmental management and renewable energy topics. He holds a PhD in ecological economics, a MSc in Rural Development and BSc in Tropical and Sub-Tropical Agriculture.

Key specialties and capabilities cover:

- Evaluation, project management, agriculture, rural development, natural resources management, renewable energy, quantitative analysis, qualitative analysis

Selected assignments and experiences
Independent reviews/evaluations:

- ***Evaluation consultant, Particip, Lebanon (remote) and Turkey***: Evaluated two EU-funded projects (10 million Euro each) aimed at integrating Syrian refugees in hosting communities in Turkey and Lebanon through cash transfer schemes, vocational trainings, matching grants for companies, farmer field schools and employment desks. The methodology consisted of qualitative tools and use of project monitoring data.
- ***Evaluation consultant, GHD, Timor-Leste***: Contributed to the mid-term evaluation of a market system development and nutrition improvement program (15.6 mln USD) funded by DFAT (ex AusAid). Tasks included: drafting the evaluation workplan, conduction of semi-structured interviews, analysis of monitoring data collected by the program and analysis of value of money (based on cost-effectiveness analysis). The results enabled the Australian Embassy to redesign the second phase of the program towards more impactful interventions.
- ***Team leader, Management Systems International (MSI), Mozambique***: Led a 6-member team to conduct the mid-term evaluation of USAID-funded project on technology dissemination and supply of early generation seeds of six leguminous crops (sesame,

cowpeas, common beans, groundnuts, pigeon peas, soybeans). This included the use of participatory approaches, application of qualitative evaluation tools (semi-structured interviews and focus group discussions), statistical analysis (using two agricultural survey datasets collected by the government), and review of project collected monitoring data. The results enabled USAID to reorient the exit strategy.

- ***Team leader, Social impact, Lebanon:*** Led a 3-member team to conduct the final evaluation of a USAID- funded project (46 mln USD) aimed at enhancing the competitiveness of six agricultural values chains (cherry, avocado, apple, table grape, olive and honey) and at developing the rural tourism and processed food sector. Responsible for designing discuss guides for focus groups, analysis of focus group discussions and interviews, conducting semi-structured interviews and analysis of gender aspects. Recommendations were used by USAID to design more sustainable and impactful interventions in the agricultural sector.
- ***Team Leader, Social Impact, Lebanon:*** Led a five-member team to successfully conduct a mid-term evaluation of USAID-funded agricultural value chain program (46 mln USD). Designed the agricultural survey and sampling methodology, conducted statistical analysis, semi-structured interviews, and analyzed gender integration. Recommendations enabled the client to re-orient the project to achieve more sustainable and impactful intervention.
- ***Team Leader, Social Impact, Timor-Leste:*** Led a five-member team to successfully conduct a mid-term evaluation of USAID- funded project (19 mln USD) on the development horticultural value chains, nutrition and climate change adaptation. Responsible for designing data collection protocols, analysis of focus group discussions and interviews and conducting semi-structured interviews. Recommendations enabled the client to re-scope the project for more effective market integration.
- ***Impact evaluation consultant, IFAD, Kenya****:* Contributed to the impact evaluation of a 33 mln USD project on the development of horticultural value chains. Tasks included review of the sampling design, of the survey questionnaires and of qualitative data collection tools, conduction of semi-structured interviews and facilitation of focus group discussion, and review of the quantitative data analysis conducted by the evaluation contractor.
- ***Evaluation consultant, Particip, Lebanon:*** Evaluated 5 EU-funded reforestation and sustainable forest management interventions in Lebanon. The results allowed the EU Delegation and the Ministry of Agriculture to compare approaches and methods to inform the design of new planned interventions.
- ***Deputy Team Leader, Counterpart International, Niger:*** Actively contributed to the impact evaluation (1,350 households interviewed) of a USAID-funded program (approx. 21 mln USD) aimed at improving child nutrition and strengthening household resilience to food insecurity and improving land management. Main tasks included: design of a quasi-experimental survey and sampling methodology, questionnaire review, training and supervision of 30 enumerators, statistical analysis, focus group facilitation, and report writing. The results showed main weaknesses and successes in the project intervention strategy, and informed the design of a new USAID-funded project.
- ***Impact evaluation consultant, FAO, Lebanon***: Designed an impact evaluation to assess the increase of farmers' income due to a government policy consisting in subsidizing "land reclamation" activities (i.e. returning abandoned agricultural land to a productive state). This included the design of the evaluation, calculation of the sample size and the development of questionnaires.
- ***Evaluation expert, HYDEA/AESA, Sierra Leone:*** Completed a mid-term evaluation of a EU-funded project (18.3 mln Euro) focused on developing value chains (coffee, cocoa, cashew nut). The findings highlighted potentially damaging activities for other donors in the same sector and weak capacity of local agents and led to the inclusion of follow-up capacity building and corrective measures.

- ***Evaluation consultant, EPTISA, Sub-Saharan Africa (Angola, Guinea, Ethiopia, Sierra Leone) and Haiti:*** Evaluated eight EU-funded interventions totaling nearly 8 mln Euros in funding on food security, rural development and renewable energy and implemented by international NGOs.
- ***Agro-economist (evaluation expert), Transtec, Sao Tomé e Principe***: Successfully completed a mid-term evaluation of an EU-funded project (approx. 1.3 mln Euro) aimed at developing agricultural value chains (cocoa, coffee, pepper, palm oil, flowers, and non-industrial fishery) and enhancing government capacity to promote an international trade strategy. Recommendations allowed the European Union Delegation to reorganize the technical assistance service contract coherently with the beneficiary needs.
- ***Evaluation Consultant, World Bank:*** Reviewed final evaluations of Global Environment Facility (GEF)-funded projects on renewable energy and energy efficiency, biodiversity conservation, land degradation, wastes, and international waters. Results were used by the Independent Evaluation Office to develop annual performance reports for GEF-funded projects. Developed a meta-analysis of country portfolio evaluations and contributed to a knowledge management study aimed at assessing the role of the GEF as a knowledge provider. This included a citation analysis.
- ***Agro-economist, WB, Mozambique***: Contributed to the Implementation Completion and Results report of an irrigation project. Conducted economic and financial analysis. The results enabled the WB to refocus the implementation a new irrigation projects on improving utilization of irrigation schemes by farmers and on enhancing the institutional capacity of the relevant government irrigation agency.

ANNEX VII. REVIEW TORS (WITHOUT ANNEXES)



TOR_Terminal Review_CounterMea

ANNEX VIII. QUALITY ASSESSMENT OF THE REVIEW REPORT

All UNEP Reviews are subject to a quality assessment by the UNEP Evaluation Office. This is an assessment of the quality of the review product (i.e. Main Review Report).

Review Title: CounterMEASURE II (PIMS ID 2049)

Consultant: Matteo Borzoni

	UNEP Evaluation Office Comments	Final Review Report Rating
Substantive Report Quality Criteria		
Quality of the Executive Summary: The Summary should be able to stand alone as an accurate summary of the main review product. It should include a concise overview of the review object; clear summary of the review objectives and scope; overall project performance rating of the project and key features of performance (strengths and weaknesses) against exceptional criteria (plus reference to where the review ratings table can be found within the report); summary of the main findings of the exercise, including a synthesis of main conclusions (which include a summary response to key strategic review questions), lessons learned and recommendations.	Section is largely complete, providing a basic summary of the project, its successes and weaknesses, and the lessons learned and recommendations derived from the evaluation. The Evaluation Office notes that a summary table of the project's performance ratings is on pg 45 and the three strategic questions are addressed throughout the Findings section.	5
I. Introduction A brief introduction should be given identifying, where possible and relevant, the following: institutional context of the project (sub-programme, Division, regions/countries where implemented) and coverage of the review; date of PRC approval and project document signature); results frameworks to which it contributes (e.g. Expected Accomplishment in POW); project duration and start/end dates; number of project phases (where appropriate); implementing partners; total secured budget and whether the project has been reviewed/evaluated in the past (e.g. mid-term, part of a synthesis evaluation, evaluated by another agency etc.) Consider the extent to which the introduction includes a concise statement of the purpose of the review and the key intended audience for the findings?	The introduction was rather brief and omits: countries where the project was implemented; reference to the broader UNEP sub-programme to which it belongs (Chemicals and Waste); the Expected Accomplishments of the Programme of work under which it was approved and the Implementing Partners. The Evaluation Office notes that some of the missing information is available in the Project Identification Table on pg 7.	4
II. Review Methods A data collection section should include: a description of review methods and information sources used, including the number and type of respondents; justification for methods used (e.g. qualitative/quantitative; electronic/face-to-face); any selection criteria used to identify respondents, case studies or sites/countries visited; strategies used to increase stakeholder engagement and consultation; details of how data were verified (e.g. triangulation, review by stakeholders etc.). Efforts to include the voices of different groups, e.g. vulnerable, gender, marginalised etc) should be described. Methods to ensure that potentially excluded groups (excluded by gender, vulnerability or marginalisation) are reached and their experiences captured effectively, should be made explicit in this section.	This section covers most of the recommended aspects, however: - the purposive sampling was not unpacked sufficiently in para 37 and should have addressed how the sample adequately represented the implementing countries. - there is no discussion of whether field visits were considered and why none were undertaken. - UNEP's use of a six-point performance rating scale	3

The methods used to analyse data (e.g. scoring; coding; thematic analysis etc.) should be described. It should also address review limitations such as: low or imbalanced response rates across different groups; gaps in documentation; extent to which findings can be either generalised to wider review questions or constraints on aggregation/disaggregation; any potential or apparent biases; language barriers and ways they were overcome. Ethics and human rights issues should be highlighted including: how anonymity and confidentiality were protected and strategies used to include the views of marginalised or potentially disadvantaged groups and/or divergent views. E.g. *'Throughout the review process and in the compilation of the Final Review Report efforts have been made to represent the views of both mainstream and more marginalised groups. All efforts to provide respondents with anonymity have been made'*	should have been described (see footnote below[21]) - the section should have referenced two key annexes: list of documents reviewed and list of respondents - the limitations section does mention that respondents from government institutions were limited but it is not clear whether there were any excluded socio-economic groups and if there were efforts to engage them. - the section also lacks explicit reference to ethics and human rights considerations taken during the evaluation exercise.	
III. The Project This section should include: • *Context:* Overview of the main issue that the project is trying to address, its root causes and consequences on the environment and human well-being (i.e. synopsis of the problem and situational analyses). • *Results Framework*: Summary of the project's results hierarchy as stated in the ProDoc (or as officially revised) • *Stakeholders:* Description of groups of targeted stakeholders organised according to relevant common characteristics • *Project implementation structure and partners:* A description of the implementation structure with diagram and a list of key project partners • *Changes in design during implementation:* Any key events that affected the project's scope or parameters should be described in brief in chronological order • *Project financing:* Completed tables of: (a) budget at design and expenditure by components (b) planned and actual sources of funding/co-financing	This section could have confirmed major work or achievements of the previous phase in order to make the boundaries of this evaluand clearer. The section would have benefited from a description of the implementing partners (and how they relate to the focal areas) and a diagram of the implementation structure to show who was being advised etc., and how the implementing partners were: a) linked to the PAG and SAG, and b) represented their countries.	4
IV. Theory of Change The reconstructed TOC at Review should be presented clearly in both diagrammatic and narrative forms. Clear articulation of each major causal pathway is expected, (starting from outputs to long term impact), including explanations of all drivers and assumptions as well as the expected roles of key actors. This section should include a description of how the *TOC at Review*[22] was designed (who was involved etc.) and applied to the context of the project? Where different groups (e.g. vulnerable, gender, marginalised etc) are included in, or affected	The TOC narrative describes the TOC presented in the project document (not a standard UNEP approved project document). However, within this section: - there is no reconstructed TOC, even though the results statements are recognised as being problematic (3 'results' confusing outputs and outcome); no Intermediate States between the project outcome and impact level; and only one causal pathway.	3

[21] 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 from Highly Likely (HL) down to Highly Unlikely (HU) and *Nature of External Context* is rated from Highly Favourable (HF) to Highly Unfavourable (HU). A Criteria Ratings Matrix is made available to the Review Consultant, within the suite of tools, to support a common interpretation of points on the scale for each review criterion. The ratings against each criterion are 'weighted' to derive the Overall Project Performance Rating.

[22] During the Inception Phase of the review process a TOC at Design is created based on the information contained in the approved project documents (these may include either logical framework or a TOC or narrative descriptions). During the review process this TOC is revised based on changes made during project intervention and becomes the *TOC at Review*.

by the project in different ways, this should be reflected in the TOC. Where the project results as stated in the project design documents (or formal revisions of the project design) are not an accurate reflection of the project's intentions or do not follow UNEP's definitions of different results levels, project results may need to be re-phrased or reformulated. In such cases, a summary of the project's results hierarchy should be presented for: a) the results as stated in the approved/revised Prodoc logframe/TOC and b) as formulated in the TOC at Review. *The two results hierarchies should be presented as a two column table to show clearly that, although wording and placement may have changed, the results 'goal posts' have not been 'moved'.* This table may have initially been presented in the Inception Report and should appear somewhere in the Main Review report.	- the appropriate results statements against which performance assessments should be made are not articulated, which weakens the later analysis of Effectiveness. This section is critical to the Review.	
V. Key Findings **A. Strategic relevance:** This section should include an assessment of the project's relevance in relation to UNEP's mandate and its alignment with UNEP's policies and strategies at the time of project approval. An assessment of the complementarity of the project at design (or during inception/mobilisation[23]) with other interventions addressing the needs of the same target groups should be included. Consider the extent to which all four elements have been addressed: 1. Alignment to the UNEP Medium Term Strategy (MTS), Programme of Work (POW) and Strategic Priorities 2. Alignment to Donor/Partner Strategic Priorities 3. Relevance to Regional, Sub-regional and National Environmental Priorities 4. Complementarity with Existing Interventions	Section is complete and covers all the recommended aspects in a satisfactory manner. The Evaluation Office notes that strategic relevance should be assessed for alignment at the time of approval (i.e. 2020). Reference to recent commitments (e.g. those made at UNEA 5.2 in 2022) are of interest but should not be used to determine the rating under relevance.	5
B. Quality of Project Design To what extent are the strength and weaknesses of the project design effectively summarized?	In para 90, the Evaluation Office does not recognize the results set out in the section on Theory of Change as 'a well-developed Results Resources Framework'. In para 93, referring to the TOC being comprehensive, contradicts some of the section on TOC. In para 25, the recommendations made in the previous phase should have been displayed, including the one recommendation that was not taken into account.	3
C. Nature of the External Context For projects where this is appropriate, key external features of the project's implementing context that may have been reasonably expected to limit the project's performance (e.g.	The nature of the external context is appropriately described and assessed.	5

[23] 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.

conflict, natural disaster, political upheaval[24]) and how they have affected performance, should be described.		
D. Effectiveness **(i) Outputs and Project Outcomes:** How well does the report present a well-reasoned, complete and evidence-based assessment of the a) availability of outputs, and b) achievement of project outcomes? How convincing is the discussion of attribution and contribution, as well as the constraints to attributing effects to the intervention. The effects of the intervention on differentiated groups, including those with specific needs due to gender, vulnerability or marginalisation, should be discussed explicitly.	Generally, the distinction between outputs and outcomes is unclear in some instances. 'Results areas' should be more clearly articulated at output and outcome levels and linked to main causal pathways. OUTPUTS: Section required a more systematic description of the actual plans at output level (e.g. a table with the baseline and targets mentioned in para 90) and the extent to which the outputs were made available, their timeliness and quality/utility. This report describes activities without reference to plans or targets. The effects of the project on differentiated groups, including those with specific needs due to gender, vulnerability or marginalization is not explicitly discussed. OUTCOMES: Section lacks evidence (e.g. para 133 assertion of attribution) and required stronger evidence of progress along causal pathways and the way in which the uptake of outputs, along with assumptions and drivers, led to the achievement of outcomes (e.g. a clear overview of plans with targets etc). There is no evidence of the contribution or comparative analyses mentioned in the Methods section, nor of the use of triangulation to justify claims of contribution or attribution.	3
(ii) Likelihood of Impact: How well does the report present an integrated analysis, guided by the causal pathways represented by the TOC, of all evidence relating to likelihood of impact? How well are change processes explained and the roles of key actors, as well as drivers and assumptions, explicitly discussed? Any unintended negative effects of the project should be discussed under Effectiveness, especially negative effects on disadvantaged groups.	This section is light and does not explore causal pathways drivers and assumptions.	3

[24] 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.

E. Financial Management This section should contain an integrated analysis of all dimensions evaluated under financial management and include a completed 'financial management' table. Consider how well the report addresses the following: • *adherence* to UNEP's financial policies and procedures • *completeness* of financial information, including the actual project costs (total and per activity) and actual co-financing used • *communication* between financial and project management staff	Inconsistency noted: the summary table on the assessment of financial management (Table 4) indicates that the "communication between finance and project management staff" was considered highly unsatisfactory but this contradicts the corresponding narrative which presents a more positive picture (para 145).	4
F. Efficiency To what extent, and how well, does the report present a well-reasoned, complete and evidence-based assessment of efficiency under the primary categories of cost-effectiveness and timeliness including: • Implications of delays and no cost extensions • Time-saving measures put in place to maximise results within the secured budget and agreed project timeframe • Discussion of making use during project implementation of/building on pre-existing institutions, agreements and partnerships, data sources, synergies and complementarities with other initiatives, programmes and projects etc. • The extent to which the management of the project minimised UNEP's environmental footprint.	This is a well-prepared section and highlights relevant shortcomings, however the strategic question on use of regional capacities and AI (paras 155-158) seems not to be factored into the rating.	4
G. Monitoring and Reporting How well does the report assess: • Monitoring design and budgeting *(including SMART results with measurable indicators, resources for MTE/R etc.)* • Monitoring of project implementation *(including use of monitoring data for adaptive management)* • Project reporting *(e.g. PIMS and donor reports)*	Assessment on the dimensions on monitoring design, budget and reporting is satisfactory. However, the assessment on the implementation of the monitoring plan itself is lacking; it is not clear whether the monitoring data was indeed used to make any significant adjustments (*adaptive management*) to the project during its lifespan or whether the involvement of the oversight groups (PAG and SAG) was well utilized in project monitoring. Discussion of the performance indicators is rather weak and there is no mention of the evidence that supports the quantification of the performance indicators.	3
H. Sustainability How well does the review identify and assess the key conditions or factors that are likely to undermine or contribute to the persistence of achieved project outcomes including: • Socio-political Sustainability • Financial Sustainability • Institutional Sustainability *(including issues of partnerships)*	Financial and institutional sustainability have been reported jointly and neither dimension has received a sufficient depth of assessment to support the rating provided; only selected positive examples are given. Section would benefit from a discussion of main causal pathways. Further, all the three dimensions of the sustainability of project results are likely to be experienced	4

	quite differently in each project country.	
I. Factors Affecting Performance These factors are <u>not</u> discussed in stand-alone sections but are **integrated in criteria A-H as appropriate**. Note that these are described in the Evaluation Criteria Ratings Matrix. To what extent, and how well, does the review report cover the following cross-cutting themes: • Preparation and readiness • Quality of project management and supervision[25] • Stakeholder participation and co-operation • Responsiveness to human rights and gender equity • Environmental and social safeguards • Country ownership and driven-ness • Communication and public awareness	The analysis in this section is presented at varying levels of detail and does not always follow UNEP's guidance in the 'Criteria Ratings Matrix'. Overall, this section could benefit from references to where themes were discussed within earlier text. It is not clear why 'not applicable' has been entered in place of a performance rating in the sub-categories of Safeguards and Country Ownership, especially as both factors are discussed (paras 183 – 187).	4
VI. Conclusions and Recommendations **Quality of the conclusions:** The key strategic questions should be clearly and succinctly addressed within the conclusions section. It is expected that the conclusions will highlight the main strengths and weaknesses of the project, and connect them in a compelling story line. Human rights and gender dimensions of the intervention (e.g. how these dimensions were considered, addressed or impacted on) should be discussed explicitly. Conclusions, as well as lessons and recommendations, should be consistent with the evidence presented in the main body of the report.	The conclusions section follows the overall structure of the report and reads more as a report summary, rather than providing a compelling narrative of the performance of the project. At least brief responses to the strategic questions should be given and/or references to where they are addressed within the report itself.	4
ii) Quality and utility of the lessons: Both positive and negative lessons are expected and duplication with recommendations should be avoided. Based on explicit review findings, lessons should be rooted in real project experiences or derived from problems encountered and mistakes made that should be avoided in the future. Lessons are intended to be adopted any time they are deemed to be relevant in the future and must have the potential for wider application (replication and generalization) and use and should briefly describe the context from which they are derived and those contexts in which they may be useful.	An important lesson learned that is not recorded is that similar interventions should not be implemented in such a limited timeframe. The project was designed to be implemented over a period of 1 year, which seems too ambitious. Although the project received a 1-year extension, some activities were still not implemented.	4
iii) Quality and utility of the recommendations: To what extent are the recommendations <u>proposals for specific action to be taken by identified people/position-holders to resolve concrete problems affecting the project or the sustainability of its results</u>? They should be feasible to implement within the timeframe and resources available (including local capacities) and specific in terms of who would do what and when.	The recommendations follow the required format and relate to specific actions. As the project has no follow-on phase there will need to be internal discussions between UNEP staff to identify other ongoing/upcoming work that can support these actions to properly embed some of the	5

[25] 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 overall supervision/technical backstopping provided by UNEP, as the Implementing Agency. Comments and a rating should be provided for both types of supervision and the overall rating for this sub-category established as a simple average of the two.

At least one recommendation relating to strengthening the human rights and gender dimensions of UNEP interventions, should be given. Recommendations should represent a measurable performance target in order that the Evaluation Office can monitor and assess compliance with the recommendations. In cases where the recommendation is addressed to a third party, compliance can only be monitored and assessed where a contractual/legal agreement remains in place. Without such an agreement, the recommendation should be formulated to say that UNEP project staff should pass on the recommendation to the relevant third party in an effective or substantive manner. The effective transmission by UNEP of the recommendation will then be monitored for compliance. Where a new project phase is already under discussion or in preparation with the same third party, a recommendation can be made to address the issue in the next phase.	gains brought about by the project.	
VII. Report Structure and Presentation Quality		
i) Structure and completeness of the report: To what extent does the report follow the Evaluation Office guidelines? Are all requested Annexes included and complete, including a gender disaggregation total for respondents.	The report follows the template provided by the UNEP Evaluation Office. The 'Response to Stakeholder Comments' is blank and the Evaluation Office assumes this is because no comments requiring a response were received. In the latest guidance, a copy of the Review Framework/Matrix is required as an Annex (this Review may have begun before this was required).	5
ii) **Quality of writing and formatting:** Consider whether the report is well written (clear English language and grammar) with language that is adequate in quality and tone for an official document? Do visual aids, such as maps and graphs convey key information? Does the report follow UNEP Evaluation Office formatting guidelines?	Generally, the report adopts a professional tone and is clearly written, albeit with a few typographical errors. Maps of the implementation areas would have been a benefit.	5
		4

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